European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/320

Green paper: Towards a new culture for urban mobility

Brussels, 29 May 2008

OPINION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on the

Green paper: Towards a new culture for urban mobility

COM(2007) 551 final

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On 25 September 2007, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

>*Green paper: Towards a new culture for urban mobility*
>COM(2007) 551 final.

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 8 May 2008. The rapporteur was **Mr Hernández Bataller** and the co-rapporteur was **Mr Barbadillo López**.

At its 445th plenary session, held on 28 and 29 May (meeting of 29 May), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion unanimously.

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1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1   The EESC considers that urban mobility policy should prioritise in particular urban planning, the information society and information technologies, good practice, especially involving the creation of public areas for pedestrians and cyclists, and an integrated approach to infrastructure.

1.2   The EESC offers its support to the Commission and hopes that it will boost Community measures for mobility, in particular to prioritise public transport with a high level of quality and protection for passengers, and promoting cycling and walking.

1.3   This will require planning towns and cities in an appropriate and compact manner and restricting demand for private, motorised transport, on the basis of consistent, rational spatial and urban planning.

1.4   The EESC considers that, regardless of any other type of measure adopted, Directive 85/377/EEC and Directive 2001/42/EC should be amended in the form set out in this opinion.

1.5   The EESC endorses the use of "green purchases" for procurement relating to infrastructure funded by European programmes, and calls for the removal of existing obstacles.

1.6   Creating a European Observatory on Sustainable Urban Mobility would bring added value, as it could gather data and facilitate the exchange of experiences.

1.7   The EESC believes that there should be general legislation at European level for the harmonisation of criteria for calculating charges and statistical data.

2.   **Introduction**

2.1   Both within and outside urban areas, the last few years have witnessed a generally strong growth in traffic and often a dramatic change in the modal split, with car journeys constantly on the increase and those by public transport constantly declining in relative or absolute terms.

2.2   In 2006, when it presented the mid-term review of the White Paper on Transport[1], the European Commission announced its intention to draw up a green paper on urban transport. It has conducted a broad public consultation over the last few months, on which the EESC has also expressed its views[2].

2.2.1   The EESC considers that Community action in the field of urban mobility is needed and would prove useful, and that adopting decisions at Community level[3] provides European added value that could cover a wide range of both binding and non-binding measures.

3.   **The substance of the Green paper: Towards a new culture for urban mobility**

3.1   The consultation process conducted by the Commission has confirmed certain strong expectations for the formulation of a genuine European urban mobility policy.

3.2   Rethinking urban mobility involves optimising the use of all the various modes of transport and organising "co-modality" between the different modes of collective transport (train, tram, metro, bus, taxi) and the different modes of individual transport (car, cycle, walking, etc.).

3.3   Urban mobility is recognised as an important facilitator of growth and employment with a strong impact on sustainable development in the EU.

3.4   European added value may take various forms: promoting the exchange of good practice at all levels (local, regional or national); underpinning the establishment of common standards and the harmonisation of standards if necessary; offering financial support to those who are in greatest need of such support; encouraging research, the applications of which will make it

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[1]   COM(2006) 314 final. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - *Keep Europe moving - Sustainable mobility for our continent - Mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 Transport White Paper*.

[2]   Opinion CESE 615/2007 on *Transport in urban and metropolitan areas,* adopted at the Plenary Session of 25 and 26 April 2007 (Rapporteur: Mr Ribbe).

[3]   Taking account of Protocol (No 30) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and the Interinstitutional agreement of 25 October 1993 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

possible to bring about improvements in mobility safety and the environment; simplifying legislation and, in some cases, repealing existing legislation or adopting new legislation.

3.5   The Green Paper, by means of 25 questions, deals with how to confront the challenges of creating free-flowing cities, greener cities, smarter, more accessible, safe, secure urban transport, and a new culture of urban mobility and the resources needed to achieve it. Unfortunately the Commission does not put forward a range of specific vertical and horizontal measures for urban transport.

4.   **Responses to the Green Paper**

This opinion will aim to respond to all the questions put by the Commission.

