

COTER-004

**ORIGINAL ENGLISH**

Brussels, 6 June 2002

**OPINION**

of the

Committee of the Regions

of 15 May 2002

on the

**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European network**

COM(2001) 544 final - 2001/0229 (COD)

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**The Committee of the Regions,**

**HAVING REGARD TO** the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (COM(2001) 544 final – 2001/0229 (COD));

**HAVING REGARD TO** the decision taken by the European Council on 14 November 2001, under Article 156 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult the Committee of the Regions on the matter;

**HAVING REGARD TO** the decision taken by its Bureau on 13 June 2000 to direct Commission 3 for Trans-European Networks, Transport and the Information Society to draw up the relevant opinion;

**HAVING REGARD TO** the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Trans-European Transport Network: 1998 report on the implementation of the guidelines and priorities for the future." (pursuant to Article 18 of Decision

No. 1692/96/EC) (COM(1998) 614 final) (CdR 60/99 fin);<sup>1</sup>

**HAVING REGARD TO** the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending Regulation (EC) No. 2236/95 laying down general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of trans-European networks (COM(1998) 172 final - 98/0101 SYN) (CdR 217/98 fin);<sup>2</sup>

**HAVING REGARD TO** the draft opinion adopted by the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy\* on 5 March 2002 (CdR 284/2001 rev. 1) (rapporteur: **Mr Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso** (E/EPP) President of the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia;

**adopted the following opinion unanimously at its 44th plenary session of 15 and 16 May 2002 (meeting of 15 May).**

### **The Committee of the Regions,**

#### **1. General comments**

The Committee of the Regions welcomes the move by the Parliament and Council to introduce new policies to make the TEN-T a reality and to resolve the imbalances caused by its construction, although it must again point out with regret that an opportunity has been missed to bring a single, organised and coordinated focus to bear on European transport policy. Although the TEN-T is an important part of this, it is nonetheless only one part and cannot single-handedly resolve the serious problems in the European transport system.

The CoR reiterates its request that the necessary efforts be made to bring together future European policies to promote freight and passenger transport in a single instrument.

Accordingly it recognises and welcomes recent efforts in this area, in particular the White Paper, which is an important contribution to the debate.

Consideration must be given to the forthcoming revision of the amended Community guidelines, scheduled for 2004, bearing in mind the certain updating of the transport system as proposed in the White Paper, the changes to transport flows, the revision of the national plans, and future EU enlargement.

The CoR reiterates its view that a situation as complex as transport cannot be analysed from one angle alone. The imbalances between modes of transport and different parts of the network cannot be solely responsible for the varying degrees of capacity and accessibility in the TEN-T; while this is certainly a key factor, we must also take account of the many other policies that have had an impact, such as – without going into the matter in detail here – the liberalisation of certain modes of transport, which sways the interests of operators towards a particular mode of transport to the detriment of others.

The Committee of the Regions therefore recommends that this time the forthcoming revision of the guidelines must be part of an integrated blueprint for the European transport system.

#### **1. Comments concerning the priorities**

The stated intentions behind the new TEN-T guidelines are not always reflected in the new list of priorities.

### **1. New priorities proposed**

The main priority is to build up a new, interoperable rail network giving precedence to goods transport, and connected to sea and inland ports and to airports.

The CoR fully supports these proposals as it has repeatedly called for such measures in previous opinions and expressed concern about the lack of investment in rail transport compared to road transport. Interconnections with sea and air transport are also essential if we are to stimulate passenger and, above all, freight rail transport.

Nonetheless, the CoR wishes to point out that two further aspects should be added, without which the proposal's objective could be seriously compromised.

The first is to prevent competition arising between rail and road because of parallel, unconnected networks, as this would spell disaster for the railway network. One solution could be to introduce higher tariffs for road users. However, this very complex measure is beyond the scope of this opinion and its consequences, inflationary and otherwise, would need to be analysed in depth, in particular where peripheral, island and less accessible regions are concerned.

