



# Time to partner for preserving Europe's road network

*Our common programme for knowledge development and exchange, addressing the challenges of preserving the capabilities of the Pan-European Road Network and the opportunities for the future.*

The success of all countries across Europe depends on their ability to preserve and future proof the services provided by the pan-European road network (PERN). As the respective national road authorities collaborating in CEDR, we are mandated nationally to manage our respective parts of this network. In doing so, we facilitate the vital transport flows through and between nodes for domestic and transnational needs. Our public responsibility is to preserve this networks' ability to provide the safety, connectivity and accessibility for Europe's economy, society and environment.

## THE PAN-EUROPEAN ROAD NETWORK (PERN)

The national road authorities, cooperating in Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR), are responsible for managing road networks that span more than one million kilometres, and also they have a role in defining the functionality of this combined network.

The PERN links the urban and economic regions of Europe, such as (air/sea) ports, metropolitan agglomerations, together with rural areas. Reflecting national as well as transnational connections, roughly 60% of the PERN is motorway. Approximately 10% is part of the EU's TEN-T.

The preservation of the Pan-European Road Network requires close attention as it is showing its age after decades of service. This particularly concerns the most critical parts of our networks: our bridges and tunnels. Age is not the only concern and simultaneous challenges that need to be addressed include resilience to climate change; impacts and opportunities from digitalisation; domestic and international greening requirements; supply chain limitations, and a growing skills crisis.

Taking all this together, the challenge of refurbishment and renewal of ageing infrastructures also offers a unique opportunity: enabling a future proof road network that fits the need of our next generations e.g. on climate adaptivity and resilience, sustainability.

## Key challenges

We consider following challenges key in preserving our road network performance:

- *Service performance is under pressure:* Following a growing awareness of risks from ageing infrastructures, a growing number of countries have shifted their policy focus from construction to preservation. This results in a major expansion of the frequency, number and scale of road works on key transport routes across the continents. The challenge is to guarantee appropriate service levels for transport and logistics during the required refurbishment and renewal works.
- *Boundary conditions are increasing in numbers and stringency:* Balancing multiple legislative and societal objectives is becoming ever more complex.

- The challenge is to build the tools for more transparent and sound decision making, even in the face of conflicting demands and expectations.
- *Decision making becomes more interdependent:* Road network management already reflects the geographic scales on national, regional, European and corridor levels, with only some cross-modal elements. The developing interconnectedness and dependencies between the transport network and supporting energy and digital utilities further increases the complexity and risk of disruption. The challenge is to initiate a dialogue between relevant partners for more coherent decision making.
- *Growing competition for skills:* The challenge is to agree on building a common approach to deliver the required skills (and knowledge base) needed for both road authorities as well as construction, ITS and other industries and bodies in the sector.
- *Societal expectations are growing and changing:* The challenge is to agree on principles for managing public and stakeholder expectations with increased emphasis on social equity and transparency.

Addressing this mix of challenges, demands and opportunities, requires even greater cooperation. This needs not only to be between road authorities themselves, but also with other stakeholders, such as from sister agencies; the construction industries and associated supply chains, automotive industries; utility and logistical services, and research, academic and vocational institutes.

For this we aim to build and execute a coherent action plan encompassing concrete actions and timelines linking the relevant national and European agendas, programmes and initiatives.

### **Towards a common programme for knowledge development and exchange**

Our aim is to collaborate with relevant partners from the mobility system, industries and associated supply chains, bodies such as the European Commission and the research and education communities. For this we will build comprehensive insight of the scale, scope and impact of each of the topics for collaboration. This forms the foundation on which we can identify and exchange good practices in and across the sector as well as initiate proposals for collaborative knowledge development and implementation.

#### **1. Mapping the scale, scope and impact:**

- *Mapping the main critical and relevant infrastructure and systems:* Building a comprehensive overview of mission critical assets (performance, cost and risk) across the PERN, and the potential impact from failure.
- *Scope and timing of interventions across key corridors:* Supporting cases on (key) transport corridors on the PERN and assess scope and timing of their programmed refurbishment and renewal interventions.
- *Cross-system harmonization of guiding frameworks:* Reviewing frameworks for planning and programming and opportunities to harmonise.



## 2. Driving the collaborative response:

- *Reconsidering the construction delivery chain:* Rethinking approaches to deliver the anticipated upscaling in volume of works taking into account the national and European market structures. In addition, this includes rethinking our procurement frameworks as well as the need for future skills.
- *Reconsidering governance frameworks:* Discussing how to deal with key interdependencies across the mobility system. This aim includes the supporting framework of data, methods, models and (technical) regulations capable of capturing economic, social and environmental equities.
- *Vision for the digital road manager:* Building a common vision and approach to address the impacts and opportunities from digitalization. This includes assessing the possible future roles of our organisations in relation to aspects of traffic operations such as connected vehicles, integrated network management (including inter modality) as well as to the planning and management of infrastructure with tools such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) and the Internet of Things (IoT).
- *Rethink the framework for skills and knowledge development and implementation:* Rethinking the current system of knowledge development and exchange, training and education from a comprehensive understanding of the extent, nature and type of knowledge and competencies.

### **Our commitment to Europe**

As CEDR members, we are committed to deliver the appropriate service performance from our networks; now and in the future. This in turn provides Europe the backbone to carry its ambitions for inclusive, sustainable growth for 2030 and beyond.

We are convinced that the growing demand for refurbishment and renewal on our networks should also be seen as the opportunity it provides: a practical lever for our efforts to deliver on a future-proof Europe where safety always comes first.

This means that we make every effort to guarantee equitable accessibility and sustainability for society and the economy; working together from a transparent system vision, centred around the evolving needs of the end user. This cannot be done alone at national levels but only in cooperation with other road managers, the construction industries and respective supply chains, but also with other modalities and with the logistics services relying on the performance of the PERN, the utility sector providing services to the PERN, and also with relevant partners in defence.

We do this by tackling the refurbishment and renewal task in a climate-proof, carbon neutral and circular manner in the context of national and European objectives. We make use of the opportunities that new technologies and developments offer us, such as digitalization and new mobility concepts.

We will anchor the outcomes of this process in a sustainable, shared knowledge environment with our partners from the research and education community, utilising relevant national and European events amongst others.

We ask our partners to join us in this process and, where appropriate, to align efforts towards partnerships under relevant national and European framework programs.

Signed (Dublin 2024) by President and Secretary-General.

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Kathy Vandenmeersschaut  
CEDR President 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a small upward tick.

Steve Phillips  
CEDR Secretary General