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Council adopts guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks

The Council today adopted a regulation on guidelines for the **deployment** and **interoperability** of **telecommunications infrastructure** projects of common interest in the field of **trans-European telecommunications networks** (TEN-Tele) ([*PE-CONS 116/13*](#); statement: [*6911/14 ADD 1*](#)).

Today's **final adoption** of the legislative act by the Council follows an agreement reached at first reading with the European Parliament. The Parliament held its vote at the plenary session of 26 February 2014.

What does the regulation do?

The new regulation lays down the **criteria** on the basis of which actions in this area are eligible for **EU financial assistance** and sets the **priorities** for funding.

Projects of common interest

The regulation covers projects in the area of **digital service infrastructures** and **broadband networks** which meet the general objective of contributing to growth in line with the Europe 2020 strategy as well as a set of other conditions.

P R E S S

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EU funding

Such projects may be eligible for assistance from the **Connecting Europe Facility** (CEF), which is the funding instrument for the trans-European networks (TEN) in the fields of transport, energy and telecommunications (press release [17321/13](#)). The ceiling set in the CEF regulation for the telecommunications sector for 2014-2020 is **EUR 1 141 602 000**. The annual amounts will be determined through the EU's annual budgetary procedure, within the limits of the financial framework.

- [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (full text of the regulation, in pdf)

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for funding, actions in the field of digital service infrastructures must, inter alia, be ready for deployment, contribute to EU single market policies and have a long-term sustainability strategy.

Criteria for actions in the area of broadband networks include making a significant contribution to the realisation of the targets of the Europe 2020 flagship initiative, Digital Agenda for Europe. According to those targets, all Europeans should have access to internet speeds above 30 Mbps and at least 50% of European households should subscribe to internet connections above 100 Mbps. Given the rapid developments in this area, consideration might be given to reviewing those targets within the framework of the evaluation of the Digital Agenda.

- [Digital Agenda for Europe website](#)

Priorities for funding of digital service infrastructures

Specific digital service infrastructures will be selected to be funded from CEF and their level of funding will be determined on an **annual** basis.

The **first priority** for funding will be given to reusable digital service infrastructures ("building blocks") which provide essential elements for the creation and operation of a range of digital services. These first-priority infrastructures include:

- electronic identification and authentication
- secure, traceable electronic delivery of documents
- automated translation for pan-European digital services
- critical digital infrastructure support to enhance EU-wide cyber-preparedness
- secure electronic invoicing.

Access to digital resources of European heritage provided by the **Europeana** portal and the infrastructure underpinning the member states' **Safer Internet Centres** are eligible for funding contributing to an uninterrupted service.

Other infrastructures eligible for financial assistance include interoperable cross-border electronic procurement services and eHealth services.

- [Europeana portal](#)
- [Insafe - European network of Awareness Centres website](#) (Safer Internet Centres)

Funding for broadband networks

Under the TEN-Tele guidelines, broadband networks will receive the minimum funding required for cost-effective interventions, the amount being set at **15%** of the budget. This contribution is intended to attract investment from the private sector, from public sources other than the CEF, such as national sources and the European Structural and Investment Funds, and from institutional players such as the European Investment Bank.

At least one third of the broadband projects receiving financial support under the TEN-Tele regulation must aim at speeds above 100Mbps.

The percentage of broadband funding and the share of high-speed broadband projects may be revised following the regulation's mid-term evaluation.

When will the regulation come into effect?

The regulation will enter into force on the day after its publication in the EU Official Journal.

It will apply retroactively, with effect from 1 January 2014, as is standard practice for multiannual financial framework -related acts which enter into force after 1 January 2014.