

TEN/412 European transport policy/ Lisbon strategy and sustainable development

Brussels, 17 March 2010

OPINION

of the European Economic and Social Committee on the European transport policy in the framework of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy and the Sustainable Development Strategy (Exploratory opinion)

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TEN/412 - CESE 461/2010 FR/GW/hn

On 23 July 2009, the Spanish presidency of the European Union wrote to the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, requesting an exploratory opinion on the:

European transport policy in the framework of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy and the Sustainable Development Strategy.

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 24 February 2010.

At its 461st plenary session, held on 17 and 18 March 2010 (meeting of 17 March 2010), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 152 votes to one, with four abstentions.

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1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee emphasises that competitive, reliable, freeflowing and profitable transport is a condition for the economic prosperity of Europe and that the free movement of persons and goods constitutes one of the fundamental freedoms of the European Union. Transport will therefore be called upon to make a major contribution towards achieving the objectives of the strategy for 2020. It would also point out that the transport sector as a whole has been hit hard by the current economic crisis. It is, however, aware that the sector lacks sustainability.
- 1.2 It supports the action taken to bring about effective co-modality and optimisation and the inclusion of different modes of transport in one network to establish an integrated transport system and ensure maximum transport fluidity. However, it would stress that the ambition to encourage modal transport must not be abandoned; otherwise, the development of low-carbon modes of transport will stagnate and congestion and emissions will continue to increase.
- 1.3 The EESC notes the transport sector's dependence on fossil fuels, with the consequences that this has as regards emissions and security and independence of supply, and is well aware that resources, particularly oil, are limited; it therefore considers that future European transport policy, while maintaining the sector's competitiveness as part of the strategy for 2020, must pursue four main objectives: **the promotion of low-carbon modes of transport, energy efficiency, security and independence of supply and the reduction of traffic congestion.**

- 1.4 The main challenges to be faced and the issues to be integrated into a sustainable transport policy are (i) growing urbanisation and the demand for comfort in daily journeys, (ii) the preservation of public health, which means reducing emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases, (iii) maintaining a trading economy that incorporates the need to reduce emissions, (iv) defining homogenous territories so as to build a real integrated transport policy and (v) getting stakeholders in the economy and the general public on board so that they contribute towards implementing new policies and new types of behaviour in the field of mobility. But it is clear that if the European Union goes it alone, its efforts will be in vain. The need for an international agreement on reducing greenhouse gases is obvious, because of global warning and the depletion of traditional energy resources.
- 1.5 Under these conditions the EESC recommends the implementation of a series of concrete measures by both local authorities and the Member States with support and input from the European Union. The EU can act by passing legislation, channelling money from the cohesion or regional development funds, setting new trans-European transport network guidelines and intervening through the European Investment Bank. Such measures, which form part of the major objectives set out above, could include:
 - establishing an ambitious research and development plan for transport and mobility (covering issues such as motoring, fuel, emissions reduction, energy efficiency);
 - setting up a forum for exchanging good practices in the field of urban and long-distance transport;
 - developing park and ride schemes as well as public transport, particularly dedicated bus lanes and tram and metro lines;
 - improving ICT as a tool for providing efficient, reliable and safe public transport;
 - putting in place genuine mobility management services covering sufficiently large geographical areas and tasked with ensuring fluidity and good connections between the various modes of transport;
 - the creation of local delivery zones and urban distribution centres in city centres;
 - maintaining rail facilities in urban areas;
 - using taxation measures to promote transport means and technologies that are more energy efficient and emit less CO₂ and other pollutants;
 - the creation of safe and comfortable rest areas for professional drivers, improving their working conditions and their training;
 - the rapid implementation of rail networks giving priority to freight and the development of a genuine customer service culture in this particular domain;
 - the promotion of cars powered by alternative energy and third generation biofuels, where necessary through appropriate taxation measures;
 - launching a real European plan for the development of electric vehicles which puts the EU in a position to define or help define international standards in an emerging sector;
 - developing the concept of "green ports" and establishing motorways of the sea;

