

Consultation on the Revision of Decision 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 July of Community Guidelines on the Development of the Trans-European Transport Network

Position on behalf of the European Intermodal Association EIA

The EIA views the inadequate transport infrastructure in EU countries with considerable alarm. Even in the currently depressed economy with declining traffic flows there are perilous bottlenecks. In particular cross-border links, the connecting links of the European integration process, leave much to be desired. With a pickup in the economy it will probably be the inadequate transport infrastructure that prevents Europe from achieving in the foreseeable future the goal staked out in Lisbon: to become the world's most powerful economic zone.

We consider therefore the report of the High level group under the chairmanship of Vice President Karel van Miert as a new impetus to go beyond the actual position of infrastructure policy in EU, particularly in the light of the eastward enlargement of the Union, now immediately impending. This fundamental change makes it necessary to combine together the trans-European networks of the 15 EU countries with the pan-European corridors and to set up a unitary Europe-wide transport network of the 25 EU countries linked up to neighbouring countries.

The report now published continues the well-known European minded approach of Karel van Miert. It is to be welcomed that it is based on the concept of corridors. This is what Europe now needs. The inclusion of peripheral zones and seagoing options round out the altogether balanced report. The fact that the western Balkans and links going beyond the borders of the 25 EU countries, as contained in the pan-European corridors, are missing from the description is something to be regretted. On the other hand, the design of the pan-European corridors has been specifically mentioned as exemplary.

Nonetheless, EIA fears that enthusiasm could be held back or even completely eliminated by certain institutional problems and the counter tendencies they facilitate. On the one hand, the Commission will see itself prevented by the subsidiarity principle from taking substantive action to complete the projects on its own responsibility. On the other hand, the governmental budgets of all member states are currently under considerable pressure so that it is precisely the internationally significant projects that frequently will have to step back in favour of national interests, held realistically or supposedly or perhaps merely for tactical reasons to be more important. The reference to the principle of subsidiarity will make it easier for governments to evade their European responsibilities.

EIA appeals to parliaments and governments in the member countries to make all efforts to produce and strengthen the required infrastructure. At the present stage of integration, this can certainly not be brought about by restricting the principle of subsidiarity (the idea of the European infrastructure agency). The only way remaining is thus binding international agreements with financial and temporal stipulations on carrying out the work, as this report also presents them.

Other aspects of the report too meet up with basic consensus from professionals, as for instance:

- The effort to gradually develop a rail-bound freight transport network largely separate from passenger traffic,
- The proposal to provide additional EU funds for TEN in the years 2007-2013,
- To raise the EU portion from 10% to at least 20% for cross-border projects,
- To build up highly developed financial engineering for TEN investment opportunities such as guarantee mechanisms, risk funds on a mutual basis, PPP, etc (perhaps even defiscalisation methods could be added),
- To develop common evaluation methods for projects and to mark off particularly convincing projects as "priority projects" and to promote them.

The limitation to projects of more than €500m appears illuminating especially since in the infrastructure area such a sum is quickly attained. Practical experience, particularly in pan-European corridors, has however shown that another one of the report's proposals could produce a much stronger effect: **Coordination of European projects must be institutionalised and entrusted to recognised personalities.** And at first a single main axis should be chosen where a concentration of resources could in a short period of time set an "example" for the type of success a coordinated approach can produce in the operational area. All professionals know that even before deploying immense financial resources only with political will power and good organisation can drastic improvements be achieved. In doing so, **all options of intermodal cooperation should be considered, particularly with the right links, border crossings, terminals, etc.**

EIA explicitly supports the orientation and urgency of Karel van Miert's report presented by Vice President de Palacio and demands consistency by all of Europe's political decision makers in creating a European transport infrastructure. It considers it an encouraging sign that the Italian government even prior to acceding to the EU presidency cited improvement of the infrastructure as a priority and proposed contributing an amount of €70bn for this purpose. We feel that with an intelligent approach as urged in the report and as can still be defined in detail in further consultations with member states and the transport industry as well, a great step forward towards the common goal can be taken with this amount. EIA declares its willingness to assume a constructive role in this process while avoiding short-sighted sector selfishness and taking responsibility for the global economy's good.

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