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ETF comments

*to the final report of the High Level Group,
"Networks for Peace and Development, Extension of the major trans-European transport
axes to the neighbouring countries and regions"*

The European Transport Workers' Federation welcomes the opportunity for consultation on the recently published High Level Group report. The ETF overall position vis-à-vis the TEN-T extension process remains unchanged, as expressed in the previous stage of consultation launched by the High Level Group in April 2005. However, with regards to the present High Level Group report, the ETF will focus its comments on the following specific issues:

- 1) the question of **replacing the existing Memorandums of Understanding with binding Transport Treaties**
- 2) the question of **social impact assessments**
- 3) **ports: selection of ports within the context of definition of Motorways of the Seas**
- 4) **road transport: the question of safe and adequate rest facilities for long-distance drivers**, as integral part of the infrastructure projects

CONTEXT

The ETF considers necessary to once again point out why a social dimension of the extension process is imperative while planning to better connect the EU with its neighbouring regions and countries. The High Level Group considers that interconnecting networks is "essential for sustainable economic growth and the wellbeing of the citizens in this part of the world". Along this line, the High Level Group and the European Commission cannot possibly overlook that **the extension of TEN-T: 1) has played and will continue to play an instrumental role**, as past experience proves, **in speeding up restructuring of major transport sectors; 2) will be accompanied by** so called 'soft measures', partly accounting for **measures meant to prepare transport sectors for liberalisation and privatisation; 3) may sustain or challenge** secondary networks, the connectivity of existing economic / urban centres, the accessibility to rural areas; 4) will therefore have a considerable **impact on labour and on population** at large, either directly – e.g. the job-loss in the railway sector – or indirectly – e.g. the decline in the welfare of communities depending on port-activity, for those ports that fail to be part of the EU sphere of interest.

With regards to the above mentioned, the European Commission must take into account that none of the neighbouring countries / regions enjoys the climate of economic, social and even political stability that the EU Member States boast with. On the contrary, the former are engaged in an overwhelming transition process and currently experience economic drawbacks, social and even political instability. They confront with high, long-term, unemployment rates; high poverty levels; weakened social protection systems; deeply rooted informal economy. Will therefore the extended transport axes 'cluster' or distribute wealth? Will this policy lead to greater regional disparities, lack of cohesion, creation of poverty pockets, and ultimately to economic migration – intraregional or to the European Union? The ETF considers that it will be the social dimension of this policy to decisively incline the balance towards COHESION – which is one of the EU policy objectives.

***The ETF therefore strongly recommends** to the European Commission to include in its future Communication – as well as in all other official documents to follow – a clear social*



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dimension to the TEN-T extension process. **The ETF further recommends** that EU policies applied in the neighbouring countries and regions ARE CONSISTENT with the policies applied by the EU within its own borders. For example, while within the European Union the Community acquis is implemented as a whole and in a coherent manner, with instruments that foster this approach, the tendency with the EU neighbouring countries is to put pressure for the implementation of sectoral acquis – energy and transport being the most relevant examples - while the most needed social acquis is completely neglected. The selection of ports provides another – striking – example of inconsistency, but the ETF will further develop on that under point (3) of the present document.

1. Replacing the existing Memorandums of Understanding with binding Transport Treaties

A transport treaty will set up a legal frame for the implementation of Community acquis on transport and competition. This will accelerate – and make mandatory – the restructuring process in transport, will force the shift from domestic to regional transport policy priorities and will ultimately deepen the impact on labour, even beyond transport, as most of the countries concerned are still locked into the central-planned economic model and re-organising networks may threaten the very way domestic economies are organised. It is therefore imperative that any treaty concluded between in EU and its neighbouring countries will contain a clearly defined social pillar which to ensure that the market opening process is carried out in a socially and labour-minded climate. **The treaties should therefore explicitly:**

- A. **enforce** implementation and compliance with **the Community social acquis**
- B. **enforce social dialogue, consultation and information of social partners** throughout the process of development and implementation of the extended TEN-T
- C. **stipulate trade union representation in the institutional frame to monitor the treaty implementation**
- D. **lay down the obligation of signatory parties to harmonise transport policies with national employment policies**, to ensure that redundant workforce is re-absorbed into the labour market rather than forced into poverty, informal economy and economic migration
- E. **stipulate EU assistance and resources aimed to enable the EU neighbouring countries to deal with social / labour consequences** of the TEN-T extension process
- F. **with respect to privatisation**, guarantee that privatisation is resorted to ONLY as part of an overall sector strategy, developed in cooperation with the social partners; guarantee compliance with collective agreements, working conditions and compliance with the fundamental trade union rights; guarantee job security.

