



Committee of the Regions

COTER-IV-004

**68th Plenary Session
13 and 14 February 2007**

**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on the
MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S 2001
TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- considers as the primary objective of the European Transport Policy is to lay the foundations for effective and sustainable trans-European transport. This involves focusing on the weak points of the TEN-T network at cross-border level, above all by improving the situation in border zones, vestiges of the Iron Curtain that divided Europe, as well as the borders of the current EU27 with the candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey), and EU borders with neighbouring states and regions, such as the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the transport node of the Straits of Gibraltar
- would also like to emphasise that the objectives of the European Transport Policy should primarily be achieved through the creation of a legal and an institutional framework that would enable various stakeholders (market players, etc.) to operate with parity in the transport sector. Regulation and intervention from public funds must be accepted only where necessary due to the failure of the market and must be bearable for the budgets of the Member States, regions and cities
- considers it a matter of priority to rebalance the modal distribution of land transport, avoiding the concentration of traffic flows almost exclusively on Europe's roads. At the same time, the Committee considers it necessary to deploy strategies to promote intermodality and multimodality in such a way as to ensure the overall efficiency of transport systems.

Reference document

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

Having regard to the White Paper on European transport policy issued in 2001, which established the broad outlines of this policy up to 2010 and also provided for a mid-term review of its implementation in 2006, and to the Communication on Freight Transport Logistics in Europe - The key to sustainable mobility (COM(2006) 336 final);

Having regard to the decision of the Bureau of 25 April 2006 to instruct the COTER Commission to draw up an opinion on this subject;

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 22 June 2006: *Keep Europe moving - Sustainable mobility for our continent: Mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 Transport White Paper*;

Having regard to its previous opinions, in particular – *White Paper European Transport Policy for 2010: time to decide* (CdR 54/2001 fin)¹; *TEN-T corridors: lever for growth and instrument for EU cohesion* (CdR 291/2003 fin)²; *Low cost companies and regional development* (CdR 63/2004 fin)³; *Community guidelines on financing of airports and start-up aid to airlines departing from regional airports* (CdR 76/2005 fin); *Safety of all modes of transport, including the issue of financing* (CdR 209/2005 fin); *Third package of legislative measures in favour of maritime safety* (CdR 43/2006 fin);

Having regard to its draft opinion (CdR 119/2006 rev. 2) adopted on 11 December 2006 by its Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (rapporteur: **Mr Jan Zahradník (EPP/CZ)** (President of the Regional Council of South Bohemia (Hejtman Jihočeského kraje));

adopted the following opinion at its 68th plenary session, held on 13-14 February 2007 (meeting of 14 February):

Having regard to

- 1) the outcome of the public consultations conducted by the Commission in connection with the Mid-term review of the White paper on European transport policy;
- 2) the observations submitted by the representatives of Europe's regions and cities in these public consultations;

¹ OJ C 192 of 12.8.2002, p. 8.

² OJ C 109 of 30.4.2004, p. 10.

³ OJ C 318 of 22.12.2004, p. 7.

- 3) worldwide developments, progress in European integration and the growth of the European transport sector over the last five years, which has been characterised by a number of new aspects, in particular:

European Union enlargement in 2004 and 2007, in which:

- twelve new Member States joined the European Union and increased its geographical area by approximately 1 100 000 km² (36% of the area of the EU15);
- the transport infrastructure of the new Member States was, and continues to be, of an incomparably lower standard than in the EU15;
- the establishment of the internal market in these Member States has led to a soaring rise in the volume of traffic, particularly in the road haulage;
- the transport networks in the new Member States are not ready to cope with these new conditions, particularly in cross-border regions, regions surrounding large conurbations and in industrial heartlands.

The renewed Lisbon Strategy,

- which acknowledges that GDP growth has not reached the levels anticipated;
- which attaches particular importance to the development of the transport sector as a key vector for economic growth;
- which views the EU's transport policy as a determining factor for supporting the competitiveness of the EU;
- which continues to treat mobility as a key objective of the EU's transport policy.

