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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries

Guidelines for transport in Europe and neighbouring regions

Summary of the Impact Assessment

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Summary of the Impact Assessment

Lead DG: Energy and Transport

Other involved services: DGs External Relations, Enlargement, EuropeAid, Economic and Financial Affairs, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Environment, Justice, Freedom and Security, Regional Policy, Taxation and Customs Union and Secretariat General

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Executive summary

Table of contents

- 1. Procedural issues and conculation of interested parties..... 4
- 1.1. Procedural issues..... 4
- 1.2. Stake-holder consultation..... 4
- 2. Problem definition..... 4
- 2.1. Political framework..... 4
- 2.2. Transport sector..... 5
- 2.2.1. Trans-European transport networks for the EU territory 5
- 2.2.2. Pan-European Corridors and Areas..... 5
- 3. Objectives of the Commission’s proposal..... 6
- 4. Policy options..... 6
- 5. Analysis of impacts and comparing the options 6
- 6. Recommended policy path..... 7

PROCEDURAL ISSUES AND CONSULTATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

1.1. Procedural issues

Transport planning between the EU and in its neighbouring countries needs to be updated to better reflect that changes that have taken place in EU and to meet the needs of the growing trade and transport flows. The enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007 brought major changes both inside and outside of the EU. The aim of the Communication is to respond to those challenges and changes and to develop a framework for transport planning between the EU and its neighbouring countries in a world of growing interdependence. It follows the work of the High Level Group on *the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions*, which was set up by the Commission¹ to look into transport connections between the EU and its neighbouring countries. The Group concluded its work in November 2005 and the chair of the Group, Loyola de Palacio handed the report² for Vice-President Barrot on 7th December 2005.

1.2. Stake-holder consultation

The Commission services organised a two-phase consultation process to integrate the views and concerns of the stakeholders throughout the policy development process. The first phase took place in the beginning of the High Level Group exercise and it aimed at collecting ideas and views from stakeholders on relevant issues to be looked at, on traffic, environmental and other bottlenecks that exist or are likely to emerge in the near future as well as on traffic corridors that are most used by international transport. Some 70 written contributions were received and a public consultation conference was organised in April 2005 with about 300 participants and interventions of almost 20 stakeholders.

The second phase was launched in December 2005 and aimed at collecting the stakeholders' views on the High Level Group's report and recommendations. Almost 100 written contributions were received from a wide range of stakeholders and a public consultation conference was held in March 2006. In this conference, there were ca. 120 participants and again around 20 stakeholders presented their views and suggestions.

Overall, the various stakeholders welcomed the Group's report and its recommendations. Some concern was raised by environmental organisations regarding infrastructure projects and the lack of comprehensive and transparent environmental impact assessment. Workers' organisations stressed the importance of including a social chapter in any future coordination structure and of assessing social impacts of plans and projects.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

2.1. Political framework

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007 meant that the borders of the EU moved towards the east and the south. This created new neighbours for the EU. In a Communication on

¹ Commission Decision C(2004) 3618 of 29 September 2004

² See http://europa.eu.int/comm/ten/transport/external_dimension/index_en.htm

Wider Europe³, the Commission outlined a new framework for relations between the enlarged EU and its surrounding areas. Its aim is to ensure a balanced and sustainable development for both the EU and its neighbours. Regional and intra-regional cooperation is an important component of this policy framework.

The need to better connect the transport networks of the EU with its neighbouring countries, is set as a clear priority in the process of integrating the neighbouring countries into the EU markets and society. This requires compatible and interconnected infrastructure networks as well as harmonised regulatory environments. The above mentioned Communication clearly states that trans-European networks should draw up strategies towards reaching this objective.

2.2. Transport sector

2.2.1. Trans-European transport networks for the EU territory

The enlargement of the EU brought also changes into the transport sector. In 2004, the Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN) were revised and extended to the new Member States, including also Bulgaria and Romania. The new Guidelines revised and modernised the plans drawn up in the 1990's by concentrating investment priorities on 30 major trans-European axes and priority projects.

The priority axes of the TENs serve primarily long-distance and international traffic within the Single Market of the EU27. The Guidelines therefore do not include priority projects⁴ to link the EU with the neighbouring countries despite the high traffic volumes that currently exist on many such connections. These connections are covered in a separate exercise, the Pan-European Corridors and Areas, which follows a different logic and decision-making process.

2.2.2. Pan-European Corridors and Areas

The Pan-European Corridors and Areas⁵ (PEC) were developed during two Ministerial Conferences in Crete (1994) and in Helsinki (1997) with the aim of connecting the EU15 with the then neighbouring countries. The cooperation along the Pan-European Corridors is organised through Memoranda of Understanding, which also establish a Chair and Secretariat for most of the PECs.

