

THE FUTURE OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS DEPENDS ON THE QUALITY OF THEIR PREPARATION



Preparations of the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020 in the field of infrastructure reflect the priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Connecting Europe Facility instrument (CEF) will be implemented in the framework of the TEN-T network and it will help to carry out ambitions outlined in the White Paper on Transport. The CEF allocation will be complementary to the structural funds, such as the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. The main task of this instrument will be more effective use of the budget through systematic efforts to include private investment into the infrastructure financing. Despite a long-lasting hostile approach by the Czech government to the CEF, there is an opportunity to mobilise private investment into the transport infrastructure through Public-Private Partnership. The PPP projects are generally more difficult and more expensive, though examples in Western countries show that they can be successful. The European Commission also claims that money that is being transferred from the Cohesion Fund to the CEF is not a threat for the Czech Republic but an opportunity, as it will

allow carrying out numerous projects. However, for the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic, Structural Funds will be the most important source of investment for transport projects and the CEF will be a supplementary tool. The Czech Republic hasn't been informed about the exact rules yet: how exactly will be the CEF used, how to prepare projects suitable for this tool and what amount of financial means will be allocated for the Czech Republic under this fund. Nevertheless, future priorities of the Operational Programme Transport will be the rail infrastructure and other sustainable means of transport, roads in the network TEN-T and roads outside the network TEN-T. This concept shall enable the Czech Republic to be flexible in using all available funding. Investment priorities will be defined in Transport Sectorial Strategies, which will be first examined by the Czech Government and then sent to the European Commission for final approval in November/December this year. These are the conclusions of CEBRE debate on Plans for transport infrastructure investment 2014-2020, held on 5th March in Prague.

OLGA SEHNALOVÁ: MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM



"The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has been one of the flagship projects of the European Commission during the preparations of the MFF, which received a strong support from the European Parliament. Although the prolonged and rather complicated negotiations about the MFF and the CEF itself are still far from being concluded, it already becomes obvious that it will depend mainly on the ability of the Member States, including the Czech Republic, to introduce well prepared transport projects eligible for financing. I believe we will be able to do so."

SMART REGULATION IS A SHARED COMMITMENT OF ALL THE EU INSTITUTIONS

On March 7th, 2013, the European Commission adopted the Communication on Smart regulation – responding to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises. The document reviews the progress in applying the micro-enterprise exemption, introducing lighter regulatory regimes for SMEs as well as SME scoreboard and ensuring regulatory fitness. The Communication also lists the top 10 most burdensome pieces of EU legislation such as REACH regulation, EU Waste legislation or Working time directive identified by stakeholders in an on-line questionnaire (ran from Oct. 1st - Dec. 21st 2012). European business organisations welcomed the

SME scoreboard and the list of the most burdensome EU legislative acts for SMEs. They also positively assessed that the smart regulation has become a top priority for the Commission. Positive assessment is also given to the move away from automatic exemptions for micro-enterprises, as it is not always possible to exempt micro-enterprises from a regulation. However, smart regulation can only be achieved if Parliament and Council are equally committed. Unfriendly provisions added during the legislative process by both bodies or during the implementation phase must be avoided. On the negative side, the Communication lacks proposals

for further enforcement of the "Think Small First" principle, which is the key principal devoted to the needs of European SMEs. Last but not least, the Commission must carefully treat results from SME Panel consultation and SME feedback database mentioned in the Communication as they do not reflect the view of the whole business community and SMEs often lack a holistic approach to a particular issue. For this, a close cooperation with business organisations, not only social partners, is needed.

CEBRE was founded in 2002 by the three most important Czech business organizations - Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations of the Czech Republic with kind support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade via its Trade promotion agency CzechTrade.



www.komora.cz



www.spcr.cz



www.kzps.cz



www.czechtrade.cz

News FLASH

>CZECH MINISTRY OF TRADE WILL GET LIGHT ON GOLD-PLATING

Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade is preparing an analysis on gold-plating. Almost 100 directives will be examined, out of which 53 will be analysed very thoroughly. Results shall be available by the end of this year.

