

URBAN NODES: EMPOWERING CITIES AND REGIONS TO BUILD THE TEN-T

MARCH 2024



POSITION PAPER ON URBAN NODES GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

DELIVERED BY THE URBAN NODES ALLIANCE – EGTC RHINE-ALPINE CORRIDOR, EMTA, ERRIN, EUROCITIES, POLIS, AND SCANDRIA ALLIANCE, INFORMED BY EU-FUNDED PROJECTS MOVE21 AND SCALE-UP

Urban Nodes in the updated TEN-T Regulation

Europeans have the right to barrier-free, safe, and sustainable movement of people and goods across the Union. The Trans-European Transport Network (**TEN-T**) is an important driver for the improvement of European mobility of people and goods. With the 2023 agreement on the revision of the TEN-T regulation, the European Union has outlined a **comprehensive strategy** aimed at enhancing mobility and sustainability in Europe's transport infrastructure, recognising the local level as an essential contributor to the performance of the network.

The new TEN-T approach identifies **431 Urban Nodes** along the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). This is a substantial upscaling of the current 88 designated Urban Nodes. Making the most of their role requires sufficient funding and technical support, but also the necessary governance frameworks to fully build on local and regional initiatives, as well as structures to complete and improve the interface between trans-European and local mobility systems.

By 2027, each urban node is expected to have a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (**SUMP**) in place, serving as a long-term, integrated plan encompassing all aspects of mobility within the functional urban area. These plans will prioritize sustainability, safety, and accessibility, with the goal of fostering efficient and environmentally friendly transportation systems.

Furthermore, by the same deadline, urban nodes are required to collect and submit **urban mobility data** to the European Commission. This data will cover key areas such as sustainability, safety, and accessibility, providing valuable insights for policy-making and infrastructure development.

To improve connectivity and address first and last-mile challenges, the development of **multimodal passenger hubs** is targeted for completion by 2030. These hubs will serve as central points for various modes of transportation, facilitating seamless transitions for passengers throughout their journeys, and providing , 'access to public transport infrastructure and active mobility'(as stated in Art. 40.1).

In addition to passenger mobility, efforts are also underway to enhance freight transportation. By 2040, each urban node is expected to have access to at least one **multimodal freight terminal**, subject to rigorous socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis. These terminals will play a crucial role in optimizing freight logistics and reducing congestion within urban areas.

Urban Nodes are a driver for EU competitiveness

Urban nodes play a pivotal role within the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) framework, as they serve as 'cross-roads' where **different levels of transport networks converge** in densely populated areas with high transport needs. This integration significantly enhances mobility across regions, fostering smoother transitions and connections between different transport modes of people and goods. The integration also increases resilience of the network: if one link, hub or mode is impacted, other network sections or modes can answer to the transport demand. Resilience plays an ever-increasing role when it comes to impact of climate change, stress on the network and possible disruptions due to geopolitical events.

Moreover, the urban nodes concept can play a vital role in **bridging the rural-urban mobility gap**, facilitating comprehensive solutions that benefit both core, sub-urban and rural areas. The implementation of Urban Nodes planning to the Functional Urban Area (**FUA**) is specifically important in this context, as are the intermodal passenger hubs that can create the physical link between the core and the hinterland of the node. The Urban Node's geographical scope can be defined to enable regional cooperation on the FUA level.

Through strategic partnerships and collaborative initiatives, urban nodes mobilize diverse stakeholders to invest in **transformative projects** that enhance infrastructure, promote innovation, and mitigate climate change impacts.

Urban nodes and the SUMP increase the **alignment of transport policy with economic, spatial, and environmental policies** with the higher-level ambition to become resilient and climate neutral. The local and regional level is best suited to create cross-sectoral synergies. Local and regional authorities can connect these policies. The designation as urban node can bring additional resources to implement strategic and large-scale projects. These resources include political will, financial assets, knowledge, skills, data and information.