4.1   Question 1: *Should a "labelling'" scheme be envisaged to recognise the efforts of pioneering cities to combat congestion and improve living conditions?*

4.1.1   The EESC considers that a labelling scheme could be set up, taking account of existing systems and displaying compatibility with them.

4.1.2   At Community level, it would be useful if the Commission were to set down indicators for performance, planning and development, creating a harmonised reference framework.

4.1.3   Voluntary quality labels, rather than incentives, could also be set up, such as those used in the field of tourism policy.

4.1.4   In all cases, the systems set up should be based on objective, transparent criteria, and should be regularly assessed and, if appropriate, reviewed, and sufficiently publicised.

4.2   Question 2: *What measures could be taken to promote walking and cycling as real alternatives to car?*

4.2.1   Given the proportion of transport that they represent, walking and cycling cannot on the whole be considered as alternatives to the use of private vehicles, unless the home and workplace are very close to each other and weather conditions are favourable. Moreover, cycling is not a universal activity as it excludes those with reduced mobility or disabilities, minors and older people. Nonetheless, in connection with public transport, walking and cycling could become viable alternatives in some cities.

4.2.2   Municipalities should draw up sustainable urban transport plans, including cycle paths, with the binding objective of successfully switching to environmentally friendly transport modes that meet minimum European requirements (which remain to be established). These plans should address situations jeopardising pedestrian safety and seek to avoid conflicts between different transport modes.

4.2.3   To this end, a quantitative target should be introduced in order to increase the proportion of transport represented by public passenger transport, cycling and walking. Failure to draw up such plans should result in loss of eligibility for financial aid from Community funds. The Commission should also verify the information that these plans contain with regard to green areas and cycle paths.

4.3   Question 3: *What could be done to promote a modal shift towards sustainable transport modes in cities?*

4.3.1   Possible solutions depend, to a large extent, on the size (area and population) of the city, bearing in mind that pollution also results from shortcomings in land-use planning, not solely from transport.

4.3.2   Considering the problem and its possible solutions through land-use and urban planning; providing secure public car parks on access routes to cities; arterial network of dedicated public transport lanes linked to different modes of transport (car parks, rail and metro), by building interchanges which encourage intermodality so as to facilitate transfers, and improving the quality of service in order to ensure that public transport is attractive for users.

4.3.3   With regard to freight transport, the Commission should promote the exchange of best practices in the field of urban logistics, such as in the Italian city of Siena where freight transport authorisations are only granted on a temporary basis.

4.4   Question 4: *How could the use of clean and energy efficient technologies in urban transport be further increased?*

4.4.1   By setting up a tax policy for transport that promotes the purchasing and use of new technologies that can reduce pollution and increase energy savings.

4.4.2   By gathering information on the environmental conduct of cities: calculation of transport emissions per inhabitant, and yearly campaigns to publicise the results.

4.5   Question 5: *How could joint green procurement be promoted?*

4.5.1   By imposing the use of "green purchases" for procurement relating to infrastructure funded by European programmes and eliminating existing barriers[4].

4.5.2   At Community level, common standards should be defined and, where necessary, harmonised.

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4   See the ECJ "Concordia Bus" case and the criteria applied thereto.

4.6   Question 6: *Should criteria or guidance be set out for the definition of Green Zones and their restriction measures? What is the best way to ensure their compatibility with free circulation? Is there an issue of cross border enforcement of local rules governing Green Zones?*

4.6.1   The EESC believes that access to these zones should be significantly reduced. However, there is need for harmonisation in order to prevent differing legislation from hindering the free movement of people and unnecessarily restricting urban mobility.

4.7   Question 7: *How could eco-driving be further promoted?*

4.7.1   Eco-driving should be covered by duly extended mandatory instruction programmes for the initial and further qualification of drivers, and by setting up tax concessions for companies that take steps to monitor and measure driving. Directive on driving training could be amended to include these criteria.

4.8   Question 8: *Should better information services for travellers be developed and promoted?*

4.8.1   Yes, with regard to safety on board, waiting and transit times, passenger behaviour in emergencies, and all existing transport options and conditions.