It must not be forgotten that one of the major weaknesses of the railway network is its inflexibility and, as a result, its unavoidable dependence on other modes of transport, in particular roads, for connection to the place of origin and final destination.

The CoR therefore proposes creating a railway network that is connected and integrated with the road network, as is the case for all other modes of transport.

This leads us to the second aspect that needs addressing, i.e. that without intermodal platforms the functionality of the railway system is seriously reduced.

The proposed new Article 5(c) ends with the phrase "including measures in intermodal terminals". The CoR would like the Parliament and the Commission to discuss this subject; the idea that terminals are no more than limited areas integrating different modes of transport is an outdated concept that is largely responsible for the bottlenecks that currently exist.

The CoR considers it necessary to build comprehensive logistics platforms, equipped with all the required services and installations, as an essential TEN-T component to serve as a major means of diversifying modes, and backed up by new intelligent transport systems, facilitating management. This is the only way of minimising the main disadvantage of intermodal transport – i.e. trans-shipping – which until now has been a considerable hindrance to its effective implementation, but which intermodal logistics platforms should help to eliminate.

For these infrastructures to function as efficiently as possible, a new and as yet unused term must be introduced to the field of transport systems: "the interoperability of intermodality".

In the CoR's view, it is essential that local and regional authorities play an active part in creating and managing these platforms, since their location and efficient operation are of vital importance to their own spatial planning requirements.

### **2. Ongoing priorities**

The CoR welcomes the fact that priority continues to be given to the development of infrastructures linking island, land-locked and peripheral areas, and hopes this priority will receive proper consideration and support.

It should be borne in mind that, in addition to providing an effective guarantee of real freedom of movement for goods and persons across European territory, completion of infrastructure directly linking peripheral and island regions to the TEN-T also merits support with a view to a strategic connection between Europe, neighbouring countries and island regions. From this point of view, the island regions offer the Union an outstanding strategic opportunity for boosting Euro-Med relations policy.

The CoR therefore strongly supports the amendment made to the wording of Article 5(b), as it gives priority to linking these regions directly to the TEN-T, rather than simply providing means of access to it. It is not unreasonable to propose that the necessary efforts be made to connect these isolated regions to the rest of the European territory as effectively as possible.

This proposal also continues to give priority to eliminating bottlenecks by completing major routes, filling in missing sections (in particular in cross-border areas) and developing key links and interconnections.

At this point, the CoR would stress that while reducing TEN-T bottlenecks by optimising capacity is an absolute necessity, the plight of many regions that are lacking accessibility must not be overlooked. These regions are, furthermore, urgently requesting the implementation of Article 154(1) of the Treaty, which stipulates that to enable regional and local communities to derive full benefit from the setting-up of an area without internal frontiers, the Community will contribute to the establishment of trans-European networks. While competitiveness factors threatened by bottlenecks certainly merit Community attention, consideration should also be given to economic and social cohesion, as this could be jeopardised if we do not ensure the accessibility of all regions, in particular those most in need.

The Committee would stress that the TEN guidelines should give equal weight to tackling the traffic congestion problem in the core regions of Europe and improving the access of the Community's peripheral regions to the single market area.

The CoR also reiterates previous calls for a new "inter-regional accessibility map" to eliminate the access constraints suffered by many regions and which hinder the effective and harmonious development of the internal market, by achieving a minimum degree of accessibility (quantified by means of objective time and cost indicators) throughout the European Union.

The CoR also proposes stepping up local and regional authority involvement in creating infrastructures; it suggests that, as part of the revision of the guidelines, consideration be given to ways of securing the cooperation of districts and regions in designing local and regional access to the TEN-T. The lack of such access compounds the present congestion problems.

Regional and local networks that feed into the central network also have bottlenecks that need resolving. Furthermore, intermodal nodes will also rely on feeder regional networks if they are to function properly.

The CoR welcomes the fact that priority continues to be given to intelligent transport systems, and that steps have been taken in this direction by supporting interoperability in the Community territory.