- 3 -

- improving working conditions and vocational training for seafarers;
- the development of inland waterway and inland-sea motorways and the introduction of new barges, adapted for the transport of semi-trailers and containers;
- taking into account sustainability and environmental protection needs when selecting types of transport infrastructure;
- the internalisation of external transport costs for all transport sectors to ensure that no single mode of transport loses out and to establish the true cost of transport services;
- the adoption by public authorities of realistic targets for cutting emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants and of sustainability objectives linked to local transport;
- taking account of such objectives when designing public transport systems and choosing;
- systematically commissioning solid and realistic impact studies before carrying out any policies or measures that are proposed.
- 1.6 In practice, new transport policy is faced with the challenge of maintaining the sector's dynamism and competitiveness whilst at the same time setting targets to curb emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutant substances, to facilitate modal shift and reduce distances, to promote "clean" transport, and to encourage more people to use low emission modes of transport, as expressed in terms of Km/passenger or Km/good.
- 1.7 This may be achieved through a number of simple steps which have a rapid, direct and tangible effect on costs: selecting the greenest and best renewable fuels, using biogas derived from waste recycling, regenerating existing sites (e.g. abandoned rail or port terminals) and redeveloping them for mobility services, improving interchange facilities where they already exist, harmonising transport tickets for regional and/or urban travel, developing dedicated bus lanes, encouraging car-sharing or facilitating information sharing between rail operators.
- 1.8 Other solutions also exist which require bold political decisions and involve greater financial outlay: the creation of park and ride facilities served by a reliable transport alternative; the introduction of a central information system monitoring the departures and arrivals of all modes of transport in a given area; establishing the most appropriate form of urban development to curb forced mobility; investment in trams or underground trains; the internalisation of external costs in the cost of transport; the development of ICT to provide actors in the mobility chain with reliable information; gauging the effectiveness of the transport modes chosen; setting up a plan for renewable energy and the recovery of such energy using the best means available (electricity for trams, gas for certain vehicles, etc).

2. Introduction

2.1 The completion of the single market requires an effective and reliable system for the transport of both people and goods. The globalisation of trade itself was made possible by the transport revolution and by price reductions, an increase in the number of carriers, competition and the construction of infrastructure.

- 2.3 Equally, transport activities are clearly an essential part of the European economy. They represent approximately 7% of GDP and account for 5% of all jobs, and help generate 30% of the GDP of industry and agriculture and 70% of GDP of services.
- 2.4 It should be stressed that the significant administrative burdens within the transport sector and the fact that they differ from one Member State are leading to hidden costs and creating barriers to trade within the EU. These costs and administrative burdens hit small and medium-sized businesses particularly hard.
- 2.5 While the European Union may be proud of the economic efficiency of its transport, and its competitiveness, the sector continues to be marked by a lack of sustainability. A sustainable transport system must therefore not only ensure that transport can fulfil the various economic duties expected of it but also comply with the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.
- 2.6 The very concept of sustainable transport entails guaranteeing the right conditions for economic growth while ensuring decent working conditions and skilled jobs for socially responsible activity which is not harmful to the environment.
- 2.7 Despite the progress made in terms of engine design and fuel quality, and in spite of the voluntary commitments entered into by car manufacturers, the transport sector remains the sector with the highest rate of growth of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2.8 The volume of goods transported has continued to rise, and at a faster rate than GDP growth. Meanwhile, although passenger volumes increased by an average rate of 1.7% per annum between 1995 and 2007, they remained below the level of GDP growth over the same period (2.7%).
- 2.9 The shift towards other modes of transport, such as rail and inland waterway transport, has been somewhat limited since 2001. Even worse, there has been a move back towards road transport.
- 2.10 Lastly, the sector continues to be 97% dependent on fossil fuels, which is harmful both for the environment and in terms of energy dependence.
- 2.11 A long-term policy must therefore ensure that our transport is efficient, curb its environmental impact and improve its safety, increase co-modality, encourage modal transfer, improve working conditions and enable the necessary investments to go ahead.