Alignment of interests can also happen between various nodes on the TEN-T network. Interdependency and complementarity can be strengthened thanks to the interconnection that the TEN-T brings. Urban Nodes can exchange knowledge, build skills and capacity together, sharing financial and digital assets. Resulting in strengthened EU competitiveness and an increased willingness to collaborate and implement larger scale, strategic projects that support resilience and climate neutrality.

No efficient Urban Nodes without appropriate governance

Governance plays a pivotal role in achieving the new requirements set for Urban Nodes, including Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs), Multi-modal Passenger Hubs, and Multi-modal Freight Terminals. Effective governance structures ensure coordinated efforts and resource allocation towards achieving these requirements.

The challenge is that the defined geographic entities in the legislation (Urban Node, the city itself and the Functional Urban Area) might have different governing institutions, different stakeholders and might not currently have the necessary (legal) structure and competences to accomplish the TEN-T Regulation requirements.

We invite member states – if needed with the support of the EU and the corridor coordinators - to initiate or accelerate the dialogue with local, regional and transport authorities to establish as soon as possible the appropriate governance structures for the designated urban nodes.

The following characteristics contribute to the effectiveness of Urban Nodes governance structures:

- **Subsidiarity in Governance – local must lead!** Governance structures at the Urban Nodal level must align with local governance frameworks, ensuring subsidiarity and democratic legitimacy. The European Commission (EC) and Member States must acknowledge and accommodate differences across Member States and between Urban Nodes. Nationally and locally tailored approaches can address diverse needs and circumstances amongst the 431 nodes and the EC should list requirements to set the framework for urban nodes governance. This can help to establish effective locally-tailored governance structures.
- **Governance capable of delivering a Functional Urban Area SUMP and Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicators (SUMI) values:** Effective mobility governance for Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) requires three abilities: i) impact on political decision-making, ii) expertise and skills to design appropriate policies – this includes owning or having access to data to inform planning processes and iii) a constructive relation with stakeholders.
- **Stimulate a more active collaboration between stakeholders vertically across governance levels and horizontally across sectors and disciplines.** Horizontal (between adjacent territories), vertical (local-to-regional-to-national), and inter-sectoral (transport-environment-energy-urban planning, etc.) cooperation are essential. Special attention to cross-border Functional Urban Areas is needed.
- **Governance enabling establishment and operation of multi-modal Infrastructure:** Governance mechanisms should facilitate the delivery of multi-modal infrastructure,

addressing complexities in project management, transport network competence, and financial stability and accountability.

Urban nodes need to be fully recognised in the TEN-T corridor governance:

Urban Nodes' governance structures should be integrated into Corridor governance frameworks to ensure alignment and coherence with the broader transportation network objectives.

- **Integration of SUMP Priority Projects in Corridor Work Plans:** Priority projects identified in TEN-T relevant SUMPs should be included in Corridor work plans, enhancing connectivity and efficiency within the transportation network. Urban Nodes can in this way be better involved in projects outside of the urban nodes limits that have a substantial impact on mobility to and from the node. Urban Nodes should be consulted on the corridor work plan. The current consultation is only conducted with the member states.
- **Urban Nodes regularly interfacing with the TEN-T Coordinators:** TEN-T Coordinators must take into account Urban Nodes' specific issues, ensuring that their unique challenges and requirements benefit from the best possible integration in corridor work plans. Collaboration platforms of cities and regions along the European Transport Corridors, such as the Scandria®Alliance or the Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC, can act as interfaces between the Urban Nodes and the Corridor Coordinators.

Financial Resources to Meet TEN-T Legislation Requirements

Adequate financial resources are essential to meet the requirements outlined in TEN-T legislation. It's imperative to recognize that Local and Regional Authorities cannot bear the entire cost of the ecological transition alone. Therefore, comprehensive financial support from European and national levels is necessary to achieve sustainability goals.

An important requirement for the success of the TEN-T will be financial stability - the financial perspective should be stable or predictable in the long run. This relates to all governance levels (from local to national to European).