The ETF thus strongly recommends to the European Commission to include in its Communication – as well as in all other official documents to follow – the specific requirement that any binding document on the implementation of regional transport networks: 1) will be drafted in consultation with the social partners and particularly with the transport unions; 2) will contain a social chapter to include all above mentioned points.

2. Social impact assessments

The ETF WELCOMES the fact that a socio-economic impact assessment is recommended by the High Level Group as part of the future analysis of proposed projects. However, the approach seems to be based on labour productivity and its share in regional economic output. The report fails to make any clear reference to aspects linked to employment / unemployment, impact on jobs and working conditions, quality of life, migration, etc. The report equally fails to recommend for **SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS** to be mainstreamed throughout the strategic planning and the practical implementation of the extended TEN-T. The ETF insists once again that is the right approach, for the reasons exposed above, in the introductory note (see 'CONTEXT').

The ETF thus strongly recommends to the European Commission to include in its Communication – as well as in all other official documents to follow – clear



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recommendations that **social impact assessments**: 1) **will precede** the actual planning and implementation of the extension process – in this context, for example, most valuable and appreciated would be an evaluation of social and labour consequences of the process of selection of ports; 2) **will precede** any plans for restructuring of national transport public companies / sectors; 3) **will be supported with EU funding**, in the same way as the extension process benefits by EU financial support. Last but not least, assessments should be extended to sectors that may be indirectly affected by collapse of domestic networks.

3. Ports: selection of ports in the context of definition of the Motorways of the Seas

Selection of ports, whether or not in the context of definition of the Motorways of the Seas, is unacceptable. The ETF points out that such an approach would never be accepted within the European Union. The ETF further brings to the attention of the European Commission that policies that are not applicable within the EU should not be experimented outside the EU borders, particularly in countries and regions which, unlike the EU Member States, are confronted with economic, social and even political instability. Having designated ports implies: 1) giving a clear signal of where investment should go; 2) condemning unselected ports to irreversible decline; 3) indirectly, sparking off the socio-economic decline of entire regions that depend on port activities. More than an enumeration of individual ports, the ETF expects from the European Commission THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF MOTORWAYS OF THE SEAS: it should be applicable to all ports that provide for an agreed standard of service in predetermined conditions.

The ETF strongly recommends to the European Commission to drop the port-selection approach. The neighbouring countries are not prepared to deal with the consequences associated to this policy, neither are they prepared to measure, prevent and absorb its socio-economic impact. However, in the long run, and subsequent to the definition of the Motorways of the Seas concept, the European Commission and the EU neighbouring countries should engage in a thorough analysis on the impact of the concept on ports, as well as the impact on: 1) cohesion and regional development; 2) employment; 3) port-dependant communities. Social partners should be involved in the exercise and all ports should be covered.

4. Road transport: the question of safe and adequate rest facilities for long-distance drivers

The High Level Group report fails to explicitly include safe and adequate rest facilities for long-distance drivers within the road safety measures. The ETF has already stressed with the occasion of the last year's consultation on the TEN-T extension towards East that Eastern Europe consists of vast, relatively low-populated areas. Having in view the considerable length of the future main axes frequent rest sites will be instrumental in keeping down the rate of traffic accidents and in reducing the stress that long-distance drivers have to put up with, stress caused by physical barriers such as security, long border crossing procedures, etc. Safe and adequate rest facilities will reduce the risk of robbery and violence against drivers and will substantially contribute to improved safety and security of the driver, freight, passengers and transport operations.

The ETF strongly recommends to the European Commission to explicitly include safe and adequate rest facilities as integral part of the extended major transport axes.

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