- 2.12 This would appear to be all the more important given that the Commission's studies for 2020 forecast a significant surge in transport flow unless trends change:
 - internal transport within western Europe is set to increase by 33%;
 - internal transport within eastern Europe is expected to rise by 77%;
 - transport from eastern to western Europe is set to grow by 68%;
 - transport from eastern to western Europe is expected to increase by 55%.
- 2.13 If these forecasts materialise, we shall have widespread congestion on the major axes of communication. Too much transport may end up being the death of transport. We must therefore carry out extensive research and development in transport technology (motoring, fuel, energy efficiency, combating pollution ...) and take significant action to invest in infrastructure, improve co-modality, redevelop rail freight and develop inland waterway or maritime transport. We need a veritable Marshall Plan for new transport technologies and investments if we are to achieve the Commission's objectives to reduce carbon emissions. Transport professionals, meanwhile, have developed the concept of opti-modality, i.e. optimising the technical, economic and environmental performance of goods transport chains, and created a circle for opti-modality in Europe. The aim is to break the link between economic growth and the negative impact of transport.
- 2.14 One issue which has been raised concerns the nature of transport and its social and economic purpose. This is a sensitive issue. The freedom to come and go is a fundamental human right and the free movement of individuals, goods and services is one of the founding principles of the European Union which underpins the rules of the World Trade Organisation. Equally, who should establish whether or not transport is useful? Does this mean that this is something of a pointless question? We believe otherwise; today, there is a need to establish the true economic cost of transport, in other words to internalise the external costs generated by each type of transport and paid for today by society at large, especially environmental costs but also public health and safety costs. By establishing a fairer price for transport services, and setting more realistic costs, we will be able to limit certain transport flows in favour of local transport.

3. Land transport

3.1 Co-modality has become the watchword in Europe, in other words the principle of optimising all modes of transport and encouraging greater coherence and the most effective interaction possible between the various modes of transport. Eighty percent of all land transport involves journeys of less than 100 km. It is therefore necessary to come up with an appropriate response to this demand which, apart from road transport, may also be satisfied by local rail transport, as inland waterway or maritime transport seems less practical for very short distances. At any event, vigorous steps should be taken to encourage a modal shift where appropriate, otherwise the EU will not succeed in developing a low-carbon transport economy.

3.2 Urban and regional transport

- 3.2.1 This mode of transport is governed by a number of specific constraints. Urban traffic is responsible for 40% of CO_2 emissions and 70% of emissions of other pollutants arising from road transport. In addition, congestion in cities, apart from its damaging effects on public health and the environment, costs the EU an estimated 2% of GDP. The development of public transport is clearly a necessity; however, it must meet certain criteria if it is to meet the requirements of providing a genuine service in the public interest and thus present a viable alternative to the passenger car e.g. frequency, rapidity, safety, comfort, accessibility, affordability, size of network, ease of connections etc. It will enable not only environmental challenges to be met but will also help to tackle social cohesion issues, such as how to overcome suburban isolation.
- 3.2.2 Use of electric transport would be desirable; however, the electricity itself should be produced in a sustainable manner and, where possible, without CO₂ emissions. Car-sharing or car-pooling schemes should also be encouraged.
- 3.2.3 A veritable sustainable urban mobility policy needs to be put in place. This would involve curbing the use of private transport, by setting up urban tolls for instance. Above all, however, this would mean improving the quality of public transport and making it more user friendly through the development of the infrastructure and services needed to provide effective intermodality. Given the situation of public finances in many EU Member States, this could be made easier in certain cases if the public authorities develop public/private partnerships to construct new infrastructure such as dedicated bus lanes, tram, trolleybus or metro lines, new regional rail networks or to re-instate disused transport routes, develop specialist transport ICT, modernise or simplify ticketing.
- 3.2.4 In practice, common sense measures such as the development of park and ride schemes well connected to urban centres, the introduction of dedicated bus lanes or the reinstatement of disused railway lines should all be capable of ensuring real progress at an affordable cost.
- 3.2.5 Improving information and communication techniques can be an effective means of developing the inter-modality of transport through the implementation of a genuine regional transport management policy. These technologies mean that traffic can be managed more effectively and should make it possible to devise energy optimisation systems for vehicle flow on the road network. They also inform travellers in real time throughout the length of their journey, simplify and optimise ticketing, and make ticket reservation easier. Thanks to these techniques travellers are able to optimise their journeys, search for timetable or service frequency information and even identify the energy usage of their chosen mode of transport. ITC therefore act as a means of synergising modes of transport, infrastructure use and energy efficiency.