Insufficient funding,

- where the level of expenditure on transport infrastructure in all EU Member States has fallen below 1% of GDP and the 2007-2013 financial perspective allocates funds of EUR 8 billion to the sector (despite the Commission's estimated requirement of at least EUR 20 billion);
- where the 30 priority TEN-T projects alone require an estimated EUR 250 billion (0.16% of Europe's GDP) and the implementation of all European projects requires a further EUR 600 billion.

The globalisation of the world economy,

- which is marked by a growth in trade between Europe and Asian markets in particular and has led to new requirements in terms of capacity, orientation, compatibility, and the modal structure of the European transport network;
- where only the air and sea transport sectors are truly global.

The risk of terrorism,

- where the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and London have demonstrated the vulnerability of transport systems, whose security and reliability are under threat.

And having regard to the interests of Europe's regions and cities in the light of familiar facts, especially that:

- their integration into the trans-European transport system and the TEN-T network is a vital precondition for taking full advantage of the free market and will have a direct impact on their competitiveness and economic performance;
- the development of transport infrastructures facilitates trade, which is a driver of economic growth, contributes to territorial cohesion and enables the construction of a Europe that is close to its citizens and their municipalities;
- the only effective way of interconnecting the enlarged EU and improving territorial cohesion is to supply the missing links and remove the obstacles hampering the main axes of the trans-European TEN-T network, to extend the main corridors of this network to neighbouring countries and regions and to tackle existing weaknesses in cross-border regions;
- although this is trans-European transport, its positive and negative impact can also be felt at local and regional level since it is closely connected to regional development and urban planning;
- conversely, regional and urban transport is responsible for a significant proportion of all adverse effects of transport, such as CO₂ emissions, noise pollution and losses due to the rate of accidents;
- regional and local authorities hold a direct remit for establishing and developing regional and urban transport systems, creating the conditions for their more effective operation, and improving their safety and reliability;
- a joint approach at all levels, from the EU institutions to local government, and one which is founded on the principle of effective subsidiarity, cooperation, the pooling of information and appropriate economic stimulus programmes, can lead to improvements in urban and regional transport.

1. General observations

- 1.1 The Committee of the Regions shares the Commission's view that mobility must lie at the heart of the key objectives of both EU transport policy and the renewed Lisbon Strategy, through the development of efficient, safe, sustainable and reliable forms of transport, with a particular emphasis on co-modality.
- 1.2 The Committee of the Regions notes that transport is part of the bedrock of the European integration process, namely the freedom of movement of persons and goods. It is also closely related to the EU's intended development path, namely economic growth. It therefore goes against the idea of European integration to contemplate regulating this sector through unsystematic restrictions and limitations, because there are no simple solutions here. Instead

new legislative measures must be adopted to liberalise differentially the various branches of the transport sector in accord with local and regional conditions harmonise the conditions applicable to the different modes of transport and promote their interoperability and cooperation.

1.3 In the view of the Committee of the Regions, **the primary objective of the European Transport Policy** is to lay the foundations for effective and sustainable trans-European transport. This involves:

- developing an unregulated transport market,
- developing a homogeneous trans-European transport network (TEN-T),
- completing missing links and removing obstacles hampering the main trans-European transport networks TEN-T,
- connecting the main axes of this network to those of neighbouring countries and regions, which will encourage territorial cohesion, even in peripheral regions at the EU's borders,
- focusing on the weak points of the TEN-T network at cross-border level, above all by improving the situation in border zones, vestiges of the Iron Curtain that divided Europe, as well as the borders of the current EU27 with the candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey), and EU borders with neighbouring states and regions, such as the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the transport node of the Straits of Gibraltar
- ensuring that regions and cities enjoy widespread and easy access to trans-European transport networks, thus increasing territorial cohesion,
- boosting trans-European networks and develop major infrastructures that will improve connections between (at least) the most populated regions of each Member State and the rest of the EU, with the aim of fully developing the internal market and raising awareness of Europe.
- making effective use of all available transport modes in trans-European networks in order to fully exploit the capacity, interoperability and synergies of existing infrastructure,
- building new infrastructures for trans-European transport in those areas where existing facilities, though meeting the above condition, are inadequate, so as to resolve problems in congested areas,
- removing physical, technical and organisational barriers which prevent the maximum flow of goods and people, or their transport between Member States,
- meeting the demands of trans-continental transport as effectively as possible by taking into account the current expanse of the EU and geographical distribution of all its Member States,
- organising transport in an effective manner, allocation of capacities in sensitive areas (sensitive regions) through market based instruments, such as trade in transit rights,