The complex investment needs of urban nodes should be recognized in the financing – going beyond sectoral boundaries in grant decisions.

Increasing the European added value of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

- **No CEF = no TEN-T investment:** Maintaining the CEF is of key-importance. The CEF has proven its value to initiate project ideas and implementation consortia, to bring a truly European dimension to European transport investment, and to bring quality, transparency and efficiency to the TEN-T roll-out.
- **Strengthening CEF:** The continuation of a robust CEF is imperative to ensure sufficient funding for TEN-T related initiatives. This includes projects aimed at enhancing urban mobility within Urban Nodes. Not only studies should be funded, but also the implementation of projects (as an example works are currently not eligible under the topic “multimodal hubs”)
- **Urban (Mobility) CEF:** Consideration should be given to establishing an "Urban Mobility CEF" specifically dedicated to financing urban transportation infrastructure and mobility solutions, with special attention to strengthening cross border urban and regional functional areas as essential for the overall corridor performance. Companies constricted by contracts with the city administration (for example public transport operators) face budget cuts if they acquire funding and are not legally able to take out loans and receive private financing directly. This should be reflected in the funding rates of programmes dedicated to these kinds of beneficiaries.

- **Enhancing Synergy between CEF Sectors:** Better synergy between the Energy, Digital, and Transport sectors within CEF is essential to improve collaboration and integration of projects spanning transportation, energy, and digital infrastructure.
- **Direct Access for Urban Nodes:** Urban Nodes should have direct access to funding from CEF and other European programmes for TEN-T Urban Nodes projects, streamlining the process and enabling them to implement necessary projects efficiently. Currently, the agreement by the concerned Member States (benefitting from the project) is required for all applications. This requirement should be lifted: unfortunately, urban nodes are currently sometimes blocked by their national government to deploy strategic projects. In this context, care must be taken to ensure that not only public authorities are eligible for funding, but also municipal companies (e.g. PTO) that actually implement the investments in infrastructure. Financial instruments should be adapted to smaller public sector organisations.

In case the CEF were to be discontinued, an instrument with equivalent impact should be established.

Beyond CEF – Diversification of funding sources

While CEF is pivotal, it cannot be the sole source of funding. Other European programmes, as well as national funds, should be utilized in a coordinated manner to ensure comprehensive financial support for TEN-T initiatives. These financial instruments should be modernised to include local and regional authorities in their capacity as investors, planners and procurers.

Whilst it is clear that public funding alone will not cover all the transport projects needed to achieve EU climate goals, developing alternative financing schemes, such as blended financing schemes, should be done with caution. It is sometimes not possible for public organisations or publicly owned companies to receive private investment e.g. loans and equity. This should be taken into account when developing new programmes and should only be utilised in very limited cases.

Creation of Transition and Resilience Fund: Consideration should be given to establishing an additional and new fund focused on supporting transition and resilience efforts. Future funding instruments must fill the gap left after the end of NextGenerationEU. This is currently providing funding for investments in sectors that are not covered by the CEF, such as cycling infrastructure and public transport. In some members states, the Fund has been of particular value in vehicle systems such as the renewal of bus systems (Project Examples: [Wiener Stadtwerke \(ffg.at\)](#); [WL4Future \(ffg.at\)](#)). The investments supported via the Resilience and Recovery Fund and RePowerEU across Europe give evidence that there is huge need of funding in two critical investment areas: urban railway investments (rolling stock, infrastructure) and purchase of zero emissions vehicles incl. charging infrastructure (electric buses, tramways etc).

This so-called Transition and Resilience Fund should:

- Support sectors where **European manufacturing** faces strong challenges from global competition, such as Heavy Duty electric (bus and truck).
- Address needs with regards to green and digital transition, as well as **climate adaptation and resilience** – by allowing projects that cover green, blue and transport investments in synergy.
- Build on Urban Nodal needs through legally requiring **local and regional level involvement** in the definition of funding priorities and procedures.