Likewise, the CoR fully agrees with the need to integrate environmental concerns in the design of the network, as we have an overriding obligation to establish the necessary corrective measures to reduce as far as possible the environmental impact of projects chosen on the basis of their importance for European transport.

### **3. Additional priorities**

The CoR suggests reconsidering the removal from the text of Decision 1692/96 of the indent referring to *"establishment of and improvement in interconnection points and intermodal platforms"*.

As mentioned above, these are an essential component of the TEN-T; without them its functionality would be seriously jeopardised, as it relies on an adequate and extensive network of intermodal nodes. This is even more important given that the objective of the proposal is to promote rail freight transport.

The CoR supports the inclusion of transport safety among the priorities. Although safety is already mentioned in the paragraph on the promotion of intelligent transport systems, safety must also be a fundamental priority when establishing and developing infrastructures. Safety problems in the TEN-T have been increasing in recent years owing to the increase in congestion points and the lack of adequate infrastructures in many parts of the network.

### **2. Comments on the specific projects**

The CoR welcomes the list of specific projects in Annex III, which are fully justified, viable and of unarguable importance to the objective of developing the TEN-T.

The CoR is particularly pleased that the project to improve the navigability of the Danube between Straubing and Vilshofen has been included as a "specific" inland waterway project, as the Committee has been calling for this mode of transport to be promoted for some time, and it would also call for improvements in navigation on the Danube to the east of Vienna.

The CoR also welcomes the inclusion of the global satellite radio navigation and positioning system (Galileo), as a way of effectively reinforcing the new technologies facilitating transport.

Nevertheless, the CoR calls for the adoption of measures enabling local and regional authorities to be involved in the design and configuration of infrastructure.

The CoR regrets the delays in the implementation of the projects announced in 1996 and expresses its concern and interest in finding ways of speeding up the necessary procedures. These delays are largely due to the lack of co-participation by regions in their development, which has caused controversies and social reservations that cannot be easily resolved by Community and national authorities. The involvement of local and regional authorities may - indeed must - help resolve these conflicts, as these bodies are closer to citizens.

### **3. Comments concerning the remaining amendments**

The CoR welcomes the replacement of Article 8 concerning environmental protection, as it

requires the Member States to execute specific environmental impact assessments, pending the implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC, which stipulates the procedures to be followed.

Local and regional authorities have the best knowledge of their local environment and must therefore be actively involved in the process of assessing and establishing corrective measures where appropriate.

The CoR also welcomes the amendments made to Articles 9, 10, 11, 13 and 18, but considers the list drawn up in Article 10(4) concerning the rail network to be poorly structured. The CoR is also surprised by the removal of the reference to goods (point 1), the addition of a reference to introducing trunk routes dedicated to freight (point 4), and the removal of the reference to an intermodal interconnection between the rail network and other transport networks (point 6).

Lastly, the CoR warmly welcomes the amendment to Article 18, where the "Committee for the exchange of information and report" is renamed the "Committee for monitoring and the revision of the guidelines", although the wording fails to clarify what the change of title implies in terms of its remit.

Thought should also be given to including a representative of the CoR on the Committee for monitoring, so that the voice of cities and regions can be heard regarding the many future aspects of the TEN-T which affect them.

## **2. Recommendations**

The CoR requests that the following changes be made to the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Decision No. 1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.

### **1. Recommended changes to the recitals of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC**

Add the following recital 2(a):

*"In accordance with the Treaty of Maastricht, the trans-European transport network must help reinforce economic and social cohesion, improve the accessibility of peripheral and island regions and contribute to the sustainable management of traffic flows on European transit routes. It must be designed and implemented with due consideration for Structural Funds programming, Objectives 1 and 2 and INTERREG, and the European Spatial Development Perspective."*

Add the following recital (5) a:

*"The TEN-T must be a key instrument in an ambitious European maritime policy, helping to develop short sea shipping, as recommended in the Commission's White Paper. It must also allow all the sea basins of Europe to participate fully in world trade by encouraging medium- and long-distance sea shipping."*

