Transport Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas addressed the European Parliament's Transport Committee on the future multiannual financial framework (2028-2034) on 16 July 2025.

From €25.8 billion to €51.5 billion. The budget earmarked for transport in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the period 2028-2034 is double that of the current financial framework (2021-2027), according to the multiannual EU budget proposal put on the table by the European Commission.

The CEF saved from the water

Some feared that the CEF would disappear, drowned in the large envelope earmarked for future national and regional plans, but without any targeted funding. This is not the case. The EU Infrastructure Fund does have a dedicated budget line in the future European budget. And the Commissioner for Transport, Apóstolos Tzitzikóstas, did not hesitate to announce this himself to the MEPs on the Transport Committee following the meeting of the College of Commissioners.

The MEPs, from all sides of the House, applauded the announcement with 'congratulations' and 'excellent news'. It was 'probably the only Commissioner to be congratulated today', one of them quipped, in view of the more than lukewarm reception given to the European executive's proposals on the other pillars of the future European budget.

But be careful what you read into the figures. The 51.5 billion euros are expressed in current euros, i.e. they consider theoretical inflation of 2% per year (details at the end of this communication). In constant euros - i.e. with the currency's current purchasing power - the envelope is 45.7 billion euros, and its real weight will depend on price trends, which have far exceeded forecasts in recent years.

Another component of the CEF, energy infrastructure, has seen its budget increase fivefold, from €5.8 billion to €29.9 billion. The - small - digital component (€2 billion in the current scheme) disappears in this new CEF, which will in future focus solely on investment in transport and energy infrastructure. In total, with the transport and energy allocations added together, the CEF would have a budget of 81.4 billion euros (current prices).

What are the investment priorities for this envelope? There are horizontal priorities, such as 'interoperable and intelligent' mobility - and investment in European traffic management systems, for example - and sustainable mobility, which will make it possible to invest in shore-side power supply systems for ships in TEN-T ports.

Above all, 'between 2028 and 2034, we absolutely must complete the cross-border sections of the trans-European transport network', insisted Apóstolos Tzitzikóstas.

Even more than in the current period, the CEF will focus on the cross-border dimension. A conscious decision. For the national sections linking these cross-border links, the Member States are invited to use the envelopes that will be reserved for future national and regional plans.

This approach 'makes sense in a way' but raises questions for the Socialist coordinator of the Transport Committee, Johan Danielsson (S&D). The investments to be made under these national and regional plans are entirely up to the Member States.

‘How can we ensure that the national sections receive sufficient funding’ outside the CEF, he asked the Commissioner.

The contribution of other instruments
‘51 billion will not be enough to cover all infrastructure investment needs’, the Commissioner insisted. ‘We will use programmes from all three pillars’ of the MFF.

The national plans, therefore, but also the Competitiveness Fund, which will be able to ‘support the entire investment cycle’, from applied research to bringing innovations to the market, particularly in ‘the production of alternative fuels, cleaner ships and aircraft, and connected and automatic driving solutions’. These are all areas eligible for the €26 billion available for decarbonization and clean transition.

The Commissioner also mentions the €40 billion Innovation Fund, which will also be able to finance equipment such as dual-use ferries or flat-bottomed wagons, a form of military mobility rail equipment that is currently in short supply. Horizon Europe, for its part, will continue to finance certain innovations in the transport sector.

Tenfold increase in military mobility
In the Commission's proposal, the CEF's military mobility envelope amounts to €17.65 billion at current prices (€15.75 billion at 2025 prices), compared to the €1.7 billion (at current prices) provided for in the current budget, which has already been used up. This is cause for satisfaction for the Commissioner - ‘it is the only envelope [in the budget] multiplied by ten’.

It's a point that also appeals to MEPs. In their draft own-initiative report, the rapporteurs of the Defence and Transport Committees call for a ‘considerable’ increase in the resources devoted to military mobility.

Apóstolos Tzitzikóstas also recalled the work in progress ‘with the military community to ensure that we have a solid portfolio of projects in the pipeline for 2028’. These projects, labelled ‘dual-use’, are also a way of improving civilian infrastructures.

What happens next?
With the budget proposals on the table, it is now the turn of the Member States to get involved. An initial policy debate is scheduled for 18 July at the level of European affairs ministers. The proposal for a regulation on the CEF presented on the same day will have to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. As in every programming period, this work will begin in parallel with the will begin in parallel with the negotiations on the multiannual budget, even if it means filling in the ‘figures’ box after agreement has been reached on the modus operandi of the mechanism.

The Commission, for its part, insists that the co-legislators cannot afford the luxury of blocking the process. "The CEF Transport will allocate its last funds from 2025 and promoters of major infrastructure projects will be faced with a funding gap for the remaining years of the current MFF. It is therefore essential to launch the next CEF in good time and to allocate the funds quickly", urges the European Commission.