1.4 The Committee of the Regions believes that the EU Transport Policy also has a secondary role: to adopt a joint approach for resolving problems that would be addressed less effectively

at the level of the individual Member State, region or city, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, in particular by:

- softening the impact that transport has on the natural environment, e.g. by honouring commitments made under the Kyoto protocol on CO₂ emissions,
- ensuring the energy sustainability of transport and using alternative sources of energy, including biofuels,
- raising safety standards, and reducing the risk of road transport accidents,
- promoting innovative approaches in the transport sector,
- allowing the EU as a whole, and thus each Member State, to adapt to changes on the global transport market.

1.5 The Committee of the Regions would also like to emphasise that the objectives of the European Transport Policy should primarily be achieved through the creation of a legal and an institutional framework that would enable various stakeholders (market players, etc.) to operate with parity in the transport sector. Regulation and intervention from public funds must be accepted only where necessary due to the failure of the market and must be bearable for the budgets of the Member States, regions and cities.

1.6 Taking into account the findings of the 2001 White Paper, the Committee of the Regions believes that in order to achieve the objectives of the European transport policy, it is necessary that:

- the future instruments of the European transport policy have a clearly defined structure that reflects the above priorities,
- the package of instruments and measures established in line with these priorities be structured in accordance with the principle of true subsidiarity to create coherent sets specific to each level of public administration, i.e. based on their powers or responsibility,
- sufficient financial resources be allocated for the implementation of these instruments and measures, and at all levels where transport has an impact on the EU's economic performance and its citizens' quality of life.

1.7 The Committee considers it essential that the necessary means be made available to enable regional government to participate in the drafting of European transport policy. The mid-term review of the White Paper does not clearly define the role to be played by the regions in this context.

1.8 The Committee of the Regions believes that in its present form the Mid-term review of the White Paper does not identify plainly enough any clear priorities for each proposed initiative and is concerned that the document could prove to be less effective as a result. It therefore recommends reordering the list of actions (Work Book – Selection of Main Actions) by presenting them not in chronological order but in the order of priority of the various objectives and the relevant areas of responsibility, in accordance with the principle of

subsidiarity. The Committee of the Regions considers that coordinators must be appointed who have responsibility for particular actions. It also believes that the objective of these initiatives lies not in the publication of a document but in the real changes that its rigorous implementation would lead to.

- 1.9 Furthermore, the Committee of the Regions calls for examination of whether the same results could be obtained through the application of market mechanisms in the transport sector before adopting any more regulations or any more action on the part of the public authorities.
- 1.10 In the light of the above points, the Committee of the Regions proposes that the 2006 White Paper include the subheading *Time to Act* to echo that of the 2001 White Paper *Time to Change*. The only method of ensuring that these results will be achieved is to systematically transpose the decisions adopted at European level into the transport policies of the individual Member States and, in turn, of the regional and city administrations until they have been effectively implemented.

2. **Land transport**

- 2.1 The Committee of the Regions considers it a matter of priority to rebalance the modal distribution of land transport, avoiding the concentration of traffic flows almost exclusively on Europe's roads. At the same time, the Committee considers it necessary to deploy strategies to promote intermodality and multimodality in such a way as to ensure the overall efficiency of transport systems.
- 2.2 The Committee of the Regions particularly welcomes the Commission's proposal to step up efforts to remove the technical and operational obstacles hampering international rail transport as well as to support positive, effective unification and standardisation of rolling stock;
- 2.3 Furthermore, the Committee of the Regions believes that to increase the competitiveness of rail transport vis-à-vis land transport and to ensure it takes its fair share of the global volume of traffic, it is particularly necessary to harmonise the conditions governing the rail and land transport sectors, as outlined in the 2001 White Paper.
- 2.4 Experience shows that the process of liberalisation has a significant impact on the legal relationship between the rail operator and its clients, suppliers, service users and staff, as well as on ownership. The Committee of the Regions therefore recommends working out of an assessment of the impact of liberalisation measures already taken in certain member states and drafting a common approach at European level for liberalising individual rail operators, based on the experiences of certain Member States. It also recommends introducing a minimum legal framework for ensuring an appropriate and balanced protection of the rights of all stakeholders affected by liberalisation of the network based transport sector (transport

providers, users and regulators, or public administrative or monitoring bodies and employees).

