

Internationalisation in infrastructures

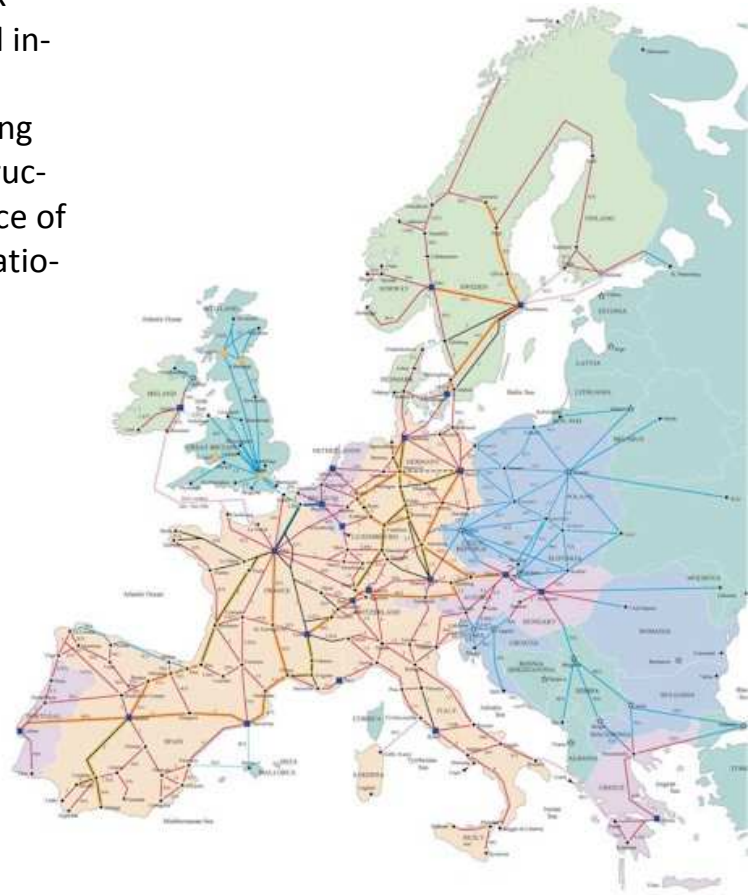
Infrastructures are more and more interconnecting at the continental scale, operated by multinational companies and under the regulatory control of international bodies. All these facts, and many others, relate to the **internationalisation** of infrastructures. We will address this theme at the 12th Annual International Conference on the Economics of Infrastructures. We have invited leading experts from academia, business and politics to discuss it and provide their views for the way ahead. We will raise issues related to supra-national regulation, technical coordination across borders, international economic exchange, converging national interests and international public service obligations. We hope to come with a specific understanding of how the internationalization of infrastructures results in a stronger interdependence of market mechanisms, technological and national systems.

Venue

Economics of Infrastructures
Delft University of Technology
Delft, the Netherlands

Organising committee

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12th Annual International Conference on the Economics of Infrastructures, 14–15 May 2009

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Internationalisation in infrastructures

Telecommunication operators are routing international calls through submarine cables and satellite networks. In the same fashion, high voltage transmission lines are interconnecting at the continental scale. These technical systems are operated by multinational companies that, for economy of scale and coordination of operations, often merge infrastructure services between countries. They fall under the control of international bodies that edict norms such as the obligation of universal service. Regarding water infrastructure, European Union directives and governance approaches are pushing towards the internationalization of questions pertaining to rivers and deltas. All these facts, and many others, relate to the internationalization of infrastructures.

We will address this theme at the 12th Annual International Conference on the Economics of Infrastructures. We have invited leading experts from academia, business and politics to discuss it and provide their views for the way ahead. Internationalization of infrastructures addresses the increasing interconnection of infrastructure activities across countries borders, and, as a consequence, the need to develop international governance to monitor and control important technical and economic parameters like traffic flows, investments or prices. Hence we will raise issues related to supra-national regulation, technical coordination across borders, international economic exchange, converging national interests and international public service obligations.

Many infrastructures have been involved in international activities, for instance telecommunication, postal services, railway, shipping, aviation and, to a certain degree, energy. These sectors were primarily nation-wide systems by respect to their industrial organization, regulation and governance. This situation changed quite significantly at the end of the twentieth century. Firstly technological innovations offered opportunities for far more efficient technical control, management and operation of networks across borders. For instance, operators of railway and aviation are using information and communication technologies for traffic control systems. What is the impact of the increasing international interconnection on technological systems?

Secondly privatized infrastructure firms are evolving into multinationals by developing global business strategies. For instance, national energy providers initiated international

exchange of electric power as a back-up facility in case of failures of national power supplies. Nowadays international trade of electricity gains increasing economic importance, accommodated by technological innovations, the evolution of international market arrangements and multi-national market players. What is the effect of market liberalization and changes in industrial organization at the international level?

Thirdly institutional arrangements at the international level affect more and more the operations of infrastructure based markets. Wireless telephony requires, among others, comparable technical standards and economic clearing systems for the allocation of costs. There is a need, hence, for supranational regulation and governance. The European Union is a well known example, but there are many other supranational regulatory bodies such as the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunication Union. The increasing technical and economic interrelations between national infrastructures require political cooperation in order to maintain the system services. The increasing importance of supranational regulatory bodies illustrates converging national interests with respect to the operation and management of infrastructures. How is the liberalization of infrastructures shaped by the internationalization of networks and institutions?

We will shed light on these questions at the 12th Annual International Conference on the Economics of Infrastructures. We hope to come with a specific understanding of how the internationalization of infrastructures results in a stronger interdependence of market mechanisms, technological and national systems.

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