In addition, we recommend that ELENA (EIB) is better linked to other financial instruments and loans: The ELENA programme (EIB) supports the preparation of major investments in urban transport and also energy-efficient measures. It is meant to serve as a lever. However, a follow-up funding instrument is currently missing for the actual investment in sustainable urban transport and mobility.

Improving together: Urban Nodes as a topic for capacity building, research and innovation

The EC and Member States, through the National Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (NSSP), should support **capacity building** for existing entities involved in Urban Nodes governance, fostering collaboration and effective decision-making.

Research and Innovation for Optimal Governance: Research and innovation activities are essential for optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of Urban Nodes governance structures, enabling continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving challenges and opportunities.

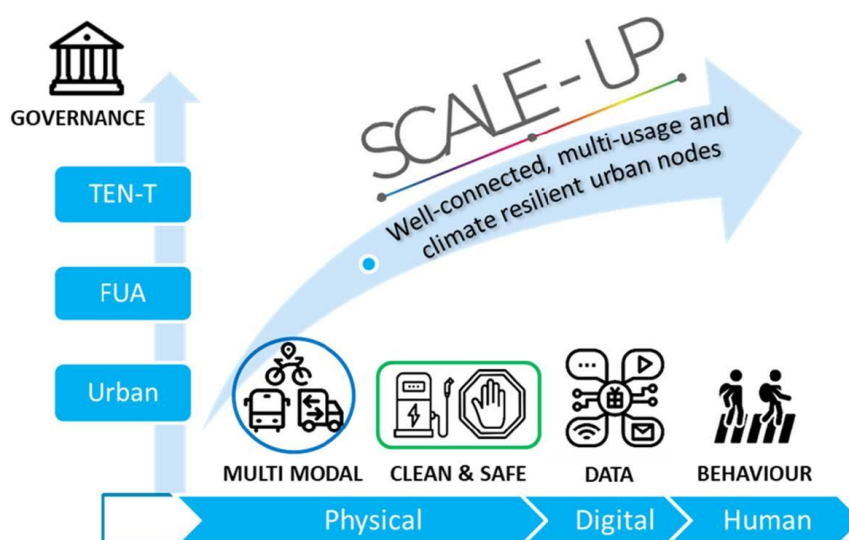
Promoting Learning and Innovation: Mechanisms for common learning, capacity building and innovation related to Urban Node issues, including Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP), integrated planning and mobility of people and goods should be expanded through programs like Horizon Europe, LIFE and INTERREG, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing. For this, institutional networking could be facilitated by establishing a community of urban nodes/TEN-T corridor professionals, continuing the activities of the Urban Nodes Forum.

Specific attention should be given to the newly designated Urban Nodes. The challenge to achieve similar levels of planning and implementation capacity as the current 88 urban nodes is immense. For many urban nodes, the capacity building circle of moving from awareness, into information to become capable and agile with as final stage full activity in implementing the legal requirements, still needs to be started.

The members of the Urban Nodes Alliance remain at your disposal for further information and cooperation to build the TEN-T!

