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PRESS RELEASE

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'Connecting Europe' – business leaders and policy-makers strongly support the Commission's 50 billion plan for strategic infrastructure investment in transport, energy and internet

At a high-level conference in Brussels, business leaders and policy-makers strongly supported the creation of a Connecting Europe Facility as proposed by the European Commission for the European Union's new financing period 2014-2020. With up to 50 billion euros the Connecting Europe Facility could become a key instrument for targeted infrastructure investment at European level to ensure the smooth functioning of the Single Market and boost sustainable growth, jobs and competitiveness across the European Union.

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: "We need an ambitious Connecting Europe Facility to invest in Europe's future growth and boost job creation. Too often, citizens and businesses are blocked by incomplete, inefficient or simply non-existent infrastructure networks. The 'Connecting Europe Facility' provides a European solution to a European problem with its focus on strategic infrastructure, its innovative character and its true European added value. This has been widely recognised at today's conference and I am confident that this message will also be heard in the capitals of our Member States."

During the event speakers and participants appreciated the innovative character and important added value that the Connecting Europe Facility would provide. The Connecting Europe Facility would help getting strategic infrastructure off the ground that helps "Europe to compete and to grow" in a globalised world, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and the recently agreed Compact for Growth.

Without it, participants agreed, many necessary infrastructure investments in transport, energy and internet in the EU would not happen if dealt with purely at national level. This is particularly true in the on-going crisis, which hampers for example bank lending for infrastructure investment. Most participants expect significant private investments thanks to innovative financial instruments linked to the Connecting Europe Facility, like project bonds, and the longer term orientations and planning security it provides.

Many pointed to existing infrastructure projects supported through the EU that clearly demonstrate the benefits and added value of EU-level infrastructure investment like for example the recently inaugurated electricity connection between Ireland and the United Kingdom or compressors enabling reverse gas flows in central and Eastern European Member States.

High-performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks were deemed essential for the full functioning of the EU's Single Market and the shift to a more sustainable low-carbon economy.

Some participants also emphasised the complementarity of the EU's cohesion policy with the Connecting Europe Facility, while emphasising the importance of cohesion policy for enhanced competitiveness of the entire European Union.

Participants agreed that the Connecting Europe Facility is a concrete expression of a new thinking and partnership that will benefit Europeans across all Member States, citizens and businesses alike as better interconnections would make work and travel easier, enhance competitiveness, business opportunities and energy security and make Europe's economy greener.

Many expressed the wish that the overall strong support for the Connecting Europe Facility coming from this high-level event could mobilise other important stakeholders and decision-makers and positively influence the course of negotiations in the run-up to the extraordinary European Council of 22-23 November 2012 dedicated to the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Background:

Following the proposals for the Multiannual Financial Framework of 29 June 2011, the Commission tabled the draft regulation for the Connecting Europe Facility on 19 October 2011. Negotiations are on-going in the Council and the European Parliament.

The 2012 June European Council agreed the Compact for Growth and Jobs which includes the removal of barriers in the Single Market and which refers explicitly to those sectors that are at the heart of the Connecting Europe Facility: transport, energy and internet. The European Council also agreed on the immediate launch of pilot project bonds.

Today's conference was organised by the European Commission. It was attended by the following speakers:

Leif Johansson, Chairman of Ericsson and Chairman of the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT)

Andrus Ansip, Prime Minister of Estonia

Efthemios Flourentzou, Minister of Communications and Works, Republic of Cyprus

Amalia Sartori MEP, Chair EP Industry, Research and Energy Committee

Adina Ioana Valean MEP, Rapporteur Connecting Europe Facility

Wolfgang Kopf, Senior Vice President Public and Regulatory Affairs, Deutsche Telekom

Maciej Witucki, President, Polish Telekom

Marc Hamy, Chief Operating Officer, AirbusProSky

Dermot Byrne, Chief Executive, EirGrid

Pierre Mongin, Chairman and CEO of RATP Group

Scott Dickens, Global Head of Structured Capital Markets, HSBC Bank

Paul O'Neill, Global Head of Energy, Allianz Global Corporate and Specialty

Participants came from a wide range of areas, including from the sectors concerned - transport, energy and internet. Among the organisations and companies represented were the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Orange France Telecom, ThyssenKrupp, Telefónica, British Telecom, Siemens, Deutsche Bank, Alcatel-Lucent and Renault.

Apart from President Barroso the following members of the European Commission participated: Vice Presidents Neelie Kroes and Siim Kallas and Commissioners Johannes Hahn and Günther Oettinger.

Further information:

Press material on the Connecting Europe Facility: [IP/11/1200](#)

Read the statements of President Barroso and other Members of the Commission:

http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/expertise/conferences/index_en.htm

Watch the video clip:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I074497>

Read the brochure on the Connecting Europe Facility:

http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/expertise/conferences/index_en.htm

On the added value of the EU budget: "Money where it matters" [MEMO/11/469](#)

On the Multiannual Financial Framework: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform>

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