



TEN–T PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE EXTENSION OF THE MAJOR TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT AXES TO THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND REGIONS T

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Foreword

Nowadays the European transport system is facing a strong imbalance in the management of the traffic flows. Establishing a modern and integrated Trans–European transport network means to ward off the increasing congestion on the traffic lines due to: the lack of interoperability, partial or inexistent links, the need of rebalancing the different transport modes. All these factors not only have a negative impact in terms of quality of life but they also undermine the potential economic growth and the development of the mobility.

After the accession of ten new countries, the EU must face the new challenge of integrating its own transport system together with that of the new neighbouring countries and regions. Therefore, the EU should both strategically plan the network and identify the priorities of the different investment projects with a considerable effort from the financial point of view. That is the reason why the European Commission should firstly allocate 20.35 billion of euros to carry out the priority Trans–European projects and secondly they should raise the co–financing rate for implementing the cross–border sections up to 50% as it is difficult to be created. This allocation should be considered as “a minimum” for ensuring the attractiveness of the investments, particularly for the financial support of private subjects.

The financing should also involve all the stakeholders, from the EU to the local public authorities and companies associations that are concerned by the crossing of the traffic axes, even within the coordination guaranteed by international financial institutions such as the EIB, the EBRD, the World Bank, and others.

The strategic analysis of the network should be based on the following items: corridors, cross border sections, intermodal links. Priority should be given to them since they are links driving from the “centre” to the “outskirts”, whereas “outskirts” should be intended as logistic maritime and/or inland waterway platforms (for example in the North Adriatic and in the South–Eastern Europe) which are crucial for reducing the increasing pressure on the main traffic axes and on the “centre”, even more jammed and blocked.

Finally, there is the need for a new and above all strategically innovative approach that should focus on the intermediate links instead of the big sections of the transport axes. In fact, it often happens that the not use of a specific corridor is due to the lack of short links which are crucial for giving continuity to the whole axe and for making easier the intermodal platform. In this context the relevance of the local actors is evident since they are the only ones able to raise the necessary financial resources for developing these sections which play an essential role in ensuring the whole system functionality while being too small for benefiting from an European or international support and too less profitable for attracting private capital.

There is a last strategic consideration to be made. It is necessary to distinguish between two different kinds of transport axes. On one hand, there are commercial axes, which are essential due to their current traffic volumes or they future growth. They have a high level of profitability and financial sustainability, therefore their construction and development must be dealt with according to market criteria. In this contest, the European Community intervention could consist in providing direct funds to private stakeholders, encouraging instruments like “project financing” or “BOT” (Built, Operate and Transfer). On the other hand, there are corridors with a more political and strategic value than an economic and commercial one. Due to their difficulty to attract private capitals, this second kind of axes would be funded directly by interested Countries, who would finance the entire costs of the infrastructure. Between these two extremes, it is possible to find intermediate cases where public and private sectors have different roles and provide different contribution.

Which are the major axes?

1. What are the main transport axes, including motorways of the sea, connecting the European Union to the neighbouring countries or broader regions today?

The major axes are Corridor n. 5 and the Motorways of the Sea connecting the North Adriatic to the following countries: Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus. All these axes and links are extremely important for connecting the South–Eastern Europe with the EU market.

2. What will these axes be with a time horizon of 2020?

Corridor n. 5 and Motorway of the Sea of South–Western Europe (Western Mediterranean), connecting Spain, France, Italy and including Malta, and linking with the Motorway of the Sea of South-Eastern Europe.

3. What is the balance between the different transport modes?

See the “Piano regionale dei trasporti della Regione Veneto” (Regional Plan for Transport of the Veneto Region) (Regione del Veneto, Assessorato alle Politiche per l’Ambiente e per la Mobilità).

4. What are the current traffic volumes, both passenger and freight, on the proposed axes?

The current external traffic volumes in the area concerned are 35% of the total volume; in 2020 it will be at least 50%.