For inspiration

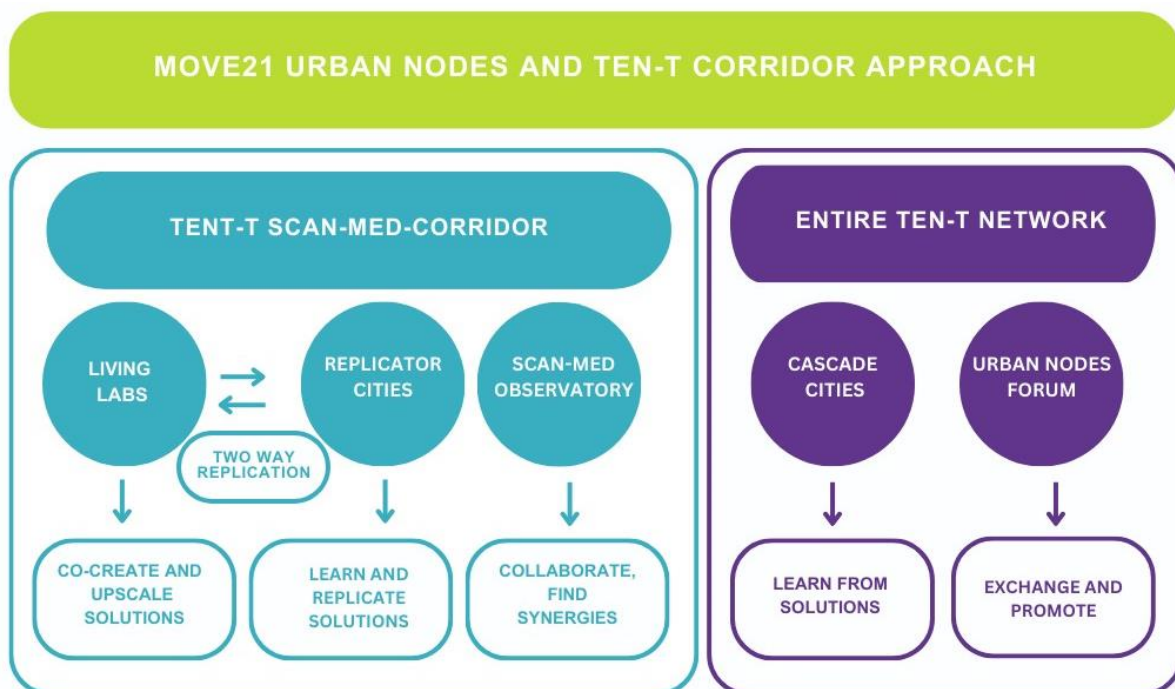
The **SCALE-UP cooperation model** relates to two ways of scaling up: a vertical upscaling (Y axis) refers to integrating the mobility and transport strategies on multiple governance levels and beyond geographical boundaries (city, functional urban area (FUA), TEN-T) through collaboration with all stakeholders. A horizontal upscaling (X axis), refers to addressing, in a balanced way, the different layers that shape the multi layered mobility system that we see today, being a physical or infrastructural layer, a digital layer, and the human layer referring to the central position of the end-user. To function as a data driven urban node all three layers need to be integrated in a balanced way.



Corridor activities are already taking urban nodes into account. In the **Rhine Alpine corridor**, the differences in approaches and governance between urban nodes from a persons' transport perspective and from a logistics perspective are taken into account. The EGTC Rhine Alpine and the Dutch approach "Goederenvervoercorridors Oost/Zuidoost en Zuid" where ministry, provinces, Port authorities and several municipalities (including (new) urban nodes as Nijmegen and Venlo) are jointly working on developing sustainable and reliable transport corridors from Rotterdam to Rhein/Ruhr and Amsterdam to Antwerp. Our colleagues from Noord-Holland, Gelderland, Noord-Brabant and Limburg are partners as well. More information on [Programma Goederenvervoercorridors | Top Corridors](#) (available in Dutch only).

In Finland, **regional transport system planning** is a statutory task of regional councils, which carry out sustainable urban mobility planning both at the regional as well as FUA level. For example, the Regional Council of Southwest Finland has transport system plans for the entire region (27 municipalities) as well as for the Turku city region (FUA of 13 municipalities). As part of the land use, housing and transport (MAL) agreements between the state and the municipalities, measures developed in transport system plans can be promoted and partially financed through a joint commitment of municipalities and the state. This system ensures a high level of both horizontal and vertical coordination.