4.9   Question 9: *Are further actions needed to ensure standardisation of interfaces and interoperability of ITS applications in towns and cities? Which applications should take priority when action is taken?*

4.9.1   The various ITS applications should be fully compatible so that different technologies can be used, particularly with regard to transport documents, thus facilitating transfers and improving transport access times, which would lead to quicker journeys on public transport. It is important for ITSs to support technological improvements, so that they do not quickly become obsolete and their cost may be duly redeemed.

         The EESC considers that information and communication technologies should be used to improve traffic and the organisation of transport.

4.10   Question 10: *Regarding ITS, how could the exchange of information and best practices between all involved parties be improved?*

4.10.1   By publishing a digital catalogue of good ITS practices, which is regularly updated and can be consulted online.

4.11   Question 11: *How can the quality of collective transport in European towns and cities be increased?*

4.11.1   By creating bodies to coordinate the different public transport services, establishing fare integration systems, and requiring optimum transport equipment (greenest and best suited to people with reduced mobility), increasing the number of departures or frequency so as to reduce passenger waiting times, setting up dedicated bus platforms (improved safety, comfort and speed, greater energy efficiency which translates to lower pollution), building interchanges to facilitate transfers, improving training of professionals in the sector, informing and raising awareness among users, providing infrastructure for the proper distribution of traffic in transit within cities, providing park and ride facilities and applying incentives to encourage their use, setting up priority signage for public transport, creating proper areas for picking up and setting down passengers safely.

4.11.2   One method that would prove effective is to assess the impact that specific plans, programmes and projects must have on mobility.

4.11.3   In this context, it is useful to note the judgment of the ECJ (case C-322-04) regarding the omission of the environmental assessment in a project to build a shopping and leisure centre in an urban area: it was the estimated volume of passengers that would be accessing the centre by private vehicle that determined its impact on the environment and the need for an assessment.

4.11.4   Therefore, the amendment of the existing directives could be threefold:

4.11.4.1   Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment establishes, in Annex III, the criteria that Member States must apply to determine whether certain projects have a significant effect on the environment.

It is proposed that a new indent be added to this first point of Annex III, expressly mentioning the breakdown of the mobility map (projected users of facilities, place of residence, etc.).

4.11.4.2   Secondly, in Annex IV, the directive sets out the information that must be included in the environmental report.

The EESC proposes that:

a)   a new indent be added to the fourth point of Annex IV, or that the third indent be amended, so as to specifically mention emissions caused by the transportation of the habitual users of the facilities;

b) point 5 of Annex IV be extended so that it covers not only the implementation of the project but also the subsequent operation of facilities and corrective measures relating to emissions caused by transport for these facilities.

Lastly, Annex III(1) and Annex IV(4) and (5) to Directive 85/337/EEC should be amended as suggested.

4.11.4.3 Thirdly, with regard to Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, similar inclusions could be made (mandatory criteria and information relating to mobility and transport modes required in the environmental report). In this case, it would make sense to include the plans' effects on mobility, as suggested, specifically in Annex I(f) and in Annex II(2).

4.12 Question 12: *Should the development of dedicated lanes for collective transport be encouraged?*

4.12.1 Yes, this measure is essential and has a strong impact on mobility. Dedicated lanes or platforms mean increased safety and speed, and less congestion and energy consumption, as well as greater comfort for passengers. This measure can help to win over private vehicle users.

4.13 Question 13: *Is there a need to introduce a European Charter on rights and obligations for passengers using collective transport?*

4.13.1 Strengthening passengers' rights is essential to ensuring that all modes of public transport improve the quality of their service (frequency, punctuality, comfort for all types of users, safety, fare policy, etc.). The Committee urges that this be done, taking into account the features of each transport mode, particularly those which share infrastructure.

4.13.2 Given the wide range of legislation existing in different texts and for different modes of transport, all the rights of passengers on public transport should be brought together in a single "charter of rights"; scope should remain for this to be supplemented by Member States and by self-regulation through codes of conduct[5] followed by economic players and organised civil society (consumer bodies, environmental bodies, business organisations, trade unions, etc.). The EESC emphasises the importance of dialogue between these bodies and public transport firms, in particular, in order to improve quality of service.

Action should be taken at Community level to recast and consolidate the rights that already exist in the different legal texts, to be complemented by action on the part of the Member States and civil society organisations. The EESC stresses the need for flexible, simple instruments to ensure that passengers' rights are exercised.