5. What is the amount and share of international traffic to/from the Union or between the neighbouring regions?

See the “Piano regionale dei trasporti della Regione Veneto” (Regional Plan for Transport of the Veneto Region) (Regione del Veneto, Assessorato alle Politiche per l’Ambiente e per la Mobilità).

6. How will these traffic volumes develop by 2020?

See the “Piano regionale dei trasporti della Regione Veneto” (Regional Plan for Transport of the Veneto Region) (Regione del Veneto, Assessorato alle Politiche per l’Ambiente e per la Mobilità).

7. Are there particularly environmentally sensitive areas that must be taken into account when identifying major axes?

Two areas of major concern in Northern Eastern Italy: the Venice lagoon and the Alps area.

Which investments and how?

1. Which are the most pressing congestion, traffic safety or geographical bottlenecks on the major axes that could justify investments?

- ✓ border between Italy and Slovenia;
- ✓ border between Slovenia and Hungary;
- ✓ missed completion of the railway axe Milan–Padua/Padua–Venice/Venice–Trieste.

2. What kind of improvements (rehabilitation, new construction) to the infrastructure would be needed to remove the bottlenecks?

Priority should be given to the existing infrastructure, by repairing and rehabilitating it. On the basis of the new EU guidelines for the Trans–European Network, it could be useful to establish the role of a “coordinator” or a “*commissario*” (as it was made for the Passante di Mestre, in Italy), who will be able to ensure a continuous dialogue with the local authorities concerned by the crossing of the traffic axes. This is the only way, both to create adequate planning tools for the new transport infrastructures and to ensure a better understanding of the importance these axes have, specially for the areas and territories concerned.

3. What is the time horizon for the realisation of such a project?

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4. What would the economic, environmental and safety benefits of such project be?

The main impact will be produced by an increased level of accessibility in the regions concerned. This point is extremely important as companies will not only benefit from a wider range of suppliers and services, but they could also extend their markets of reference (both in terms of sales and purchase of production goods). At the same time the market enlargement will even concern companies situated in the neighbouring countries and in the EU Member States directly concerned by the areas whereas the impact from the crossing of the transport axes is the greatest one.

5. Are there alternative technical or modal options to remove or alleviate the bottleneck?

See the “Piano regionale dei trasporti della Regione Veneto” (Regional Plan for Transport of the Veneto Region) (Regione del Veneto, Assessorato alle Politiche per l’Ambiente e per la Mobilità).

6. How can the project best be financed? What could be the role for private sector involvement and user charges?

There is a need of a relevant financial support by the European Community, that should be integrated with the one of the main international financial institutions (EIB, EBRD, World Bank). This support should give priority to the projects related to the transport axes that mainly contribute to: the regional development, intelligent transport systems, cross border sections.

Moreover, in the framework of private financings and public/private partnerships, the EIB could establish a special guarantee programme for the long term investments.

In the case of public/private partnerships (even if they can not ensure an important rate of private capital), they have the capacity to call for a grater transparency of costs and a more careful attention by the public authorities in defining their long term transport policy (regulation, infrastructure charging) and in committing themselves in contractual terms for reducing the operational risks.

Every transport network and axe must be conceived in a coordinated and integrated way. To this end, private stakeholders should work together with the public sector, as they have a better knowledge of the construction of infrastructure, while the public administration have more means to collect funds. Moreover, the users of these networks (railways companies, haulers, maritime companies, logistic platforms, etc.) should be involved as third actor, as they are the only ones who really know the real necessities in using the networks and their potential development. To sum up, the construction of the main and the secondary transport axes shall foreseen the participation of the institutions

providing funding, the operators who have the technical capacities to build the infrastructure and the users.

Nevertheless, some points must be made sure, in order for the private actors to intervene: firstly, the timing (of tendering, realization, permit accordance, funding by Governments); secondly, the funding allocation, as these funds are not always compatible to private actors' capacity to intervene and to find the way to finance the work; and finally, the capacity of Governments receiving the funds to have the necessary expertise to use them and to organize the related procedures of tendering, permit accordance, etc.

How to ensure seamless and efficient use of the axes?