>CZECH DELEGATION IN THE EP WILL SLIM DOWN

After the recalculation of seats in the European Parliament from July 2014, the Czech Republic will lose 1 MEP; the number of Czech MEPs will drop from 22 to 21.

>LATE PAYMENTS DIRECTIVE DELAYED

After 760 days that member states had for the transposition of the EU Late Payments Directive into their legislation, the Czech Republic did not manage to do so.

EU-ASEAN BUSINESS SUMMIT: EU LOOKING FOR A GROWTH IN ASIA



easily, especially in telecommunication sector. Furthermore, both sides stressed the need to improve access to finance for SMEs and several options were suggested, for example the introduction of non-cash payment mechanisms. Furthermore, new measures that will facilitate inflow of skilled technical workers from the EU to ASEAN countries should be introduced, not only in the ICT but also for example in automotive. In this sector, ASEAN representatives assured their EU counterparts that they would work on adopting higher technical and safety standards and achieving a single regulatory regime by 2015.

While the EU is desperately trying to boost its economic growth, Asian countries are rising. Although the growth predictions foresee a mild slowdown in 2013, some Asian countries are experiencing growth rates that the EU can only dream of. While China is still the leader when it comes to economic growth, other countries in the region also hide untapped business potential. Therefore, the European Commission is making a lot of effort to enhance mutual trade cooperation with Asian countries, for example ASEAN members. There has been the 3rd EU-ASEAN Business Summit taking place in Ha Noi from 8th to 9th March, where representatives of both sides discussed ways how to enhance

mutual cooperation. The EU and ASEAN create a huge market of over a billion people with trade volume exceeding 200 billion EUR in 2011. The EU is already very active in negotiating free trade agreements with individual ASEAN members and as a result, the first agreement was concluded with Singapore in December last year. Several broad topics were discussed during the Summit, from financial services to pharmaceuticals. Both parties agreed that setting up the right regulatory framework is of the utmost importance for mutual business cooperation, especially in the financial sector. ASEAN representatives promised that they will push for opening the domestic financial markets to allow European players enter more



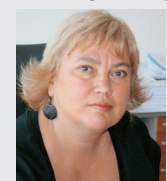
EESC CORNER: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN EDUCATION IN THE EU?



Job creation through apprenticeships and lifelong vocational training – it is a key point of the new own-initiative opinion adopted by the EESC in March. Europe is now deploying all its drivers of growth, which include a skilled labour force of the right size and structure to meet current labour market needs. This is why the focus is now on practical work skills, vocational training, apprenticeships and technical subjects. Commission sets out a series of specific proposals calling for a strong partnership of trust among all

stakeholders. The opinion represents a contribution of the business community to this common effort and its strong commitment to all new actions of the Commission asking for re-thinking skills in Europe and their better matching with the labour market needs, and entrepreneurial education. A newly announced initiative Alliance for apprenticeship is particularly welcomed to promote attractiveness of apprenticeship, to create a sufficient number of places for trainees and apprentices on the basis of dual systems which link school learning with in-house work experience. Action to strengthen the position of industry and related services in Europe will require changes in the structure of qualifications and related skills in all sectors based on clearly defined results. The shortage of STEM skills will become one of the greatest barriers to economic growth. These sectors have an ageing workforce; a change of generation is a reality for a number of STEM professions, with highly experienced employees leaving companies to go into retirement. It will be several years before the schools systems have adapted to supply the labour

market with the skilled specialists that are needed so urgently. That is why employers must fight the myth that STEM skills have no future. They must show that, on the contrary, the development of STEM subjects at schools of all levels will mean greater opportunities in the future and more flexibility in terms of career development. They need to inform people more effectively about the future skills needed by companies and must contribute to the process of lifelong learning among teachers.



EESC opinion SOC/469 – CES2308-2012_00_00_TRA_PA: www.eesc.europa.eu
Vladimira Drbalová, Rapporteur, Group I Member

CEBRE CALENDAR:

- CEBRE Debate “Is the REACH revision necessary?” – 30th April 2013 (Prague)
- CEBRE Debate “Do I know what I buy?” – 15th May 2013 (Prague)

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