- 2.5 The Committee of the Regions notes that land transport continues to play a vital role for cities and regions and that for many regions it constitutes the sole means of ensuring accessibility and mobility. Intermodal links are especially important for the optimisation of the overall transport system.
- 2.6 Against the current background of cut-backs in public investment, the Committee considers that it is right to promote the high-speed rail routes included in TEN-T as priority projects. But high-speed rail links complementary to TEN-T also deserve support. Efforts should therefore be made to identify and develop high-speed rail projects which, although not included in TEN-T, are parallel and complementary sustainable transport projects and which should therefore be considered for EU financing.
- 2.7 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the European Commission's proposal for intelligent payment systems for the use of infrastructure and also its ideas on the allocation of capacity in conurbations and sensitive regions by means of market-based instruments, such as trade in transit rights.
- 2.8 Although the initiatives set out in the White Paper to promote more sustainable modes of transport, such as rail and maritime transport, should be firmly supported, it also has to be recognised that many regions do not have suitable rail or maritime transport infrastructure. In this case, a shift of road transport towards environmentally more sustainable modes would require significant investment in such infrastructure.

3. **Air transport**

- 3.1 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the new surge in the development of regional airports and low-budget airlines which has made air transport more affordable for passengers in recent years, thereby providing them with a viable alternative to long-distance land transport. At the same time, however, the negative side effects of this trend must not be forgotten.
- 3.2 In line with its previous opinions, the Committee of the Regions wishes to stress the importance of regional airports for regional development and territorial cohesion (establishing links between regions, increasing mobility, taking advantage of the benefits of free circulation, economic development, the rehabilitation of peripheral and less developed regions). It therefore welcomes the Commission's initiative to create conditions allowing the further development of air transport in the inter-regional air transport market.
- 3.3 Equally, the Committee of the Regions reiterates its earlier calls to strike a balance between the need for transparency and admissibility regarding state aid and the ability of local and

regional authorities to finance regional airports and develop new routes allowing them to link their regions with the rest of the European market.

- 3.4 In the light of the special situation of the outermost regions, in which maritime and air transport are their only link with the rest of the European Union and the world, they should be allowed necessary exemptions from any measures to combat the impact of the air and maritime transport sectors on climate change. These regions' emissions of greenhouse gases are less than 0.5% of the EU total for these sectors and they in no way threaten to compromise the international agreements entered into by the European Union in this field.

4. **Waterborne transport**

- 4.1 The Committee of the Regions warmly welcomes the Commission's recommendations to continue developing short sea shipping and "motorways of the sea" as an alternative to land transport. It draws attention to the fact that it has previously urged that:
- 4.2 the operational programmes for 2007-2013 provide for implementing projects supporting maritime transport (combating pollution, ensuring safe transport, managing the infrastructure of waterways);
- 4.3 greater efforts be made to increase capacity and develop infrastructure allowing land access to port facilities, the construction of logistics distribution networks, with a particular emphasis on port infrastructures in island areas;
- 4.4 the EU's island areas be connected to the "motorways of the sea" system in order to improve their access to the single market.
- 4.5 Furthermore, the Committee of the Regions welcomes the Commission's proposal to develop a common European maritime space, to assist the development of the single market in this area.
- 4.6 The Committee of the Regions also welcomes the legislative measures planned for ports and expresses an interest in taking part in the discussions ahead of their drafting. Moreover, it wishes to stress the importance of the links between ports and the towns or regions where they are located.
- 4.7 The Committee of the Regions gives its backing to cities and regions with important maritime ports that wish to connect their land transport infrastructure to the TEN-T networks and integrate the "landbridges" or transcontinental long-distance land transport routes.
- 4.8 Moreover, the Committee of the Regions notes that inland shipping has long been underrated as an alternative to land transport and welcomes the Commission's proposal to create a programme supporting its development. Equally, with regard to the Commission's call for

improved coordination between the various EU policies (transport policy, energy and environmental policy), the Committee of the Regions points to a fundamental conflict which often exists in the approach to building internal waterways. Thus the requirement to build waterways and develop inland shipping as a viable alternative to land transport is often compromised by the impossibility of implementing these measures due to regulations based on the excessive application of environmental restrictions.