- 3.2.6 Transport system management problems often extend beyond the confines of a single local authority and can affect a wide area outside an urban centre. Based on the initiative of local authorities, genuine mobility management services may be set up covering a large and well-defined geographical area, e.g. through the delegation of public powers. These mobility management services would have the following missions:
 - to analyse passenger flow, geographical and urban constraints and other factors in the regions concerned, taking account of local operators;
 - to optimise and tailor mobility services to identified needs;
 - to oversee a variety of cross-cutting services to facilitate inter-modality: information, ticketing and tele-ticketing, on request transport services, transport for persons with limited mobility, car sharing;
 - to carry out audits of mobility management and its environmental impact.
- 3.2.7 The organising authority would, naturally, retain its right to select local operators, to set tariffs and to formulate transport, travel and local planning policy. It would help ensure the transparency of contracts, draw up binding target commitments for both the management services and the local authority concerned, and identify service quality targets.
- 3.2.8 The EESC has already highlighted that local authorities play a decisive role in the organisation of public transport and local and regional planning. The subsidiarity principle certainly has a role to play in this area but nonetheless, the European Union quite rightly wishes to promote the most sustainable urban transport models possible. It has already allocated financing via the structural and cohesion funds as well as through the CIVITAS programme. The EU should not only boost the exchange of urban transport best practices but also finance research efforts on the interaction between transport and urban development under the next framework programme.
- 3.3 Freight transportation in urban areas
- 3.3.1 This type of transport generates a significant volume of traffic. In Paris, for example, it accounts for 20% of all traffic and 26% of GHG emissions. We therefore need to optimise urban transport logistics and, where possible, encourage a modal shift towards rail or inland waterway transport.
- 3.3.2 The following may be considered:
 - grouping together deliveries, through the creation of local delivery zones, parking spaces and loading bays close to neighbouring organisations and businesses;
 - setting up urban distribution centres, to ensure deliveries in the city centre, along with load restrictions, mandatory use of logistics platforms, optimised fuel tanking, use of electric vehicles;

- maintaining rail facilities in urban areas wherever possible, with guaranteed access for all operators;
- developing inland waterway port infrastructures in large urban areas situated alongside rivers.
- 3.4 Road haulage
- 3.4.1 The growth of road freight transport has meant that there is a need to address a series of challenges: growing CO_2 emissions, the high dependency of the transport sector on fossil fuels, as well as a need to improve infrastructure, particularly its safety, and to ensure that drivers have a favourable working environment and good working conditions.
- 3.4.2 Regarding CO_2 emissions, action should be taken to step up research and development to curb emissions, particularly by developing new engines and alternative energy sources. Tax-related measures to promote products and/or measures geared towards alternative propulsion techniques and the reduction of CO_2 emissions will be all the more effective if an ambitious research policy is in place. The internalisation of external costs¹ must therefore apply to all modes of transport in a fair and balanced manner.
- 3.4.3 It will be vital to develop technological solutions and to introduce ICT technologies tailored to freight road transport if we are to address the challenges facing the sector, limit energy dependence, vehicle emissions and network congestion. A clear framework is needed to introduce new technologies, with the creation of open standards, to ensure interoperability, and to increase R&D spending on technology still requiring further development before its introduction onto the market. Such technologies must also be used to reduce the frequency of trips by empty vehicles through a better application of information to logistics. They may be of great interest in improving transport safety.
- 3.4.4 Infrastructure should also be improved, especially through the provision of fully equipped, secure and monitored rest areas and facilities to protect drivers against theft and other criminal acts, and ensure their safety.
- 3.4.5 We need to ensure that professional driving continues to be an attractive occupation by guaranteeing a favourable working environment and good conditions, such as regulated working time, with harmonised driving hours and rest periods, and to ensure that such measures are not empty legislative promises but that they are actually implemented in practice².

¹ EESC opinion CESE 1947/2009 on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures – not yet published in the OJ; OJ C 317 of 23.12.2009, p. 80.

² OJ C 161, 13.7.2007, p. 89. OJ C 27, 3.2.2009, p. 49. OJ C 228, 22.9.2009, p. 78.