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[5] See opinion CESE 71/2008 on *The European Charter on the Rights of Energy Consumers* (Rapporteur: Mr Iozia).

4.14   Question 14: *What measures could be undertaken to better integrate passenger and freight transport in research and in urban mobility planning?*

4.14.1 Urban mobility plans in metropolitan areas should cover both passenger and freight transport, to ensure that freight logistics can operate without hindering passenger mobility.

4.14.2 Therefore, the number of agents to monitor dedicated loading and unloading bays should be increased.

4.14.3 Creation of mechanisms to facilitate and speed up offender reporting systems, so that offending vehicles can be removed as quickly as possible from dedicated bays, rendering them operational again.

4.14.4 Creation of effective mechanisms for penalising offenders, from removal of the vehicle to effective collection of fines.

4.14.5 Public information and awareness campaign to achieve general acceptance and involvement in meeting defined goals, such as gaining the cooperation of local shopkeepers to monitor dedicated loading/unloading bays, by showing them how illegal parking in these spots could be detrimental for their businesses.

4.14.6 Restriction of authorised stopping time in dedicated loading/unloading bays, more in line with the time taken for most loading/unloading operations. It could be possible to request special permission to increase the authorised stopping time, so as not to hamper certain types of transportation (e.g. removals) which require longer to load and unload goods. Also, specific time slots could be established for loading and unloading.

4.15   Question 15: *How can better coordination between urban and interurban transport and land use planning be achieved? What type of organisational structure could be appropriate?*

Through proper coordination in the following areas:

a)   Coordination between the different bodies:

   −   In some European cities, the creation of transport coordination bodies has greatly improved the coordination and planning of transport, ensuring that high-quality services are implemented efficiently and effectively.

   −   As concerns coordination with other modes of transport, there should be greater transparency in cost allocation for different transport modes.

− It would be useful for interurban transport services to have the necessary infrastructure for modal interchanges, so as to facilitate transfers between different modes of public transport, thus preventing passengers from having to use additional transport to connect from one mode to another.

b) Coordination with planning instruments:

− Taking account of the impact on mobility of certain plans and projects is a requirement already established by the landmark Court of Justice ruling of 16 March 2006 (case C-332/04): the obligation to submit a controversial project for environmental evaluation was based essentially on its estimated impact on mobility. This criterion has not yet been incorporated into positive law, however.

− As a result, two changes specific to Community legislation on environmental evaluation are considered necessary if the plan or programme's effect on mobility is to be included amongst the impacts to be considered. is proposed in particular that the changes set out in the answer to question 11 be made.

− Strategic spatial planning must be implemented in a consistent manner in order to ensure rational land use by regional authorities.

4.16   Question 16: *What further actions should be undertaken to help cities and towns meet their road safety and personal security challenges in urban transport?*

4.16.1 Road safety: at European level, promote good practices and more intensive, structured dialogue with regional and local stakeholders and Member States on new technologies (particularly ITS) in order to improve safety. Also, increase the level of driving training for industry professionals. The establishment of dissuasive measures should also be regulated to prevent cross-border traffic offences from going unpenalised.

4.16.2 Personal protection: in order to encourage good practices, physical police presence should be stepped up on public transport, particularly at night or on lines that travel to areas with higher levels of unrest and social exclusion, and the use of information technology and passenger information should be increased.

4.17   Question 17: *How can operators and citizens be better informed on the potential of advanced infrastructure management and vehicle technologies for safety?*

4.17.1 By raising public awareness through education and information campaigns, particularly those aimed at young people; and through activities to generalise the use of enforcement devices in cities for all road users.

In general the EESC considers it particularly important to adopt measures aimed at strengthening the cultural and civic education aspects of all issues connected with urban mobility.

4.18   Question 18: *Should automatic radar devices adapted to the urban environment be developed and should their use be promoted?*

4.18.1 Depending on the end requirements, these devices must always be geared towards improving mobility and optimising journey speeds. Good practices should be encouraged to increase safety, as should the use of intelligent systems.