- 4.9 The Committee believes that the measures to be pursued regarding motorways of the sea should include a sound analysis of the impact on existing port systems and should define the ways in which any such negative impact would be remedied, setting out how discriminate aid will be determined in order to resolve the various remoteness and insularity issues that will arise.
- 4.10 The Committee believes that future regulations governing the development of aid for motorways of the sea should formally involve the regions.

5. **Urban and regional transport systems**

- 5.1 The Committee of the Regions notes that the principle to apply in urban transport more than anywhere else is that the best transport is no transport at all. This is not about measures for the transport sector alone but also legislation for town planning and regional development, as well as housing policy. This is all the more true in the case of the new Member States, where there is often a need to implement instruments that enable people to move house for work-related reasons, to liberalise the housing market, etc.
- 5.2 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the Commission's proposal to draft a Green Paper on Urban Transport and, in its capacity as a representative of Europe's cities and regions, it declares its willingness to take part in discussions with stakeholders prior to its adoption.
- 5.3 At the same time, it notes that the greater the extent to which urban and regional transport systems meet local needs, the more effective they are. Accordingly, unlike trans-European transport, it is very difficult to envisage every possible EU action or standardisation in this particular field. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the EU's role should primarily involve sharing know-how and creating a programme for the transfer and implementation of tried and tested methods or for the screening of innovative approaches (transport organisation, intelligent systems, environmentally friendly and energy efficient fuels, mobility as a condition for regional development etc.).
- 5.4 In view of the fact that transport problems are particularly concentrated in large towns, conurbations and peri-urban areas, and that the large-scale urbanisation of these zones makes building and modernisation of transport infrastructure very expensive, close attention should be given at all levels to the development of this infrastructure and equipping it with modern technology, including support of infrastructure that is not part of the TEN-T network as such.

It is important to encourage clean urban transport systems in order to help reduce the pollution levels suffered by our cities, and thus improve the quality of life of their inhabitants. The Committee of the Regions recommends that the Commission also includes these factors in its analysis when drafting the Green Paper on urban transport.

- 5.5 The Committee of the Regions requests that the Commission put particular emphasis on transport in urban areas and that it duly check whether careful attention is paid to urban transport and allocation of adequate financial resources in each operational programme for 2007-2013. The Committee of the Regions points out that urban transport is as important as the trans-European transport network, as most transport routes begin and end in towns and so it is towns themselves that are the worst bottlenecks. High quality urban transport is therefore a prerequisite for EU competitiveness and consequently for the whole Lisbon Strategy, in terms of the mobility of both goods and labour.
- 5.6 The Committee of the Regions believes that in order to reduce the congestion of access routes into major cities, large interchanges should be developed on the edges of cities, with sufficient parking spaces ("park and ride") to enable people driving into the city to park their vehicles and then take public transport, without any significant increase in journey time.

6. **Optimising infrastructure and network accessibility**

- 6.1 In the interest of ensuring sustainable trans-European transport, the Committee of the Regions believes that the most pressing task, along with completing the TEN-T European transport network and building new infrastructure, is to make it easier to tap unused capacity in the existing infrastructure to the full.
- 6.2 The Committee of the Regions warmly welcomes the fact that the Commission considers the need to reduce congestion and improve transport accessibility to be a priority task. In its opinion, this is a necessary pre-condition for taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by the freedom of movement, and for achieving greater territorial cohesion.
- 6.3 Nonetheless, the Committee of the Regions does not agree with the Commission's findings that Europe has a dense transport network with a generally high quality infrastructure. The Committee of the Regions wishes to draw attention to the differences between the transport infrastructures of EU15 and EU10 countries. At the same time, it notes that, owing to the upsurge in transport in the new Member States following the EU's enlargement in 2004, the state of their network is constantly deteriorating, causing the gap between the EU15 and the EU10 to widen even more. For this reason, the Committee of the Regions also recommends carrying out a detailed and rigorous assessment of the transport infrastructure of the EU27 as part of the work on the mid-term review of the White Paper, so as to provide the EU institutions with a better basis for taking decisions in this field.