3.5 Rail transport

- 3.5.1 While there has been a general increase in the number of rail passengers, particularly over long distances with high speed rail links, rail freight transport remains at a low level, accounting for 8% of all goods transport. In general, steps should be taken to see that when carrying out modernisation and improving competitiveness on the railways, maximum attention is paid to safety requirements and the need to ensure continuity of service during periods of bad weather.
- 3.5.2 The EESC supports the Commission's proposal to set up rail networks giving priority to freight. However, there is a need to instil a customer service culture, which is competitive and business-minded. Opening services up to competition should make this transition easier.
- 3.5.3 The principle behind a priority freight network is to identify time slots and specific locations where freight trains would benefit from priority passage, without disrupting passenger train traffic.
- 3.5.4 It should be noted that a number of such schemes have already been set up in the European Union, and that some lines are even reserved exclusively for freight transport such as the Betuwe line between the port of Rotterdam and Germany. The New opera and Ferrmed projects should also be mentioned in this context.
- 3.5.5 The development of rail freight transport is possible, provided that certain conditions are met:
 - it offers a genuine logistics service rather than just a transport service;
 - it succeeds in lowering costs to become more competitive;
 - it provides a more reliable service;
 - it is capable of guaranteeing reasonable "end to end" journey times;
 - it offers more flexibility in supply and is more responsive in the event of traffic disruption.
- 3.5.6 The development of rail freight transport also requires the development of inter-modal roadrail transport platforms. In this context, we can only be delighted by the inauguration of the road-rail transport link between Lyon and Turin, but after a period of uncertain development for road-rail transport the time has now come to promote road-rail highways (such as the alpine highway or the lorry-rail link between Perpignan and Luxembourg) and maritime highways such as the Franco-Spanish Fres Mos project between Nantes Saint Nazaire and Gijon.

3.6 Passenger cars

- 3.6.1 The climate/energy package has imposed a number of important restrictions on car manufacturers. There is a need to develop new alternative fuel vehicles, especially electric or hybrid motor cars. Equally, it is important to maintain an open debate regarding biofuel. Today, we are witnessing the development of higher performing third generation biofuels, especially algae-based fuel, which can help avoid conflict over the use of arable land earmarked for the cultivation of agricultural produce for human consumption.
- 3.6.2 Alongside developments in the technologies and vehicles available on the market, there have been other areas of progress, especially with regard to saving energy and space that is currently congested because of cars. This concerns action such as courses on energy and cost saving measures , which have been organised by certain large companies or public sector bodies, the creation of car sharing or car pooling schemes or the decision by certain towns to make small electric vehicles available for hire.

3.7 Walking and cycling

3.7.1 The development of these modes of transport should be encouraged in urban areas, although they are constrained by topographical and climate considerations and the age of the persons involved. However, it is clear that local authorities should develop safe cycle tracks, as one of the obstacles preventing the development of bicycle use is the potential danger from cars.

4. **Maritime transport**

4.1 Maritime transport forms the backbone of international trade. The sector is suffering the effects of the crisis and is currently facing a problem of overcapacity. We must avoid underinvestment and the loss of skills and know-how, the effects of which would be disastrous when the economy begins to recover, especially as European maritime transport is the absolute world leader in the sector and as we need to ensure a level playing field and maintain the competitiveness of the European fleet, which represents a veritable asset for the European Union.

4.2 Fuels

4.2.1 Seagoing vessels use highly polluting oil by-products. Notwithstanding the need for technological development, we should examine together with the profession how best we can offset this adverse effect on the environment. If the CO₂ quota system is not suitable, we could perhaps consider introducing an eco-tax. This issue should be discussed by international maritime bodies.

- 4.2.2 In any event, the Committee reaffirms its support for investment in research and development into sea-going vessels, fuel and green ports, and also insists that the motorways of the sea outlined in the TEN programme be fully implemented.
- 4.3 Safety
- 4.3.1 One can never truly avoid the perils of the sea or the danger of shipwreck but everything must be done to ensure passenger and crew safety, both in the field of ship design and maintenance. European law on maritime safety is among the most comprehensive and detailed such legislation in the world. Equally, there is a need to step up the fight against illegal degassing through a firm and stringent approach.

