

EDITORIAL

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The European mandate currently drawing to a close has marked a particularly significant point in European Union policies. Faced with the challenge of implementing its commitments under the Paris Agreement (2015), the European Union has set itself ambitious targets through the "European Climate Law" (2021): carbon neutrality by 2050 and a reduction of at least 55% in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 1990 levels by 2030.

Accordingly, the two joint legislative bodies - the Council of the European Union, which brings together the Member States on the one hand, and the Parliament, which brings together the representatives of Europe's citizens on the other - have agreed on particularly proactive legislative proposals from the Commission. Presented as part of the Green Deal, the adopted texts set out the European Union's action plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Decarbonisation of the economy by 2050 is now a benchmark for all players in the economy and civil society. It is a benchmark in both senses of the term: an objective to be achieved and that calls for, legitimises and justifies the resources dedicated to it, or an objective that is still being debated and that some players would like to change or even call into question.

The main indicator of this multi-sector strategy is defined by GHG emissions and has revealed a particularly sensitive issue for the European Union. How can we achieve this significant and continuous reduction in the GHG emissions generated by the use of transport, mobility and logistics services? This is not an insignificant issue: European transport policy bears on two of the EU's four fundamental freedoms of movement (people, goods, services and capital), while at the same time the transport sector is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases and its emissions are not diminishing.

European transport policy: increasingly integrated and cross-cutting... and central?

Transport is an area of competence shared between the European Union and its Member States. In summing up the European mandate that is drawing to a close from a transport point of view, we could simply note that European transport policy has taken on a new dimension. It is still embodied in clearly identified sectoral factors (links between physical infrastructure networks and service networks in their various technical, economic and social dimensions). It still calls for efforts to improve the safety and economic efficiency of the systems in the context of the single market and technical and social harmonisation; it must continue to improve passenger rights. But it has also become a key issue for energy and industry policies. The objective of decarbonising transport calls into question some of the fundamentals of the European Union (free and undistorted competition and openness to international trade) at a time when the rules of international trade are being undermined and circumvented by the protectionist strategies of the United States or commercial dumping by China, for example.

In addition, the issue of transport policy is now beginning to echo in the concerns raised by the threat to the political stability of our continent. With the war in Ukraine, the strategic role, in the military meaning of the term, of our infrastructure networks has taken on a new and worrying urgency.

The Climate Act and the Green Deal have brought European transport policy into a more cross-cutting dynamic, where the European Union is looking for a way to ensure decarbonisation while guaranteeing a fundamental freedom that lies at the core of the European project, i.e. mobility.

Does this mean that transport will spontaneously become the subject of analysis, proposals and debates between the candidate lists? Will they be willing to invest the time and energy needed to address the complexity of the issues and factors involved in a policy that is still considered to be technical and a matter of necessity? Is this fundamental freedom of movement taken for granted, regardless of the externalities, to the extent that we feel that we do not even have to worry about them? On the contrary, is it so fundamental that we are working even harder to implement and guarantee it, in other words to decarbonise it proactively, in a reasoned and planned way - and at what price?

What do we expect from European transport policy?

On the eve of this new European mandate, the transport policy of the European Union and its Member States is facing issues of political orientation that appear to be increasingly complex. The goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 calls into question the priorities of public decision makers and the resources they are prepared to deploy to ensure the credibility of targets incorporated into national legislation and regulations. What levers should be used? In what order of priorities, with what sectoral and regional complementarities and with what resources for providing impetus, funding, implementation and evaluation? Regulatory, financial, contractual, human resources? What are the effects of past decisions? Do they need to be clarified? Are the objectives well-formulated and well-positioned on an agenda that must take account of regional, social, industrial, economic and financial constraints?

At a time when the European project is also giving rise to debates about its desirability and the ways in which it should be implemented, the question of how it is understood and accepted by the public has become crucial. Behind the technicalities of the measures taken by the European Union to decarbonise transport, how can we account for the objectives and progress made, share the burden of the efforts required of citizens and businesses and legitimise the impact of these measures on lifestyles? How can we get Europe's citizens on board with the need to decarbonise transport, respond to the doubts and concerns that have been voiced for several months, keep to our goals and ensure that they are achieved on time?

18 questions to clarify a few alternatives and prepare for European transport in the future

For the second time since 2019, TDIE is pleased and honoured to present the contribution of its Scientific Council to the identification of European transport policy issues that require policy guidance. For TDIE, the purpose is simple: to contribute to the identification and recognition of transport policy issues and to encourage the expression of well-argued and coherent proposals, taking into account the diversity of issues for which a political response is required.

This is why the questionnaire for candidates is preceded by a summary document which sets out the main facts and figures and strives to formulate the issues for debate and political policy making and put them into perspective. The questionnaire is based on five different angles under which political matters can be grouped from the point of view of the prerogatives of the European Parliament: 1/ general policy issues, 2/ issues relating to the financing of transport infrastructure and systems, which is a focus of close attention from TDIE members, 3/ factors related to continuing the dynamic of the Green Deal in relation to transport, and 4/ issues relating to social aspects, training and research.

The fifth and final angle is no less important: we believe it is absolutely essential that transport policy issues are tackled with determination by well-motivated men and women who are interested in their political as well as technical complexity. What role will transport play in the next College of Commissioners? What role will transport issues play in the future Parliament?

True to its concerns and convictions, TDIE is incorporating the diversity of transport modes into its considerations and is once again attempting to rise to the challenge of working on both passenger and freight issues. Our transport systems meet very different needs. How can we improve our overall environmental and energy performance?

We hope to make a useful contribution to mobilising candidates on these vital issues for our fellow citizens and thus encourage consideration of transport issues at the highest level of French representation in the future European Parliament. ■