



Motorways of the sea

Regular, high-capacity ferry routes between key ports in the EU have the potential to improve the efficiency and reliability of freight transport, providing viable alternatives for congested land routes on roads. In particular, motorways of the sea will help bypass the bottlenecks created by such geographical features as mountain ranges.

What is the axis?

Four motorways of the sea corridors have been identified for support across the EU. On these corridors, projects will help to concentrate flows of freight on sea routes, with the aim of reducing road congestion and/or improving access to peripheral and island regions and Member States. The network will include facilities and infrastructure concerning at least two ports in two different Member States, primarily of use for freight transport, although motorways of the sea should not exclude combined transport of persons and goods.

The projects may also include activities with wider benefits not linked to specific ports, such as ice breaking, dredging, information systems. However, such projects have to demonstrate that they relate to the network and fulfil the general objectives of motorways of the sea: modal shift and/or cohesion.

The types of project which may receive Community support are as follows:

- infrastructures: port infrastructures, infrastructures for direct land-sea access, inland waterway and canal infrastructures; and
- facilities: electronic logistics management systems, safety, security, administrative and customs facilities, facilities for ice-breaking and dredging operations.

What are its expected benefits?

Motorways of the sea projects will contribute to modal shift and/or cohesion. Whilst the effects of a given project must be measured in the context of that corridor, and therefore no overall objectives for the EU have been set, the effects of a given project should be substantial.

In respect of modal shift, the benefits should be evaluated against the proportion of road freight in a given corridor to be shifted by 2010. That shift should amount at least to the expected average annual increase of road freight. The types of goods targeted (e.g. dangerous goods) should also be taken into account.

Motorways of the sea will bring benefits in economic and social cohesion to the countries concerned, in terms of accessibility, reduction in transport cost and time, distribution and production, improvement of quality, creation of employment and access to new markets are of particular importance.

What is its current status?

Four corridors have been agreed, on which motorways of the sea projects will be implemented up to 2010:

- **motorway of the Baltic Sea** (linking the Baltic Sea Member States with Member States in central and western Europe, including the route through the North Sea/Baltic Sea canal);
- **motorway of the sea of western Europe** (leading from Portugal and Spain via the Atlantic Arc to the North Sea and the Irish Sea);
- **motorway of the sea of south-east Europe** (connecting the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus);
- **motorway of the sea of south-west Europe** (western Mediterranean, connecting Spain, France, Italy and including Malta and linking with the motorway of the sea of south-east Europe and including links to the Black Sea).

By early 2007, the Commission will draw up an initial list of specific projects of common interest, making the concept of the motorways of the sea more concrete.