4.4 Training

4.4.1 If we are to maintain and develop European maritime transport, young people need to choose maritime careers and show an interest in remaining there. We should improve the quality of training given to seafarers, along with their living and working conditions at sea and strive to boost crew numbers.

5. **Inland water transport**

- 5.1 Inland water transport is widely developed in the north of Europe yet could be developed further in other countries. In parallel with the steps taken in the maritime sector, consideration should be given to the concept of inland waterway motorways and inland-sea motorways, all the more so given that the energy consumption and emissions of this type of transport is three to four times lower than that of road transport. This innovative concept can only be developed through the introduction of new types of vessels and by setting up port and logistics platforms.
- 5.2 Hybrid inland waterway/sea-going vessels and river barges are a key factor in the process of establishing new inland waterway services. They are vital for ensuring that such services are efficient and profitable and must be specially tailored in terms of their capacity and speed, and meet port and navigational requirements. This involves optimising the dimensions of vessels and barges to enable the transportation of semi-trailers and containers in particular.

6. **Airborne transport**

6.1 Airborne transport is responsible for 3% of the CO_2 present in the atmosphere. It should be stressed that emissions have increased at less than half the rate of the growth in traffic since 1990. Airborne transport will be covered by the CO_2 emissions trading scheme and, similarly to VAT, the Commission has raised the problem of kerosene taxation for transport within the EU.

- 6.2 Airborne transport has developed as a result of the liberalisation of the sector and the emergence of low cost airlines. However, the localisation of these companies has often been accompanied by the award of public subsidies which should in turn entail a requirement for the beneficiary companies to implement offset policies.
- 6.3 The issue of air safety is obviously a key one when considering air transport policy. The EU should be at the forefront in establishing an international air safety system and act accordingly at the ICAO international conference to be held in Montreal in March.
- 6.4 Finally, the move to the second phase of the "open sky" project after 2012 should be well prepared and the difficult negotiations between the USA and the EU should be brought to a successful conclusion.

7. Infrastructure

- 7.1 The EESC has always supported the trans-European transport networks programme. It reaffirms its support for this programme but is concerned about financing difficulties and delays.
- 7.2 It notes that the needs of the enlarged Europe in the field of transport infrastructure have grown and some thought has to be given to the matter of how to adapt existing financial instruments, or even create new ones. All such thoughts should be focused on finding ways of setting up sustainable infrastructures: combining public and private funding, mobilising new, non-budgetary resources etc. ...
- 7.3 It must be stressed that transport infrastructure plays a very important role in socio-economic development and in regional cohesion. However, transport infrastructure also represents the cornerstone of a sustainable and environmentally friendly transport system. The type of infrastructure used is therefore a matter of pivotal importance. We must help develop the accessibility of the regions and integrate them into national and European structures by promoting infrastructure which is sustainable and environmentally friendly.
- 7.4 The future guidelines for the TEN-T which will be submitted at the beginning of 2011 should clearly reflect the EU's choice of favouring low-carbon transport.
- 7.5 The EESC reaffirms its unwavering support for the GALILEO programme and stresses the need for it to be brought into operation without further delay.

8. Internalisation of environmental costs

8.1 There is broad agreement regarding the need to internalise the environmental costs of transport. If this internalisation does not take place, it will be the public at large who will have to bear these costs. What is more, this may encourage some rather questionable economic

practices since it results in the transport over significant distances of products which could be provided from closer to home.

The EESC believes that a carbon tax would be the most effective way of internalising a major part of the environmental impact. This would give firms a strong incentive to finds ways of reducing their carbon dioxide emissions and thus their environmental impact.

8.2 The ecolabel is a procedure which it is impossible to dismiss outright, even if the details of its implementation and its impact need to be studied with care. This principle should be considered for both air and sea transport within the appropriate international bodies (ICAO and IMO). It would be desirable to re-open the debate on the revision of the "Eurovignette" directive, though it should be borne in mind that the principle of the internalisation of external costs should be comprehensively applied to all modes of transport.

Brussels, 17 March 2010.

The President of the European Economic and Social Committee

Mario Sepi