Following the 2004 enlargement and the revision of the TEN Guidelines, major parts of the Pan-European Corridors became parts of the TEN network and only small parts remained outside the EU. There are clear pressures from the countries concerned by many of these Corridors to extend them further to better account the changing trade patterns and traffic flows in the region and to change the coordination frameworks set up for the Corridor development.

As described in the main impact assessment document (ch. 2.2.2), the Corridors have been successful in varying degrees and much depends on the particular circumstances of the Corridor. Despite the existing structures, coordination remains weak and the development plans of the Corridors address mainly national bottlenecks, leading to the persistence of

³ COM (2003) 104

⁴ Apart the projects no 12 Nordic Triangle and no 6 Lyon-Trieste-Divaca-Ljubljana-Budapest-Ukrainian border

⁵ See the progress report on http://europa.eu.int/comm/ten/transport/documentation/index_en.htm

unnecessarily lengthy delays particularly at borders. Rail being more affected by these delays, shift from rail to road can also be expected with increasingly detrimental impacts on the environment and traffic safety.

The situation will get worse in the future, as trade and transport between the EU and its neighbours are expected to continue growing rapidly (see trade and traffic forecasts in ch. 2.3 of the main impact assessment document).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL

The overall aim of the Commission's proposal is to facilitate and stimulate trade between the EU and the neighbouring countries through efficient transport connections and extension of the single market to the neighbouring countries. The recommendations made by the High Level Group as well as by the Pan-European Corridor Chairs form a good basis for setting up guidelines for transport infrastructure policy in Europe and neighbouring regions.

4. POLICY OPTIONS

Following the analysis of the problems, the work of the High Level Group and the valuable experience of the Pan-European Corridor Chairs and the contributions of the public consultation process, the following three policy options have been chosen for a more detailed analysis:

- **Continuation of current situation (“do-minimum”)** – The Pan-European Corridors/Areas concept would remain in their current form or slightly extended. The monitoring and implementation of these measures would continue under the existing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). For Turkey and the Caucasus, Traceca would continue to be the basis for cooperation.
- **Loose cooperation structure (extended Memoranda of Understanding)** – The Pan-European Corridors/Areas and the MoUs would be extended geographically and also horizontal measures would be addressed. For Turkey and the Caucasus, Traceca would continue to be the basis for cooperation. For the other regions, an MoU would be proposed.
- **Stronger cooperation structure (international agreement)** – A multilateral agreement would be signed including all the neighbouring countries and the EU. It would cover both infrastructure development and horizontal measures. The agreement would also foresee building on existing regional structures.

5. ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS AND COMPARING THE OPTIONS

The analysis of impacts aims at assessing the consequences of the different policy options regarding multilateral cooperation along the axes. It should be noted that this impact assessment does not aim at analysing the effects of further development of the axes - through infrastructure projects or horizontal measures - as these have not been defined in sufficient detail.

The impacts of the do-minimum scenario and the loose cooperation structure scenario are quite similar as they are both based on MoUs. The development of the axes would continue to be based on national logic neglecting the needs of international movements along the whole axis and setting up master plans for the axes would not be likely. The MoU being a loose form of cooperation, the willingness of the countries concerned to go ahead with an extended MoU is likely to be high and a rather rapid agreement could be expected on the terms of the MoU.

In comparison, the strong cooperation structure scenario would set up a structure, which would allow for a coordination of the implementation of the actions along the transport axes. This structure would allow on the one hand the horizontal measures to be addressed globally, taking into account the need to ensure harmonised rules and interoperable systems across all countries, and on the other hand to build on strong regional implementation which would be needed for the infrastructure projects along the axes. Secretariats would be established as part of the agreement, which would make it possible to monitor the implementation of the measures in a sustainable and coordinated way.

The drawbacks of this policy option are actually a consequence of its strengths. An international agreement typically needs to be ratified by national parliaments, which could prove out to be politically difficult, even impossible in some of the neighbouring countries. Even if successful; this option is also likely to be a lengthy process and if no interim solutions are sought could lead to a standstill in developing the transnational axes.

6. RECOMMENDED POLICY PATH

Given the pros and cons of the different policy options, it is clear that none of them can be singled out as the best option for each region and transport mode. To speed up the overall process and to ensure that the format and content of the cooperation structure meets the needs and expectations of the parties concerned, it is therefore proposed a two-step approach to implement the policy:

1. In the first phase, exploratory talks could be launched with all the neighbouring countries. These talks would aim at assessing the interest and commitment of the countries to strengthen the multilateral coordination frameworks, where these exist, or to put such a framework in place, where these do not exist today. In this phase, eventual interim solutions would also be sought to allow for uninterrupted development of the axes.
2. As a second step, following the outcome of the exploratory talks, recommendations and/or proposals to implement the policy and coordination framework would be made.