### **2. Recommended changes to Article 3 of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC**

The CoR believes the guidelines in Article 3 of Decision 1692/96/EC should be amended

further, by incorporating a new point worded as follows:

***" 4. Intermodal logistics platforms are necessary elements for the effective integration of the various modes of transport, their infrastructures, installations and additional services, as well as their local and regional access."***

### 3. Recommended changes to Article 5 of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC

- Point a)

Amend as follows:

***" a) establishment and development of the key links and interconnections needed to eliminate bottlenecks, fill in missing sections, notably their cross-border parts **or parts connecting regions with poor communications**, and improve interoperability on major routes, with a view at all times to improving safety;"***

- Point b)

Amend as follows:

***" b) establishment and development of infrastructure making it possible to link island, landlocked, peripheral and outermost regions with the central regions of the Community **and with each other to encourage the balanced and polycentric development of the European Union**; while showing appropriate concern for areas of particular ecological sensitivity;"***

- Point d)

Amend as follows:

***" d) establishment of rail infrastructures to ensure connections to ports in order to foster **long and short sea and inland shipping services**;"***

- Point e)

Amend as follows:

***" e) measures to link rail and **sea shipping to** air transport, including rail **and sea** access to airports and the infrastructure and facilities required for air, **sea** and rail transport services, wherever territorial circumstances so permit;"***

- Include a new point in Article 5.

*" design and development of intermodal logistics platforms, as regards both their infrastructures (such as installations and auxiliary services), and their adequate access to local and regional networks."*

#### 4. Recommended changes to Article 10 of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC

The wording of Article 10 should be revised as follows:

**" Point 4. The network shall:**

- *play an important role in long distance passenger **and freight** traffic,*
- ***promote interconnection with other transport mode networks, in particular air transport, sea shipping and inland waterways,***
- ***facilitate** access to regional and local rail networks,*
- *play an important role in combined transport, **essentially through intermodal logistics platforms,***
- ***promote** freight transport by identifying and developing **additional and alternative routes to road transport and by giving priority to freight trains in certain rail corridors.***
- *also be compatible with regional development objectives and contribute to their achievement."*

An additional insert should be added at the end of Article 10 (4) to read as follows:

**" - provide value added in ecological terms when compared to the trans-European road network."**

**Amend Article 10(6) as follows:**

**" Point 6. The network shall include the infrastructures and the facilities allowing the integration of rail, sea and air transport services."**

#### 5. Recommended changes to Article 13 of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC

Article 13(3) should be amended as follows:

*1. The trans-European airport network shall comprise airports situated within the territory of the Community which are open to commercial air traffic and which comply with the criteria set out in Annex II. These airports shall be classified differently according to the volume and type of traffic they handle and according to their function within the network. They shall permit the development of air links and the interconnection of air transport and other modes of transport. **The involvement in airport management of regional authorities will be crucial to achieving these objectives.***

*2. (unchanged).*

*3. International and Community connecting points shall be gradually linked to the high-speed lines of the rail network, where appropriate. The network shall include the infrastructures and the facilities allowing the integration of air, sea and rail transport services."*



## 6. Recommended changes to Article 18 of the Decision No. 1692/96/EC

Article 18(2) should also be amended, as follows:

*" 2. A Committee on the Trans-European Transport Network, hereinafter called 'the Committee', is hereby set up at the Commission; it shall be composed of representatives of the Member States **and a representative of the cities and regions proposed by the Committee of the Regions**, and chaired by a representative of the Commission. The Committee shall **follow-up and assess the revision of the guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network**, exchange information on the plans and programmes notified by Member States and may consider any question relating to the development of the trans-European transport network."*

Brussels, 15 May 2002

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

**Albert Bore**

**Vincenzo Falcone**

<sup>1</sup> OJ C 293, 13.10.1999, p. 9

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 93, 6.4.1999, p. 29

\* Re-organisation of the commissions and their terms of reference, 6 February 2002.

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