- 6.4 The Committee of the Regions also warns of the possibility of new bottlenecks forming on the main transport axes in border zones and isolated peripheral regions located at the EU's new external borders. For this reason, it is very important to complete the process of revamping the TEN-T networks, which proposes expanding these systems to encompass the EU's neighbouring countries and regions.
- 6.5 The Committee of the Regions also firmly supports regional projects focusing on the development of transport infrastructure, in particular those with a cross-border dimension, and calls on the Commission to continue to grant them favourable conditions through programmes that are eligible for funding under cohesion policy for 2007-2013 and inter-regional cooperation programmes.
- 6.6 The Committee of the Regions also encourages the Commission to use financial support instruments (TEN-T budget, EIB, EBRD, PPP etc.) and institutional instruments (European coordinator) to create a support programme for the rapid elimination of cross-border bottlenecks and the completion of missing links as part of the 30 priority EU TEN-T projects identified in 2004 as well as those which may subsequently have been identified as necessary, in order to ensure the uniform nature of the TEN-T networks. Transport policies dealing with this issue at national level have long proven to be ineffective, which has had a particularly adverse effect on regional development, territorial cohesion and the ability to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the freedom of movement and cross-border cooperation. Moreover, funding mechanisms should be provided for other projects which complement TEN-T projects, particularly those designed to improve accessibility: road and rail links, port access, logistics centres linked to modal interchanges, urban access, etc.
- 6.7 At the same time, the Committee of the Regions also draws attention to the need to rebalance the west-east and north-south axes of the TEN-T corridors. In order to ensure the more effective use of the capacity of the maritime ports in the Adriatic and the Baltic, the Committee also proposes taking account of the findings of the INTERREG IIIB A-B Landbridge project, which covers this very issue, when extending the TEN-T networks in the future. This project involves regions in Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland and, further afield, regions in non-EU Member States such as Norway and Croatia.

7. **Interoperability and standardisation of modes of transport**

- 7.1 The Committee of the Regions cautiously welcomes the principle of co-modality as defined in the mid-term review of the White Paper on European Transport and shares the opinion that each mode of transport has a specific role to play in the European transport system. The only means of optimising transport naturally is through true interoperability between the various modes of transport under fair market conditions. In reality, there is only one "transport service" (the demand for transport services), which relies on the best available transport solutions (modes of transport). The only way to improve the European transport situation is to establish equal conditions for all modes of transport, and not favour one particular mode over

another. The unwelcome fact that road transport is very successful even in those segments of the transport market where rail, waterborne and combined transport would be less environmentally damaging is due not only to insufficient harmonisation between the various modes, external costs, unresolved interoperability in the rail sector and the sector's incomplete transformation, but also the inadequate technical level of rail and combined transport. For this reason, research and development must be supported not only in telematics and information systems, but also in rail transport and combined transport technologies, and effective standardisation, unification and harmonisation.

- 7.2 However, the Committee would like to reiterate its commitment to a proactive EU modal-transfer policy towards the least polluting modes of transport, in light of the EU's Kyoto Protocol commitments.
- 7.3 Following the line of argument mentioned in paragraph 7.1., the Committee of the Regions proposes continuing in drafting and implementing the rules for internalisation of external costs in transport. The goal is establishing a common European framework to create an open-access, toll-based road infrastructure and revitalised fare-based railroads, which are a necessary condition for full intra-modal competition. The fees should not only be used to cover the costs of construction and maintaining infrastructure (although in economies in transition this will be a considerable source of revenue), but should also serve as an instrument that responds automatically to infrastructure needs, thereby increasing user rates and taking account of the full internal and external costs – including the environmental costs - of each mode of transport. Last but not least, fees will be factored into the price of products and so should also serve as a natural market regulator of excessive demand for transport, the best transport being no transport at all.
- 7.4 The Committee of the Regions believes that new intelligent payment systems are the way forward for improving traffic flow, making effective use of existing infrastructure and preventing congestion. Support should only be given to those payment systems that are transparent, fair, booked in the accounts, enable external costs in particular to be invoiced and have a simple tariff that is also sufficiently variable to make the best use of the infrastructure in terms of space and time. This fee should be of an equivalent value across Europe and not simply divert transport from toll roads to free-of-charge transport routes. In this respect, the Committee of the Regions would like to reiterate its support for the Galileo project which, if it is correctly introduced in all EU Member States, could provide such a system.
- 7.5 To increase support for the Galileo satellite navigation system and its uniform use in transport throughout Europe, or at least to better promote the idea, especially among the new Member States, the Committee of the Regions recommends that the European Council locate the GNSS Supervisory Authority in one of the new Member States and thus put them more at the centre of such forward-looking projects (while also fulfilling its informal promise in 2003 to locate European agencies in the new Member States).

