

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SEMINAR ON “WIDER EUROPE FOR TRANSPORT”, SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN, 8 JUNE 2004

The Transport Ministers of Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain, together with the Transport Ministers of Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, being among the countries most concerned with the extension of the major Trans-European axes, the European Commission, as well as representatives from Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Sweden and Romania, and in the presence of Mr Costa, Member of the European Parliament, and a representative of the European Investment Bank, met in Santiago de Compostela on 8 June 2004:

RECOGNISING the important role of good transport connections for achieving sustainable economic and social development of the European Union and its neighbour countries in the context of the enlargement and the new geopolitical situation.

EMPHASISING that smooth, safe and secure transport connections and good coordination of investments reinforce and promote international trade and tourism as well as economic cooperation in the context of the globalisation of the world economy.

BUILDING on the successful process to define and promote the Pan-European Transport Corridors and Areas developed in the conferences in Prague 1991, Crete 1994 and Helsinki 1997, which helped to focus financial resources on priority infrastructure investments and optimised the efforts of the countries concerned, and taking further the ongoing exercises such as the definition of priority axes and projects for the Balkans.

RECOGNISING that within the European Union the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) is a legally binding instrument and its Guidelines have been revised in April 2004 following the work of the High Level Group, set-up by Vice President de Palacio, and of the Council in 2003. They cover the enlarged European Union defining major trans-European axes and identifying 30 priority projects on these axes. The countries concerned are firmly committed to these projects which serve primarily long distance and international traffic and will resolve the most pressing problems of congestion on the European Union territory.

DESIRING to promote regional economic cooperation by developing transport infrastructure and services to better connect the major trans-European axes with the countries neighbouring the European Union and beyond and to identify priority projects on these axes.

NOTING that while there are serious difficulties in funding transport investments and reliance on national budgets prevails, innovative funding solutions, such as user charges and public private partnerships, have to be examined.

EMPHASISING the development of bilateral relations with Russia as well as the establishment of the new European Neighbourhood Policy, as laid down in the Commission Communication dated 11th March 2003, aiming at strengthening relations between the EU and its neighbours including the countries of the Mediterranean and of the Black Sea regions and recognising the importance of improved transport connection with the European Union.

A. The following conclusions are drawn:

- Following the decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on 21st April 2004 on the new Community Guidelines for the TEN-T network inside the European Union, the development of technically and administratively interoperable transport connections between the European Union and the neighbouring regions is an issue of utmost importance for economic growth, facilitation of trade and connecting people,
- Following the enlargement of the European Union and building on the previous exercises, such as the Pan-European Corridors, priority connections between major trans-European transport axes and the different neighbouring regions of the European Union should be identified and developed. They should cover especially the following countries and regions: Russia and the Western Newly Independent States, the Balkans, the Mediterranean region, Turkey and the Black Sea region,
- The establishment of a High Level Group by the European Commission is welcomed and the Council of the European Union is invited to nominate representatives to the Group. The European Investment Bank and the non-EU Member States concerned will also be represented in the Group. The Group should submit a report by 15th December 2004 and complete its work in the second half of 2005.

B. The participants express appreciation to the Regional Government of Galicia for the organisation of the seminar.