

## **Reaction of the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) to the report on extending the TEN-T to neighbouring countries**

With a strategic position in Europe's hinterland, inland ports are part of the comprehensive transport and supply chain. They offer excellent traffic links to the rail, road and waterway networks. State-of-the-art logistics services supported by modern communication and information technology ensure an efficient coordination of all transport combinations. European inland ports are important nodal points and are located along the main corridors and industrial areas in the EU and are an important link in the intermodal and logistic network. The specific advantages of all transport modes can be used and the customers can be provided with optimum combinations.

Therefore, the EFIP welcomes the proposal of the high-level group chaired by Loyola de Palacio who has worked on the development of a report to extend the TEN-T to EU neighbouring countries. It implies a further integration of the networks which is essential in order to have an efficient and sustainable pan-European transport system and to avoid bottlenecks. In terms of transport traffic flows, the EU is not isolated, and it should improve its connections to countries beyond its borders in order to ensure sustained development of exchanges with other important trade partners. The EFIP also welcomes the fact that the Commission consults the stakeholders prior to developing on this subject a Communication to the Council and European Parliament on the way ahead that is planned further this year.

### **Choice of axes**

The EFIP agrees with the recognition by the high-level group that there is a need to better connect the enlarged EU to its 26 neighbouring countries. The infrastructure projects that are being dealt with in this report are in close connection with the Trans-European Networks. This recognition is right and important insofar as it may further support the implementation of the TEN-T which are not complete. This report is an important contribution to increase the pressure on the implementation of pan-European projects. These axes are therefore important ones.

### **Horizontal measures**

The recommendations include a number of infrastructure projects and several simpler measures the aim of which is to address the removal of physical and administrative bottlenecks and to facilitate cooperation and communication between authorities in the different countries (harmonisation of documents and procedures, joint border control stations, etc .)

Further harmonisation is needed and technical and administrative barriers should be removed (this would for instance facilitate one-stop-shop).

Besides, the accent is put on operational and tactical measures which should certainly bring a great contribution in logistic terms.

In the future the exchange of data should play a greater role. Therefore a unified documentation is essential in order to allow a smooth and quick information flow. In this respect, it is important to ensure that the physical transport and data circulation are synchronised in order to accelerate the logistics.

It is important to bear in mind the objectives of the White Paper on transport policy, meaning that the realisation of the main axes should not lead to an increasing market share for road transport but rather to a rebalancing of transport modes.

## Financing

The financing seems always to be a difficult and sensitive issue, sometimes a headache.

Regarding the financing of the main axes, lessons should be learned from the difficulties to finance the existing TEN-T priority projects. Indeed, the EFIP fears that some important Community projects may be put on hold or even abandoned following Council's proposed budget cuts for TENs projects (the Council had proposed an estimated €6 billion in its December 2005 agreement as opposed to the initial proposal of the Commission to have €20.35 billion allocated to the TENs).

The Group correctly stressed the need to study the economic viability and financing mechanisms before the projects should be considered for implementation. It also wants to promote the exchange of best practices to explore the role of public-private partnerships in accelerating the implementation of the projects.

The report emphasises the importance of public-private partnerships and user charging. With regard to possible support to public financing, private financing is certainly an interesting option and should be looked at. The construction of infrastructure is already being made with the support of the private sector but the public entity is an important partner in planning. However, the role of private partners could be enhanced in order to gain time and to respond to market demands when planning infrastructure projects.

The management of infrastructure could be handed over to a private partner, but it is necessary to ensure that the public commitment/involvement remains at an appropriate level in quality and quantity.

Besides, the EFIP supports the idea of having more exchange of best practices and to organise regional workshops as the problematic of financing may be different from regions to regions.

Finally, a recent Green Paper developed by the European Commission as well as a Communication have opened the debate on these kinds of public-private partnerships models. This is a positive move that should be further explored in constant dialogue with all interested parties.

## Agreements

The suggestion to develop agreements and memoranda of understandings could certainly be an option in order to intensify the dialogue between the EU and the neighbouring countries, and to do so in a systematic and coherent/coordinated way.

**EFIP (European Federation of Inland Ports)** was founded in 1994 and is the official voice of 200 inland ports in 18 countries of the EU and Candidate Countries as well as Switzerland and Croatia. Inland ports are contributing actively to attaining and maintaining a long-term sustainable mobility and favouring in particular a more efficient integration of various modes in the transport chain. They are inland load centres offering networking opportunities between different modes such as road, rail and inland shipping, including short-sea shipping in some major inland ports. EFIP is happy to provide you with any further information on its positions and activities via its Secretariat General in Brussels.

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