Commission welcomes agreement on the Connecting Europe Facility to fund greener, more sustainable transport and energy networks, and digitalisation

Brussels, 12 March 2021

The European Commission welcomes the agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) proposal, worth €33.7 billion, as part of the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027.

The Connecting Europe Facility programme supports investment in Europe’s transport, energy and digital infrastructure networks. It will support the twin green and digital transition, by contributing to the ambitious targets for the European Green Deal and the Digital Decade.

It will support the goals of the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy laying the foundation for how the EU transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises. As outlined in the European Green Deal, the result will be a 90% cut in emissions by 2050, delivered by a smart, competitive, safe, accessible and affordable transport system. It will also prioritise environmentally friendly modes such as rail and the development of charging points for vehicles using alternative fuels.

By further integrating an efficient and competitive internal energy market, enhancing interoperability of networks across borders as well as facilitating decarbonisation and cross-border energy cooperation, the Connecting Europe Facility will help to reach our ambitious climate and energy targets. It will underpin the priorities of the revised TEN-E policy framework as proposed by the Commission at the end of last year with targeted financial support for key infrastructure projects that link EU energy systems.

The digital strand of the Connecting Europe Facility programme will help develop and deploy innovative, secure and sustainable cross-border digital infrastructures, to enable digital networks and services to flourish and support Europe’s vision in the Digital Decade for 2030, building on the 2025 Gigabit Society goals. It will also equip major transport paths, such as road, rail, maritime routes and ports with resilient, high-speed connectivity. At the same time its citizens will benefit from faster and resilient connections for enhanced online learning, access to more efficient digital services and enhanced potential for remote collaboration. As cross-border digital connectivity plays a vital role in closing economic, social, and territorial divides, the new CEF Digital financing instrument will enable many more of Europe’s regions, including rural areas, to breathe with new opportunities.

Members of the College said

Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, said: “The Connecting Europe Facility is central to completing the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), as well as making it greener and more digital. It will serve to bridge critical cross-border transport connections, shift more traffic towards rail and inland waterways, and boost multimodal integration. We must have a smarter, more sustainable and crisis-proof transport system, and CEF will be key to making that happen.”

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, said: “Advanced cross-border connectivity is a fundamental element of our economy that supports Europe’s digital and green transition as we move forward in the Digital Decade. The new CEF Digital will be one of our key tools to support cross-border fibre and 5G connections, ensuring that all citizens and businesses will benefit from innovative digital services, more jobs and more social and economic opportunities.”

Commissioner for Energy, Kadri Simson, said: “This agreement marks an important milestone on our way towards climate-neutrality and a green energy system. The strengthened CEF will support the revised trans-European energy networks policy by investing in smart and sustainable cross-border infrastructure and, for the first time, incentivising new cross-border renewable energy generation projects.”

Next steps
This provisional agreement now has to be formally approved by both the European Parliament and the Council.

**Background**

The CEF financial contribution comes mainly in the form of grants, with different co-financing rates depending on the project type. Under CEF Transport, €25.8 billion will be made available for grants from the EU's 2021-2027 budget to co-fund transport projects in EU Member States. Under CEF Energy, €5.8 billion will be made available to co-fund projects of common interest under the TEN-E Regulation as well as cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy. CEF Digital will invest €2 billion in European connectivity infrastructures and will stimulate the deployment and take-up of fifth-generation of mobile (5G) networks by local communities. The CEF will contribute largely to the Green Deal objectives to promote greener and more sustainable trans-European transport and energy networks as well as digitalisation.

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Press contacts:

  Stefan DE KEERSMAECKER (+32 2 298 46 80)
  Darragh CASSIDY (+32 2 298 39 78)

General public inquiries: Europe Direct by phone 00 800 67 89 10 11 or by email