1. What are the main technical and administrative bottlenecks on the axes?

- ✓ the lack of a coherent approach to the network development and the incapacity of raising both public and private capitals;
- ✓ a persisting economical distance towards the markets, which could be reduced by improving the physical infrastructures and the institutional framework through harmonised and simplified policies and regulations;
- ✓ the lack of an efficient and fair charging system;
- ✓ the lack of actions encouraging the complementarity between the different transport modes;
- ✓ the lack of actions encouraging the involvement of private sector.

2. Are there problems of interoperability when crossing borders or changing modes?

Serious problems of interoperability between the different transport modes still exist. In this contest it is necessary to conceive common technical standards concerning, for example, electrification and signalling systems, safety and environmental sustainability. According to that, EU directives and/or international agreements like UNECE, CEN, CENELEC or even ETSI agreements could be good points of reference.

3. Is safety or security a major concern along an axis?

Yes, it is. A particular attention should be paid to the development (still inadequate) of adequate information management systems which are directly linked with safety in the field of transport and mainly concern signalling or traffic flows management in difficult climatic or environmental conditions or even in the case of safety related to the carried goods' nature.

4. What could be done to solve the bottlenecks today and with a time horizon of 2020?

There is a need of a framework for decision-making actions related to planning and investment operations. Therefore priorities should be defined for the development of the

network in the EU neighbouring countries and their links with the Trans–European Network. This will also provide guidelines for the elaboration of national transport plans and necessary feasibility studies for the realization of the investment programmes.

Since this streamlining process of the investment actions will not by itself solve all the problems related to the network development, there is consequently a need for establishing and promoting an efficient regulation and management institutional system. It will be crucial both for an effective implementation, management and maintenance of the public supported transport infrastructures, and for the allocation of an adequate level of funds, also functional too the involvement of international actors (like EIB, EBRD, World Bank) and private operators.

5. How can intermodal transport be facilitated?

The intermodal transport could be facilitated by improving (whereas existing) or creating *ex novo* efficient ports-inland waterways-railway links. Particularly, the following actions are suggested:

- ✓ container standardisation;
- ✓ providing innovative services and encouraging the freight integrators;
- ✓ creating *ad hoc* supporting programmes (like Marco Polo) whereas specific financings aiming to ensure the operativity of the port structures (landings, dockings, loading wharfs, etc.) are foreseen;
- ✓ three–year specific grants for the start up operation of the intermodal maritime and inland waterways initiatives.

6. What common market rules should be implemented to facilitate and speed up transport along an axis?

There is a need of working on the following items:

- ✓ a new legislation in the field of concessions;
- ✓ fair competition for all transport modes;
- ✓ common framework concerning infrastructure charging.

7. Which policies or administrative procedures should be better integrated?

There is the need to elaborate a new approach, aiming to:

- ✓ within the road transport, the adoption of a suitable legislation on the following areas: technology, safety, environmental impact, market access, fiscal and social regulation;
- ✓ within the rail transport, the integration of services between the railway companies in the EU Member States and between them and those of the new neighbouring countries, improving by way their capacity in managing their organizational structure and financial asset in a context of fair competition;
- ✓ within the inland waterway transport, the improvement of the new neighbouring countries' capacity in terms of short sea shipping;

- ✓ within the air transport, the adoption of a suitable legislation in the areas of safety, market access, infrastructure organization;
- ✓ within the maritime transport, the adoption of a suitable legislation concerning safety and promotion of the Motorways of the Sea.

8. What could be the role of the private sector?

There is a need for a greater involvement of the private sector in the development and use of the network. In this context, common technical and legal standards, together with the definition of the financial conditions (public/private partnership) should be supported and boosted. Consequently, the creation of companies' consortiums or their temporary association should be promoted, since they could have, thanks to their operational flexibility, the most suitable tools for ensuring a deep involvement of the private operators. Moreover, as shown in the past, these groups have the capacities to raise the necessary level of financial resources by establishing specific regional funds or regional clusters and consortium ("cofidi") for promoting the project financing facilities.



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