



*European Economic and Social Committee*

**TEN/479**

**Transport White Paper:  
getting civil society on  
board**

Brussels, 11 July 2012

**OPINION**

of the

European Economic and Social Committee  
on the

**Transport White Paper: getting civil society on board**  
(exploratory opinion)

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Rapporteur: **Stefan Back**

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On 11 January 2012 the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on the

*Transport White Paper: getting civil society on board*  
(exploratory opinion).

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 25 June 2012.

At its 482nd plenary session, held on 11 and 12 July 2012 (meeting of 11 July), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 140 votes to 3 with 7 abstentions.

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## 1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The EESC should initiate the setting up of a framework for an open and transparent exchange of views on the implementation of the White Paper between civil society, the Commission and other relevant players such as national authorities at different levels. That way acceptance and understanding can be improved in civil society and useful feedback be provided for policy makers and those responsible for implementation.
- 1.2 A dialogue should be multilayer and involve national, regional and local levels of both civil society and government. Civil society is to be understood in a large sense, including but not restricted to, business, employers, employees, users, NGOs and academia.
- 1.3 A dialogue must ensure a two way communication. It must provide an opportunity for the European Commission to communicate on proposals and policy actions. At the same time it must provide in particular civil society as well as regional and local level government with an opportunity to connect with the Commission, the EESC and other relevant institutions to submit comments and raise problems and questions related to EU transport policy and its implementation with the certainty that they will get an answer. An open and constructive dialogue is important to improve acceptance of policy measures, including legislative proposals and infrastructure plans.
- 1.4 It should be possible to raise concrete problems, for instance with respect to accessibility for disabled persons, quality of local transport and the adequacy in certain contexts of transport policy aims such as modal shift or transports above a given distance.

- 1.5 A dialogue along these lines may improve understanding and acceptance of EU transport policy aims and proposed implementation measures. It may improve understanding in EU institutions of practical realities and the need to take account of different conditions in different parts of the EU and improve the possibilities to find satisfactory solutions to concrete problems and answer raised concerns.
- 1.6 Continuity and follow up on questions raised are important elements in a successful dialogue, as well as timely communication from the Commission prior to planned initiatives. An agreement should be reached with the Commission regarding its involvement to ensure an efficient, open and transparent dialogue. The EESC understands that the Commission attaches particular importance to dialoguing on infrastructure projects and actions involving behavioural change. The EESC also feels that the scope of a dialogue should be wider and that it could bring added value to most initiatives.
- 1.7 Involvement of youth is an important element in a dialogue, in order to create interest in and acceptance of EU transport policy aims.
- 1.8 A dialogue should largely be based on internet communication. This should include a dedicated website. Use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter should be considered. Adequate management of the internet dialogue is important to make sure that the system works. A dedicated section of the web place for the dialogue should be oriented toward youth. There should also be a number of relevant external links, for instance to the Commission's web place for the Citizen's Initiative.
- 1.9 Internet should not be the exclusive means of communicating. Conferences or other arrangements, organised as required, could complement the internet dialogue and provide a forum to discuss two or three subjects. Likewise, direct contacts between the EESC and civil society representatives should take place whenever considered useful. Questions and concerns raised in those contexts should be brought to the attention of the Commission.
- 1.10 As appropriate, questions or problems raised in the course of the dialogue could give rise to own initiative resolutions by the EESC, and influence its opinions regarding matters referred to it.
- 1.11 Considering the involvement of regional and local government in the dialogue, contacts should be taken with the Committee of Regions (CoR) to seek an arrangement to involve the CoR in the dialogue and its management, with due regard to the respective roles of the EESC and the CoR.
- 1.12 In the EESC the dialogue should be managed by a steering committee from the TEN Section of the EESC, with the support of the TEN Secretariat and in continuous cooperation with CoR and the Commission.

- 1.13 Details of the management, as well as of the administration of the internet dialogue, resources required and budget issues should be looked into by a task force, which is to deliver its suggestions by the end of 2012. Slim and simple management and administrative solutions should be sought, as far as possible within existing resources. The option of sharing costs involved in managing the dialogue with the CoR might be considered.
- 1.14 The target date for starting the dialogue should be early 2013.

