

PRESS RELEASE

ASECAP Webinar on EU recovery Plan: Proposals of road infrastructure operators in developing a sustainable transport system

On Monday, 22nd of March 2021, ASECAP organized its webinar on EU Recovery Plan, with the participation of representatives of the EU institutions (European Commission, Council of the EU and European Parliament) and the toll road infrastructure operators. It has provided the opportunity to hear from the Commission and Portuguese Presidency details and priorities on the EU recovery.

ASECAP President Massimo Schintu requested that National Governments should integrate road infrastructure into the Economic Recovery Plan. He asked for the funding of the EU recovery and resilience facility, launched to face the pandemic crisis, to be split equally among all the EU key industrial sectors, treated equally public and private road operators. Road operators will be major enablers for a sustainable and resilient recovery of Europe's economy from the pandemic. The construction, renovation and maintenance of roads must be part of priorities which will require investments and will allow the creation of jobs essential to regain economic growth.

ASECAP and its members presented the proposals of the EU road infrastructure operators in developing a sustainable transport system. ASECAP Road operators representing more than 88,000 km of motorways across 21 member countries, play a key role for reaching the Green Deal goals and climate change objectives. ASECAP members have already started to make the shift to greener mobility. They are ready to propose concrete plans to boost new mobility frameworks and contribute to de-carbonization of road transport, as well as promoting digitalization and creating jobs. Motorway concessionaire companies are long-term investors in public infrastructures and services and are ready to support EU policy to foster the deployment of green, safe and innovative transports.

More specific during the webinar the speakers indicated:

Massimo Schintu, ASECAP President

COVID-19 pandemic has caused a major impact on EU economy for all Member States. The ASECAP members are willing to play a key role in reaching the EU's climate objectives. They are ready to propose plans to contribute to decarbonizing road transport, promoting digitalization and creating jobs, all these objectives are clearly identified in the EU recovery plan.

Massimiliano Salini, MEP from TRAN Committee, European Parliament

The EU Recovery Plan is a very important tool for all Member States. Pandemic has shown the importance of a sustainable mobility and efficient road infrastructure. There is important needs to invest in road infrastructure to build a good future for our citizens. For this reason, all Member States should give priority to these projects in their national recovery plans. The EU recovery plan provide significant amount of money, but this money will not be enough without a clear political vision of the future of our Union.

Nicolas Imbert, Deputy Head of Unit in TF RECOVER.B1 (Recovery and Resilience Task Force), European Commission

European Commission's key priority is to support economic recovery and resilience in the EU through the implementation of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility. There is a potential for substantial support to key investment priorities (flagships) including cross-border projects, sustainable transport and the deployment of electric and hydrogen charging infrastructure, if Member States decide to include such projects into their recovery and resilience plans. It will be possible, in principle, for Member States to get funding under this flagship to equip their motorway network with sustainable, accessible and smart transport, charging and refueling stations.

Paulo Variz, Transport Attaché, Representative from Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU

Recovery is one of the main priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. The Portuguese Presidency notes a general support to the EC's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy vision for a greener and more digital transport (e.g., to have by 2030 automated mobility deployed at large scale and by 2050 nearly all cars, vans and heavy-duty vehicles at zero emissions). All transport modes shall contribute to these green objectives and be part of the solution as reminded by ASECAP position paper. It is very positive to see that ASECAP members are at the forefront of these challenges and efforts. Road operators are eligible for funding for EU recovery and resilience facility and CEF funding (Transport, Energy & Digital) to be discussed with their national representatives.

António Nunes de Sousa, President APCAP, Vice-President of ASECAP, Portugal

There has been a significant drop in traffic due to the pandemic, but the motorway operators have maintained total availability of the network. Portuguese Government has not implied the motorway companies to be part of the national Recovery Plan proposal. Nevertheless, the motorway operators have shown their willingness to propose a set of concrete projects to accelerate the economic recovery focusing on 3 pillars: Resilience to promote road safety, decarbonization to fulfil climate change objective and digital transformation for sustainable mobility.

Roberto Tomasi, CEO of Autostrade per Italia, Vice-President AISCAT, Italy

There is a strong need to have a full integrated transport project relying on an important modernization plan for infrastructure for the next ten years. An exceptional effort in investments and maintenance, digital infrastructure and alternative power supply will be needed. the Recovery Fund is a unique enabler to fund this integrated transformation to enhance citizen's life. It is also necessary to better define the allocation of the Recovery Fund the rules through which the various Member States will implement the project in order to ensure the compliance with mandatory deadlines.

Christophe Boutin, Executive Director of ASFA, Immediate Past President of ASECAP, France

The pandemic is having drastic consequences on traffic but the concession model has proven its resilience in providing continuity of services. French motorway companies are willing to continue investing for decarbonated and connected mobility, optimizing the existing infrastructure by deploying managed lanes, intermodal hubs for mass public transport. Important investments are still needed to modernize the network, but also to be able to meet the new mobility needs.

Julián Nuñez, President SEOPAN, Spain

During the period 2019-2021, four toll concession have expired and will be operated with no tolls, which will have important consequences: in 2021, a public deficit increase of 286 million euros (M€) due to the lack of tax collection (242 M€) and the rise of maintenance costs (66 M€). By 2022, there will be a permanent annual increase in public deficit of 478 M€. The implementation of a road charging scheme in Spain based on a distance-based user/pay principle operated by private concessionaires for a 25 years contracts will generate 104 B€ of upfront payment from the private sector or an average yearly payment of 4,8 B€ with a lower upfront payment, relieving public budget relieving public budget for other important social priorities (health, school...). The new concessionaires will face investments to foster decarbonization and digitalization in the current network.

Bruno de la Fuente, Director Concessions, SEOPAN, ASECAP COPER I Chair

The key outcomes of the webinar confirm that Road operators have the willingness to be proactive on the crisis and the skills and knowledge to manage efficiently these investments. All possible resources and solutions to boost recovery have to be activated. In this context, it is important to remind that before the pandemic the road operators were already using efficient instrument to generate activity and employment: they were able to invest €7 billion/ year, generating more than €5 billion in tax revenue and employ over 50,000 people. Therefore, toll roads have great potential to face massive investments to contribute to the economy and create jobs.

ASECAP Statement on the EU recovery plan:

http://asecap.com/images/documents/ASECAP_Statement_on_EU_Recovery_Plan_Financing_VF.pdf

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