EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) {COM(2011) 650 final} and apologizes for the delay in replying.

The Commission would like to stress that the methodology used to design the revised TEN-T network has been specifically developed to ensure that the core network includes the strategically most important nodes and links of the TEN-T according to traffic needs. Specific criteria have also been included to provide a good balance in terms of geographical coverage. But ensuring the accessibility of all regions in the EU, including the remote and outermost regions, and the strengthening of the cohesion between them is the primary role of the comprehensive network.

Two sources of EU financing should be available to support interventions developing links within the comprehensive network: the future Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), via the innovative financial instruments, targeting primarily user-based revenue projects, and the Cohesion Fund and the structural funds, particularly the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). According to the Commission's budget proposal for the period 2014-2020, Member States will need to ensure an appropriate balance between investments in trans-European networks and environment that would be available within the Cohesion Fund (apart from the €10 billion earmarked within the Connecting Europe Facility) for transport infrastructrure, and a part of the total ERDF budget of about €170 billion.

With regard to the specific case of Sardinia, the small size of its urban nodes and the relatively low volumes of goods and/or passengers transiting its ports and airports did not allow any of these nodes to qualify as core nodes according to the thresholds used in the TEN-T design methodology. Consequently, it could not be included in any of the corridors. However, Sardinia remains well covered by the comprehensive TEN-T, including 8 ports and 3 airports. Financially, in addition to support via CEF financial instruments, the development of the comprehensive network in Sardinia would continute to benefit from the ERDF support. The Commission proposal for a Regulation on the ERDF for 2014-2020 includes among its investment priorities providing support to a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T and enhancing regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure.

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The Commission has considered the possibility of including the Ancona – Bari link passing by Pescara into the core network. However, this option proved eventually not possible.

Indeed, according to the TEN-T methodology, a core port is to be linked directly to only one urban core node, following the most important traffic flows. In this case, the port of Bari could have been directly linked to one of three core urban nodes: Napoli, Rome (bypassing Napoli on a number of alternative routes) or Bologna (along the Adriatic coast, passing also via the port of Ancona). Yet, a direct link Bari – Rome bypassing Napoli is not intense enough in terms of traffic, while on the link to Bologna, the section Bari-Pescara-Ancona presents limited freight transport flows and hardly any passenger traffic. The link Bari – Napoli, while still far from being exploited at its full potential on both freight and passenger traffic, has the strategic role of linking the Tirrenian and the Adriatic coasts, as well as being part of the main link between Bari and the region of Apulia, on the one hand, and Rome and the Northern half of Italy, on the other hand.

A change in methodology as suggested by the Senato della Repubblica would entail including any direct link between a core port and a core urban node. But in such case the density of the core network would become very high, and the objective of identifying and improving the efficiency of priority transport links following strategic traffic flows would be lost.

On the other hand, the non-inclusion of the Bari – Ancona link in the core network would not undermine the potential of the development of the future Ionic-Adriatic macroregion. The Adriatic coastal link indicated by the Senato della Repubblica is already fairly well developed in terms of rail infrastructure and upgrades of road sections are either planned or ongoing. As part of the comprehensive TEN-T, EU financial support could be provided for further development of this link, from either the CEF or the structural funds. In addition, the development of short see shipping routes linking ports within the future macroregion could and should be envisaged. CEF as well as structural funds financial support would be available for the improvement of the port infrastructure and their link to the road and rail TEN-T. In this context, it is important to recall that many of the ports in the future macroregion are core TEN-T ports: Taranto, Bari, Ancona, Ravenna, Venezia, Trieste, Koper, as well as the Croatian core ports that are yet to be identified. In addition, the Bari - Napoli link and the port of Bari are also part of the Helsinki – Valletta corridor, while Ravenna, Venezia, Trieste and Koper are part of both the Baltic – Adriatic and the Mediterranean corridor.

As it is drafted, the provision in Article 7.2(c) does not limit the period of time over which the socio-economic cost-benefit analysis should be calculated. While there is no official EU standard with regard to the conduct of socio-economic cost-benefit analysis, current practice at both national and EU level takes into account the long term economic and social benefits of infrastructure development.

I hope that these clarifications have addressed the concerns raised by the Senato della Repubblica and look forward to continuing our political dialogue on these important issues.

Yours faithfully,

Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President