## 2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 The White Paper: Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system (the Roadmap) sets ten goals for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system serving as benchmarks for achieving the 60% GHG (Greenhouse gas) emission reduction target. The long term goals set out the global aims for 2050, while other goals point to milestones in 2020 or 2030. The White Paper also sets out a strategy comprised of 40 initiatives to contribute to the achievement of these goals over the next ten years.
- 2.2 The 40 initiatives set out in the roadmap are to be implemented by 2020. Some are legislative. But many are built on national or local initiatives or on encouragement of behavioural change either because there is limited EU competence or because legislation is not a sufficient tool to bring about the behavioural changes that are essential for the success of a given initiative. Also with respect to a number of legislative initiatives behavioural change is important to success.
- 2.3 In a letter dated 11 January 2012, the European Commission has requested the views of the EESC on how civil society can be engaged to buy into the objectives of the White Paper and contribute to achieving its long term vision of transport. The letter specifically brings up the need to reconcile national and European interests regarding important infrastructure projects in the TEN T, and how support and contributions from civil society can be obtained for the long term goals set out in the White Paper.
- 2.4 A comparison may be made with the EESC role in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy through the establishment of a new horizontal “Europe 2020 Steering Committee” to allow more efficient interaction between the EESC bodies and national stakeholders with a view to identifying and planning particular initiatives and best practices in the on-going reform process in the Member States. A report on the civil society evaluation of the elaboration of National Reform Programmes (NRP) and the involvement of civil society in that process was published on 23 February 2011, to provide the Commission with input for the European Spring Council.

- 2.5 Also the Single Market Act foresees to “Involve civil society and promote a culture of evaluation”. The Act states that the public consultation had highlighted the willingness of civil society to be more closely involved in the development of the single market. The Commission will therefore regularly publish a list of citizens’ and enterprises’ 20 main expectations regarding the single market. The list will be submitted to the single market forum which will periodically gather together market participants, e.g. business, social partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) and those representing citizens, public authorities at various levels and parliaments. It will examine the state of the single market and exchange best practice. It will contribute to the development of a policy evaluation culture and as such will play its part in monitoring the Single Market Act and help to measure the impact of that Act at grassroots level. The social partners should also have an enhanced role and be given the opportunity to present their positions on issues relating to economic and social cohesion.
- 2.6 A first set of expectation, based on a study has been published in the autumn of 2011.
- 2.7 Concept ideas for a European Energy Mix Forum (EEMF) are also currently being evaluated in the EESC. A suggestion for a permanent structure with a steering committee, a permanent secretariat, yearly conferences and up to six working group meetings per year is being considered against questions relating to financing, institutional matters, appropriateness and legal basis. The concept also includes a network of national fora.

### 3. General Comments

- 3.1 The EESC takes the view that the task now at hand is similar to the ones referred to above. It focuses on support for and contributions to the long term transport goals set out in the White Paper from civil society and acceptance of infrastructure projects. The Commission also seems to seek the views of civil society whether the 60 % reduction of GHG emissions and the corresponding ten goals of the White Paper can be reached with the current tools available for the Commission.
- 3.2 The EESC takes note that Article 11 (1) – (3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) provides a formal basis for this kind of exercise. These provisions stipulate a duty for EU institutions to establish an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative stakeholder associations and civil society, carry out extensive consultations with business and representative associations and provide possibilities for citizens and associations to publicly enounce and exchange their views. The EESC also takes note that this article also forms the legal basis for the Citizen’s Initiative.
- 3.3 The EESC takes the view that, out of the ten goals, set out in the White paper, civil society support seems particularly significant for goals number 1 (market acceptance and behavioural change), 3 (attitude of operators, transport planners and cargo owners), 4 (behavioural changes), 5, 7 (optimal use of infrastructure and traffic management systems, encouragement

of efficient cross border planning) 8, 10 (fairness of the system), 9 (safety and security related behaviour patterns).

- 3.4 Support for the goals of the Roadmap is clearly useful, as a matter of helping to create a politically favourable climate for its implementation.
- 3.5 In the opinion of the EESC significant general issues where a dialogue with organised civil society may be particularly useful include:
  - Questions relating to the mating of the EU interest with national/regional/local interest, particularly from the viewpoint of organised civil society interests.
  - Questions relating to non-technical ways to promote transport policy aims, including corporate policy, business behaviour, acceptance of innovation and behavioural change.
- 3.6 On these points, the support of organised civil society is important and possibly the best channel to forward information, gain support, but also to get feedback about problems and obstacles.
- 3.7 Ideally, such communication channels may also be used for benchmarking and exchange of information.
- 3.8 The list of initiatives also gives an idea about where the support of civil society is important to achieve the long term goals.

#### 4. Specific comments

- 4.1 To get a better idea about the points in the 40 point action plan on the 2020 horizon set out in the White Paper, where support from civil society is particularly important, the EESC draws attention to the following items.

##### 4.2 A Single European Transport Area

- 4.2.1 Planned initiatives to promote quality jobs and working conditions will require the active support of the social partners who may also provide useful input regarding the usefulness of further action within the framework of the social dialogue (Articles 9, 152,153 TFEU). With regard to the prevention of social conflicts and possible actions aimed at creating a level playing fields as regards remuneration levels, it is recalled that these areas are expressly excluded from EU competence (Art 153 (5) TFEU. and therefore referred to conflict of norms solutions such as in the Services Directive or in the Directive on Posting of workers, the practical aspects of which may pose particular problems in the field of transport.