The EU-funded project **MOVE21** has been working on renewed collaboration models that consider the urban nodes approach and private-public collaboration. Based on insights from dedicated work, partner cities highlighted the need for more aligned or integrated policy planning related to mobility, logistics, infrastructure, energy, and spatial planning to deliver on the multiple targets of the cities while increasing liveability and attractiveness of cities as places to live, work and invest. Policy coherence should be pursued both at cross-sectoral (horizontal) level, aligning policies from different areas like mobility and urban planning, and cross-level (vertical) level, by making sure that policies at different government levels, such as city and national levels, are aligned. Identified challenges include regulatory challenges, strong sectoral silos, lack of comprehensive mobility plans, mandates and the management of expectations towards multi-level and stakeholder collaboration.



At a broader level, its **Scan-Med Observatory (SMO)** is a peer group and community of urban nodes that facilitates institutional networking, coordination, collaboration on TEN-T corridor level, It acts as an open platform that gathers a committed group of representatives from the local level located along the TEN-T Scandinavian–Mediterranean corridor and which have been identified as urban nodes by the revised TEN-T regulation. The SMO was launched at the European Week of Regions and Cities in October 2022. Pending the entry into force of the updated TEN-T Directive, the SMO has started in 2023 iterations with the European Coordinator of the TEN-T Scandinavian-Mediterranean corridor to identify future synergies and act as a potential bridge between TEN-T Corridor structures and (new) urban nodes. The SMO aims to remain operative beyond the MOVE21 project lifetime to allow local authorities to play a more relevant role in the decision-making process at the TEN-T Corridor level.

This document is the first recommendation of the Urban Nodes Alliance, the cooperation between leading networks, Territorial Groupings and EU funded research projects that are close to the reality of Urban Nodes.



Promoting the territorial cooperation among its members to jointly strengthen and coordinate the territorial and integrated development of the multimodal [Rhine-Alpine Corridor](#) from the regional and local perspective. Integrating urban nodes for an efficient corridor network.



[EMTA](#) (European Metropolitan Transport Authorities) is an association of 34 public transport authorities across 21 European countries. Together, EMTA members work to improve the daily mobility solutions offered to more than 100 million Europeans. EMTA serves as the voice of public transport authorities towards European policymakers and as a forum to exchange experience and best practices in planning, integrating and funding public transport services at the metropolitan level.



The European Regions Research and Innovation Network ([ERRIN](#)) is a Brussels-based network that brings together some 120 innovative regions and their ecosystems around EU research and innovation policy and funding.



[Eurocities](#) is the largest network of European cities. We count over 200 large cities among our membership, representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries, from within and outside the European Union.



[POLIS](#) is the network of European cities and regions working together to deploy innovative solutions for more sustainable mobility. Polis fosters cooperation and partnerships across Europe and with the EU, to make transport research and innovation more accessible to cities and regions.



The [Scandria Alliance](#) is a unique cooperation platform for cities and regions along the ScanMed corridor. Our joint vision is to connect regions, communities and economies through clean and smart transportation.

The Urban Nodes Alliance benefits from insights from the following Horizon Europe Projects:



[MOVE21](#) is an innovation project funded by the European Commission, coordinated by the City of Oslo. It aims to transform European cities and their surrounding areas into smart, zero-emission mobility and logistics hubs. The project helps participating cities to achieve a 30% reduction in transport-related emissions by 2030 through the implementation of 15 transport-related innovations.



[SCALE-UP](#) is an EU-funded Innovation Action, focusing on 3 European urban nodes (Madrid, Antwerp, Turku) and exploring options to render them better connected and climate resilient while further developing complex multi-modal transport systems. The main outcome of the project are at least 28 newly developed innovative mobility measures to ensure the vertical (governmental) and horizontal (dimensional) upscaling of urban mobility.

The working party was chaired by Île-de-France.



As a regional authority dealing with urban mobility and innovative transport solutions, the Île-de France Region values the main objective of TEN-T to create European added value by creating cohesion (between long-distance traffic and local and regional traffic), by adding efficiency (through connections of nodes and stimulation of new innovative technologies), by striving for sustainability (by lowering emissions and external costs of traffic), and by establishing links between European citizens