8. **Logistics**

- 8.1 The Committee of the Regions emphasises that in order to improve the interoperability of individual modes of transport it is also essential to adopt measures to promote the use of logistics. Public transport logistics is a crucial link in ensuring interoperability between modes in freight transport and is also an important link in ensuring interoperability between modes and the trade and industry sector. The right environment must be created to ensure the development and efficiency of transport logistics at European level.
- 8.2 The Committee of the Regions offers its assistance in developing the proposed framework strategy for freight logistics in Europe since the development of this segment has a significant impact on regional development. Accordingly, it is involved in numerous local authority projects, as well as regional development strategies and urban projects, and also plays a role in the conception of urban and regional transport systems and the development of regional airports, ports on internal waterways or public logistics centres, which should to all intents and purposes be considered as transport infrastructures forming part of the networks to which they provide services.
- 8.3 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the intention of the European Commission to adopt an action plan on freight logistics in 2007. The Committee of the Regions is of the view that the formulation of a framework strategy for freight logistics in Europe should also be accompanied by an assessment of how a transport policy can promote a shift of freight from road to rail; using more effective, economical, natural and market respected tools than before. These measures, which could be fiscal or legislative, should be supported by targeted assistance, capable of acting as a catalyst.

9. **Safety**

- 9.1 The Committee of the Regions expresses concern that the number of road-related deaths is still unacceptably high in the EU25, despite a steady long-term improvement in these figures. It wholeheartedly supports the Commission's proposal to tackle the issue of road safety in a comprehensive manner, by focusing on user conduct, vehicle construction and technology, and the quality of infrastructure.
- 9.2 The Committee of the Regions notes that, given the continued increase in the mobility of persons and goods across the whole EU area, it is logical to assume that the Member States will continue their discussions on standardising and homogenising national road traffic rules and regulations to make them easier to understand for drivers and other infrastructure users. This will also help increase safety, reduce the number of accidents and balance the competitiveness of commercial transport provision.
- 9.3 The Committee of the Regions is also in favour of standardising road signs, at the very least on the main trans-European routes, by ensuring their technical uniformity and introducing

multilingual signs for guaranteeing greater safety, including drawing on developments in telematic systems.

10. **Security**

10.1 The Committee of the Regions notes the urgent need to guarantee the security of transport systems in view of the terrorist threat and supports a common approach to carrying this out.

10.2 The Committee of the Regions urges the EU and the Member States to adopt a joint approach in this field, given the limited powers and opportunities that local and regional authorities have in this field.

10.3 At the same time, the Committee of the Regions requests that EU bodies provide stakeholders in good time with any proposals for measures in the field of system security that could have a direct impact on the organisation and joint financing of regional and urban transport systems in order to allow them to sufficiently debate and comment on the issue.

11. **Freight transport logistics in Europe – the key to sustainable mobility**

11.1 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the European Commission's initiative to create a strategic framework within which to explore the methods and means by which the EU can help to improve the European transport system. However, it notes that logistics is not in itself the goal, but merely one of the instruments by which this may be achieved. It is not the sole instrument, since it can only work if lower elements of the transport system are developed, among them infrastructure, telematics (information systems in transport), interoperability and appropriate transport modes. For this reason, we draw attention to earlier points in this opinion regarding what we consider to be fundamental steps towards improving the conditions for European transport as a whole.

11.2 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the Commission's acknowledgement of the essentially commercial dimension of logistics. More than anything, it is the operation of market forces that encourages better use of transport units and efficient use of transport links. In other words, it is an instrument for improving the management of transport and ensuring its efficient use. The question of quality marks must also be left to businesses in the transport sector or sectoral organisations at European level.