- 4.2.2 Transport security and transport safety as well as the free movement of disabled and elderly passengers directly related to the accessibility of the whole transport market are also not only a question of regulation, but also a question of the policy of transport company and the human factor.
- 4.2.3 Similarly, while the Single European Sky, the Single European Railway Area and the Blue Belt are essentially dependent on regulatory measures and administrative routines, actual use of the possibilities opened, particularly regarding the Single Railway Area and the Blue Belt, including optimal use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and market access to ports will depend on the action of operators and other parties concerned.
- 4.2.4 The questions of quality, accessibility and reliability of transport services concern both freight and passenger transport. In particular regarding freight the action of various operators involved is important to success. Regarding passenger transport mainly the evaluation of the passenger rights regulatory frame's effectiveness and the quality of transport infrastructure for disabled and elderly passengers will also require the involvement of the organised civil society.

#### **4.3 Enhancing and integrating the local grassroots initiatives**

- 4.3.1 The message of resource efficiency, adaptation and sustainability contained in the transport white paper has already stimulated citizens' action programmes, rural and urban, across Europe. This is happening in numerous innovative ways. For example, organised car sharing schemes reduce individual car ownership, and highly localised community transport (especially operating on-demand) offers improved access and mobility to disadvantaged and isolated groups. Community resilience plans, often with an emphasis on energy minimisation, have identified resource-efficient transport and appropriate localisation as a key element. Not only do such practical schemes offer new transport models but, as they develop from the grassroots, they provide effective public engagement and information opportunities for their participants. This broadens the base of public knowledge and understanding for the change in attitudes towards transport that will need to take place.
- 4.3.2 However the many local initiatives that take place here and there in Europe have an uncoordinated and unstructured character that is not commensurate with the size of the challenges ahead and notably with the targeted steep reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport. The level of ambition of the White Paper makes it necessary to considerably enhance efforts through e.g. the following actions:
- the further development and extension of existing initiatives, especially with the view to maximise public participation and engagement;
  - the multiplication of such initiatives throughout Europe based on the existing good practices and with again a special focus on public participation and engagement;

- the progressive integration of all these initiatives through common communication platforms and tools in order to exchange good practices, reach out larger communities and create a wide-ranging public understanding of the challenges/possible solutions.

#### 4.4 Innovating for the future – technology and behaviour

- 4.4.1 The European Transport research, innovation and deployment strategy is not only a matter of research, research funding, governance and deployment of smart mobility systems. As pointed out in the Roadmap, support by regulatory framework conditions is required. But market acceptance and market uptake are also essential elements, and here organised civil society can play a part.
- 4.4.2 This is in fact closely related to the theme of Innovative Mobility Patterns, where the attitude of operators, cargo owners and, as for passenger transport, the general public is essential.
- 4.4.3 This is the case with freight, where willingness to make use of technical innovations and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are important as well as for instance readiness to cooperate to optimise capacity utilisation.
- 4.4.4 Likewise as for urban transport a lot depends on civil society support to ensure market uptake of alternative propulsion systems, efficient organisation of last mile distribution and sustainable planning of individual travel and goods transport.

#### 4.5 Modern infrastructure, smart pricing and funding

- 4.5.1 As for the European Mobility Network, it is essentially the optimal use of IT tools, tracking and tracing systems for cargo, optimised schedules and traffic flows (e-freight) that require acceptance by actors on the market. This acceptance is necessary to make their deployment on TEN-T links worthwhile. This is both a question of achieving optimal results and value for money invested.
- 4.5.2 Within the framework of the TEN-T corridor approach as an implementation instrument for the core network, infrastructure projects should be developed in such a way as to enable citizens, civil society and relevant authorities to "gain ownership/identification" with the projects concerned. This should include measures such as an early involvement (starting at the planning stage), the sharing of best practices across the Union, the application of state-of-the art planning and implementation methods or continuous and transparent communication. Within this context, civil society support may also help to create a climate that is more favourable to coherent cross border infrastructure planning.

- 4.5.3 As for financing, the Public Private Partnership (PPP) issue remains essentially a financing issue which itself will mainly depend on legal and technical aspects. Nevertheless, given the importance of civil society involvement in infrastructure projects and services where PPPs may be used, there is a legitimate civil society interest in involvement in the conception and implementation of PPPs.
- 4.5.4 As regard pricing and avoiding distortion, this is essentially a regulatory issue. Nevertheless, contacts with civil society may provide useful input as regards the prospects of creating a climate of acceptance for these measures. Such contacts may also provide information regarding possible social problems arising from severe cost effects in sparsely populated regions or the quality of life of economically or physically vulnerable groups.

To achieve acceptance, it is essential that any pricing system is seen as reasonable and fair and also here input form civil society can be useful.

Brussels, 11 July 2012.

The President  
of the  
European Economic and Social Committee

Staffan Nilsson

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