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European Commission
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European Forum Northern Swedens views on the successor to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

European Forum Northern Sweden (EFNS) is a network for politicians at the local and regional levels from Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland. EFNS is a meeting place and a knowledge arena for discussion and analysis of the impacts of EU policy on northern Sweden. EFNS monitors European issues to influence EU legislation, the EU's strategies and action programmes and the EU's budget. The objective of EFNS is to safeguard the interests of northern Sweden both in the European arena and in relation to the national level in matters with a clear European perspective.

The EFNS position in brief

- EFNS strongly supports the European transport policy, including the prioritised European Transport Corridors, which is a crucial tool for the timely implementation of the TEN-T Core Network.
- EFNS stresses that the successor of the CEF needs to be reinforced to realise the TEN-T network and to meet the major investment needs linked to the new challenges Europe faces.
- EFNS underlines the importance of direct management of the successor to the CEF to ensure realisation of infrastructure projects of high European value.
- EFNS advocates that a part of the successor to the CEF should be earmarked to remove bottlenecks, missing links and cross border projects.
- EFNS underlines that a sufficient share of the successor to the CEF should be allocated to projects supporting accessibility of peripheral regions in the comprehensive network, including at border crossings to third countries.
- EFNS finds that the northern sparsely populated areas should have broader criteria for investment grants in airport infrastructure.
- EFNS emphasizes the importance of enabling investments in transport infrastructure in northern Sweden through the ERDF in the next budget period as well.



EFNS strongly supports the European transport policy, including the prioritised European Transport Corridors, which is a crucial tool for the timely implementation of the TEN-T Core Network.

The trans-European transport network (TEN-T) constitutes the backbone of the EU single market and is crucial to go from a patchwork of national networks to a fully connected, seamless European transport network. Improved transport networks contribute to cohesion by ensuring that remote and rural areas become more accessible, allowing citizens and local business to experience the benefits of a single transport market.

The European Transport Corridors (ETC) lead the way by implementing the TEN-T core network by 2030 and is a powerful tool to boost investments and to advance the TEN-T transport objectives. The European Coordinators for the ETCs play an important role as facilitators for the TEN-T policy and should continue to guide the implementation of the TEN-T in close cooperation with national, regional and local actors.

EFNS stresses that the successor to the CEF needs to be reinforced to realise the TEN-T network and to meet the major investment needs linked to the new challenges Europe faces.

The EU faces a multitude of environmental, social, economic and security challenges that need coordinated action at European level involving national and regional authorities to ensure the transition to sustainable, resilient and competitive societies. The timely completion of the TEN-T core network by 2030 and the comprehensive network by 2050 is of the essence to meet these challenges. However, there are still gaps and bottlenecks in the TEN-T network hampering the proper functioning of the single market and there is a risk that the targets in the TEN-T will not be reached.

To complete the TEN-T on schedule, the successor of the CEF needs to be reinforced to continue being the key financial instrument in EU transport policy. Nevertheless, to address the overwhelming investment needs stemming from climate change and geopolitical instability, it is necessary to complement the funding with additional resources such as the cohesion policy funds and financial blending instruments, like Invest EU.

EFNS underlines the importance of direct management of the successor to the CEF to ensure realisation of infrastructure projects of high European value.

The directly managed CEF is the guarantee for implementation of infrastructure projects of low priority for a single member state, but of a high European value. The successor to the CEF should thus operate under the same principles and conditions as the current CEF, a project-based approach allowing the EU Commission to select the best projects contributing to priorities defined at EU level. Direct management, together with the use-it-or-lose-it principle that enables the redistribution and recycling of unspent EU funds, optimize EU budgetary efficiency.



EFNS advocates that a part of the successor to CEF should be earmarked to remove bottlenecks, missing links and cross border projects.

A major concern is that the transport system in many parts was built in a different age where the need for capacity and efficiency wasn't as important as today. Many, long railway lines in Sweden are single-track lines with few meeting facilities. These bottlenecks severely limit the opportunities for increased and faster traffic on the tracks, which in turn affects competitiveness. The same goes for cross border sections, which historically have had low priority for member states but are extremely important when it comes to security of supply and competitiveness.

EFNS underlines that a sufficient share of the successor to the CEF should be allocated to projects supporting accessibility of peripheral regions, including at border crossings to third countries.

Due to the geopolitical situation in Europe, where Finland's long border with Russia is closed and probably will remain so for a long time to come, the transport patterns changes. Future transport solutions need to be based on this new reality.

Developing the Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor will be even more important, but it is equally important to secure access to the Norwegian ice-free ports along the east-west connections, some of which are in the comprehensive network in our region.

All ports and nodes on Sweden's east coast and the equivalent on Finland's west coast are given an incredibly important position, and this should also be mirrored when it comes to CEF funding.

EFNS finds that the northern sparsely populated areas should have broader criteria for investment grants in airport infrastructure.

The needs of transport infrastructure in the northern sparsely populated areas are in many respects the same as in the outermost peripheral regions. Regional airports continue to be important to territorial cohesion and for the European Union to be able to benefit from the geographical added value of the regions. The transitioning towards sustainable aviation is rapid and several important initiatives on electric aviation and production of Sustainable Aviation Fuels are already ongoing in the north of Sweden. Accessibility through air traffic is of major importance to regional growth and quality of life and the transition of the aviation sector can create new opportunities to bridge the long distances in the vast geography in the north. For that reason, EFNS believes that the northern sparsely populated areas should have broader criteria for investment grants in airport infrastructure than more densely populated parts of Europe where there is competition between airports and other modes of transport.



EFNS emphasizes the importance of enabling investments in transport infrastructure in northern Sweden through the ERDF in the next budget period as well.

In northern Sweden, the European Union has contributed to building infrastructure that creates new conditions for innovation and growth, both through the TEN-T and CEF funding, but also with funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This includes development of intermodal terminals, port infrastructure, expansion of infrastructure for alternative fuels and special measures for parts of the rail network, which are very important from a regional perspective. These are measures that sometimes struggles to compete at national and European level, or where there is insufficient funding reserved within the scope of the counties' transport plans to achieve real improvements. One example is the Mid-Nordic Corridor, Sweden's largest Regional Fund project, which aims to strengthen the Sundsvall-Östersund-Trondheim route. The Mid-Nordic Corridor is a cross-border corridor to Norway, a third country in the TEN-T. Similarly, there is great potential for cross-border collaboration between Norway, Sweden and Finland if the E12 route between Mo i Rana and Umeå and over the sea to Vasa, is developed, facilitating the flow of goods and boosting tourism, which should qualify to receive support from the ERDF.

Synergy between the European Union's transport policy and cohesion policy is essential to develop infrastructure in northern Sweden. EFNS therefore emphasizes the importance of enabling investments in transport infrastructure in northern Sweden through the ERDF in the next budget period as well, from 2028.

Adopted by European Forum Northern Sweden

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