EU TRANSPORT:
€11.9 BILLION TO IMPROVE EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

It was announced from Brussels on 11th September that the European Commission has invited Member States to propose projects to use €11.9 billion of EU funding to improve European transport connections. This is the largest ever single amount of EU funding earmarked for transport infrastructure. Member States have until 26th February 2015 to submit their bids.

This funding will be concentrated along nine major transport corridors which, taken together, will form a core transport network and act as the economic life-blood of the Single Market (see map here). Funding will remove bottlenecks, revolutionise East-West connections and streamline cross border transport operations for businesses and citizens throughout the EU.

Commission Vice President Siim Kallas, responsible for transport, commented, “Transport is fundamental to an efficient European economy, so investing in transport connections to fuel the economic recovery is more important than ever. Areas of Europe without good transport connections are not going to grow or prosper. Member States need to seize this opportunity to bid for funding to be better connected, more competitive and provide smoother and quicker journeys for citizens and businesses.”

EU financing for transport has tripled to €26 billion for the period 2014-2020 (compared to €8 billion for 2007-2013), under the new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). This is the first tranche of the new funding for transport to be made available.

Taken together these innovations – the tripling of transport financing combined with the decision to tightly focus the funding along nine major EU transport corridors 1 – amounts to the most radical overhaul of EU transport infrastructure policy since its inception in the 1980s.

The new core network, to be established by 2030, will connect:

- 94 main European ports with rail and road links
- 38 key airports with rail connections into major cities
- 15,000 km of railway line upgraded to high speed
- 35 cross border projects to reduce bottlenecks
Funding will be attributed to the most competitive projects and focused on nine major transport corridors in Europe.

The projects will receive EU funds but must be co-financed by Member States. The results of the bidding, the allocation to projects will be announced in summer 2015.

1 Infrastructure - TEN-T - Connecting Europe Corridors

Core network corridors were introduced to facilitate the coordinated implementation of the core network. They bring together public and private resources and concentrate EU support from the CEF, particularly to: remove bottlenecks; build missing cross-border connections and promote modal integration and interoperability.

They also aim at:

- integrating (as ongoing modal measure, these corridors shall be integrated into the multi-modal TEN-T) rail freight corridors,
- promoting clean fuel, and
- other innovative transport solutions,
- advancing telematics applications for efficient infrastructure use,
- integrating urban areas into the TEN-T,
- enhancing safety.

Nine core network corridors are identified in the annex to the CEF Regulation, which includes a list of projects pre-identified for possible EU funding during the period 2014 – 2020, based on their added value for TEN-T development and their maturity status.

A work plan will be drawn up for each corridor that will set out the current status of its infrastructure, a schedule for removing physical, technical, operational and administrative bottlenecks, and an overview of the financial resources (EU, international, national, regional and local; public and private).

To make sure that the corridors are developed effectively and efficiently, each will be led by a European Coordinator, supported by a consultative forum (the "Corridor Forum").

The following nine core network corridors have been identified and will function along the lines described:

7.1. The **Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor** is a crucial north-south axis for the European economy. Crossing the Baltic Sea from Finland to Sweden and passing through Germany, the Alps and Italy, it links the major urban centres and ports of Scandinavia and Northern Germany to continue to the industrialised high production centres of Southern Germany, Austria and Northern Italy further to the Italian ports and Valletta. The most important projects in this corridor are the fixed Fehmarnbelt crossing and Brenner base tunnel, including their access routes. It extends, across the sea, from Southern Italy and Sicily to Malta.
7.2. The **North Sea-Baltic Corridor** connects the ports of the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea with the ports of the North Sea. The corridor will connect Finland with Estonia by ferry, provide modern road and rail transport links between the three Baltic States on the one hand and Poland, Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium on the other. Between the Odra River and German, Dutch and Flemish ports, it also includes inland waterways, such as the Mittelland-Kanal. The most important project is Rail Baltic, a European standard gauge railway between Tallinn, Riga, Kaunas and North-Eastern Poland.

7.3. The **North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor** stretches from Ireland and the north of UK through The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg to the Mediterranean Sea in the south of France. This multimodal corridor, comprising inland waterways in Benelux and France, aims not only at offering better multimodal services between the North Sea ports, the Maas, Rhine, Scheldt, Seine, Saone and Rhone river basins and the ports of Fos-sur-Mer and Marseille, but also better interconnecting the British Isles with continental Europe.

7.4. The **Baltic-Adriatic Corridor** is one of the most important trans-European road and railway axes. It connects the Baltic with the Adriatic Sea, through industrialized areas between Southern Poland (Upper Silesia), Vienna and Bratislava, the Eastern Alpine region and Northern Italy. It comprises important railway projects such as the Semmering base tunnel and the Koralm railway in Austria and cross-border sections between Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

7.5. The **Orient/East-Med Corridor** connects the maritime interfaces of the North, Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas, allowing optimising the use of the ports concerned and the related Motorways of the Sea. Including Elbe as inland waterway, it will improve the multimodal connections between Northern Germany, the Czech Republic, the Pannonian region and Southeast Europe. It extends, across the sea, from Greece to Cyprus.

7.6. The **Rhine-Alpine Corridor** constitutes one of the busiest freight routes of Europe, connecting the North Sea ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp to the Mediterranean basin in Genoa, via Switzerland and some of the major economic centres in the Rhein-Ruhr, the Rhein-Main-Neckar, regions and the agglomeration of Milan in Northern Italy. This multimodal corridor includes the Rhine as inland waterway. Key projects are the base tunnels, partly already completed, in Switzerland and their access routes in Germany and Italy.
7.7. The **Atlantic Corridor** links the Western part of the Iberian Peninsula and the ports of Le Havre and Rouen to Paris and further to Mannheim/Strasbourg, with high speed rail lines and parallel conventional ones, including also the Seine as inland waterway. The maritime dimension plays a crucial role in this corridor.

7.8. The **Rhine-Danube Corridor**, with the Main and Danube waterway as its backbone, connects the central regions around Strasbourg and Frankfurt via Southern Germany to Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and finally the Black Sea, with an important branch from Munich to Prague, Zilina, Kosice and the Ukrainian border.

7.9. The **Mediterranean Corridor** links the Iberian Peninsula with the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. It follows the Mediterranean coastlines of Spain and France, crosses the Alps towards the east through Northern Italy, leaving the Adriatic coast in Slovenia and Croatia towards Hungary. Apart from the Po River and some other canals in Northern Italy, it consists of road and rail. Key railway projects along this corridor are the links Lyon-Turin and the section Venice-Ljubljana.