4.19   Question 19: *Is video surveillance a good tool for safety and security in urban transport?*

4.19.1 Installation of new technology-based emergency systems in public transport vehicles, so as to warn emergency services in the event of vandalism or accidents and provide information on the situation of the vehicle, and transmission of voice and image data showing what is happening inside the vehicle.

4.19.2 Adequate measures must be adopted to avoid the invasion of privacy, which is a fundamental human right.

4.20   Question 20: *Should all stakeholders work together in developing a new mobility culture in Europe? Based on the model of the European Road Safety Observatory, could a European Observatory on Urban Mobility be a useful initiative to support this cooperation?*

4.20.1 A new culture for urban mobility will require the cooperation of the European institutions and Member States, regions and local authorities, along with civil society organisations.

4.20.2 A European Observatory on Sustainable Urban Mobility would be a useful initiative and would bring added value, as it could gather data, track changes in transport demand and facilitate the exchange of experiences. It would also help to improve knowledge of mobility problems and apply policies to resolve these.

There is a need for harmonisation of urban assessment measures at European level, and the EESC would welcome the unification of criteria in this field.

4.21   Question 21: *How could existing financial instruments such as structural and cohesion funds be better used in a coherent way to support integrated and sustainable urban transport?*

4.21.1 By making an improvement in urban mobility and the gradual shift towards clean public transport facilities (low fuel consumption, low emission) objectives of the funds, and ensuring a greater return on investment for every euro spent.

The EESC is in favour of increasing the percentage of funds earmarked for education and research.

4.21.2 Financial contributions should also be reduced by establishing objective scales that allow the most cost-effective solution for the Community to be selected, in order to provide citizens with high-quality transport at an affordable price. Efficiency and compliance with public service obligations should be key concerns.

4.22 Question 22: *How could economic instruments, in particular market-based instruments, support clean and energy efficient urban transport?*

4.22.1 By requiring the inclusion of green clauses in contracts for equipment relating to infrastructure projects funded by European programmes.

4.22.2 Another possibility would be to include the criteria from *Buying green. A handbook on environmental public procurement* [SEC (2004) 1050] in a COM document, adding green public purchasing of transport equipment.

Like the public transport vehicle market, the private vehicle market is becoming more eco-friendly. The purchase of cleaner cars (fuels, engines) should be promoted, and the financial efforts made by those who buy them should be rewarded by giving these vehicles specific treatment in policies for access to city centres.

4.23 Question 23: *How could targeted research activities help more in integrating urban constraints and urban traffic development?*

4.23.1 By clearly establishing the category of projects eligible for Community public aid, and making it mandatory (with due verification) to comply (within a specific timeframe) with the objectives of such projects, so that in the event of non-compliance any funding could be recovered.

4.24 Question 24: *Should towns and cities be encouraged to use urban charging? Is there a need for a general framework and/or guidance for urban charging? Should the revenues be earmarked to improve collective urban transport? Should external costs be internalised?*

4.24.1 There should be common rules at European level, through the harmonisation of criteria for calculating charges and assessment of the useful density threshold of the public transport network.

4.24.2 However, the EESC considers that charging or toll systems for access to city centres are in the public interest and have satisfactory immediate results, but discriminate against those with lower incomes, and have little dissuasive effect on those in higher income bands.

Local authorities should adopt measures to overcome any negative effects, for example by promoting the use of public transport or providing reduced rate passes.

4.24.3   An alternative with "cross-cutting" effects across all income bands would be a "toll" at access points. Rather than charging a sum of money, it would calculate the available urban mileage assigned to each driver. In other words, the proposal would be to "ration" access (mileage per unit of time). This would mean "selecting" and managing city journeys by private vehicle, although it should be borne in mind that there would be some discrimination on the basis of place of residence/origin/destination.

4.24.4   Naturally, this would mean further zoning in addition to the proposed "low-traffic zones" in which traffic would be essentially restricted to public transport and residents.

4.25   Question 25: *What added value could, in the longer term, targeted European support for financing clean and energy efficient urban transport, bring?*

4.25.1   The added value is enormous, although difficult to calculate, if we take health and hygiene factors (both physical and psychological) into account, along with the value of people's time (an aspect which varies depending on the time needed to get from home to work and back, which when added to the working day can create a wide range of negative factors).

Brussels, 29 May 2008.

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