11.3 However, the Committee of the Regions takes the view that, should market forces prove inadequate, legislative measures are also a warranted means of achieving the desired goal of mobility and freight logistics geared towards sustainability. A key prerequisite for rail freight transport is also a comprehensive system for modal interchanges of standardized equipment of freight transport. In order to create this possibility and thus ensure that the network is used to full capacity economically, in the event of market forces proving inadequate, back-up framework conditions should be introduced, such as incentives or legislation as a deliberate,

albeit temporary, effort to give priority to the modes that appear inevitably to be supported in accord with tenable specific environmental local and regional conditions.

- 11.4 Consistent with its earlier points, the Committee of the Regions considers logistics to be a key instrument that encourages regions and cities to adopt measures to ensure fast and efficient transport through their territories with the fewest possible drawbacks. The Committee also considers it important to develop city logistics to improve the environment in urban agglomerations by using all good practices in congestion elimination.
- 11.5 As pointed out earlier in this opinion, the role of towns and regions in the development of logistics lies primarily in providing the right conditions for transport and logistical facilities and in supporting the creation of logistics centres. On this particular front, the Committee of the Regions thinks EU action could take the form of Cohesion policy instruments and the transfer of knowledge and good practices.
- 11.6 The Committee of the Regions considers it crucially important to identify the impediments to better use of logistics and, hence, to improvement of the European transport system. These impediments include: inadequate infrastructure (bottlenecks, non-existent connections, inadequate connection of transport nodes and other elements of the transport system, absence of public logistics centres), insufficient compatibility of transport units (especially between EU 15 and EU 10+ countries) and obstacles of a technical and organisational character (transfer of information between transport operators, common consignment note, etc.). The European Commission's DG TREN should play a positive role in identifying these obstacles.
- 11.7 The Committee also considers it crucial to develop new transport management and information systems (including ERTMS and Galileo). At the same time, however, it stresses the need to address the security of data systems, especially where an open architecture environment is used.
- 11.8 The Committee of the Regions welcomes the European Commission's undertaking to examine vocational training and the certification of common European standards covering the knowledge and experience of workers in logistics. At the same time, it points out that this needs to be approached in partnership with businesses in the logistics sector and the transport sector generally or with their umbrella organisations at European level.
- 11.9 The Committee of the Regions also welcomes the European Commission's intention to take steps in relation to statistical data on the evolution of logistics. As part of its approach, the Commission should establish a set of indicators which would track and represent the development, performance, use and so on of logistics networks.
- 11.10 The Committee of the Regions also points out the need to focus at EU level not only on priority TEN-T projects, but also on modernising and developing important transport nodes. In order to make better use of logistics and to improve European transport systems all the

more, the "last mile" phenomenon must also be overcome. To do this, reloading facilities and facilities at the end of the logistics chain must be developed, in particular linking major logistical hubs to all types of transport link.

- 11.11 The Committee of the Regions also regards as crucial the Commission's initiative on common European standards for intermodal loading units in the EU. It would be very useful, for example, if the EU were able to cut the number of configurations of various types of containers and semi-trailers in order to make the most of permitted dimensions.
- 11.12 The Committee of the Regions points out that using various forms of transport in the same transport network requires more than just a change in thinking: frequently, physical barriers are also involved. The new Member States, in particular, lack not only the right transport links and reloading facilities to allow combinations, but also the right transport units. One way of improving matters in this area would be for the European Investment Bank to adopt a favourable credit policy or for Community aid to be given for purchasing vehicles and for building terminals.
- 11.13 Finally, the Committee of the Regions recommends that checks be made on the feasibility of the idea of an action plan to support the creation of dedicated freight transport rail networks. Nevertheless, it would like to draw attention to the situation of the new Member States. However promising the idea may be, it is reasonable to doubt whether there will be sufficient investment to implement it. Member States and representatives of the transport industry must focus their endeavours, with EU support, on coordinating international freight timetables – to ensure, for example, that transit takes place predominantly during the night, when there is little passenger transport.

Brussels, 14 February 2007.

The President
of the
Committee of the Regions

The Secretary-General
of the
Committee of the Regions

Michel Delebarre

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