

Guidelines for trans-European networks in the area of telecommunications infrastructure

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The Council held a public orientation debate on a draft regulation on guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks and took note of a presidency progress report.

Ministers focused their discussions in particular on the criteria to be used for selection of broadband deployment projects and on the types of European cross-border digital services infrastructures that could be supported.

The following issues, in particular, will require further consideration by delegations:

(1) Member State involvement, particularly in relation to the preparatory steps of project selection and the modification of the description of projects of common interest.

- Many delegations stressed that guidelines and projects of common interest, which relate to the territory of a Member State, shall require the approval of the Member State concerned.
- Many delegations were opposed to, or put a reservation against, the Commission's proposal for it to be empowered to adopt delegated acts to modify the annex. These delegations argued that, taking into account that projects of common interest which relate to the territory of a Member States shall require the approval of the Member State concerned, the modification of the list of possible projects would require the full involvement of the Member States. Some delegations questioned whether and under which conditions implementing acts would be an appropriate instrument in this regard. Other delegations argued that an approach with neither delegated acts nor implementing acts would be preferable.

(2) Role and status of the proposed expert group.

- Delegations sought more clarity on the exact role of the Expert Group, for instance with regard to the drawing up of the annual work programmes.
- Some delegations questioned the Expert Groups status as an advisory body only with some delegations looking to extend its capacity to allow a broader view on telecommunications.

(3) The contents of the annex to the proposed Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) regulation.

- Many delegations appeared to accept the annex as a framework for establishing future projects but some considered that the text should spell out in more detail which projects are envisioned and how member states could get involved in such projects.
- Some delegations expressed the view that the annex could possibly make it clearer with regard to projects in the area of broadband infrastructure which methods of intervention (financial instruments, grants or a combination thereof) could be available in which geographical areas (e.g. rural or urban areas, islands, landlocked regions).
- Other delegations would prefer a more open and flexible approach.

(4) Relations between the CEF regulation and other financial instruments.

- A large number of delegations sought clarification on how the actions under the CEF Regulation and the Telecoms Guidelines would relate to other financial instruments, such as the Structural and Cohesion Funds.
- With regard to the deployment of broadband infrastructure in less developed regions in particular, delegations questioned where the financing will come from and in which priority.

There is still a substantial need for clarification with regard to the processes envisioned in general for the working of the Connecting Europe Facility as well as more specific issues relating to e.g. the list of projects of common interest in the Telecoms Guidelines annex and the list of pre-identified priorities and areas of intervention in the CEF Regulation annex.

The EU funding related to this regulation is to be negotiated in the context of the [CEF financing instrument](#), linked to the next multiannual financial framework (2014-2020). The proposal for the regulation establishing the Connecting Europe Facility was discussed in greater depth by transport ministers on the first day of the TTE Council (see above, page 9). The Commission presented this proposal in June 2011 with the aim of promoting the completion of priority energy, transport and digital infrastructures with a single fund of EUR 40 billion, of which EUR 9.2 billion are allocated to broadband networks and digital service infrastructures.