

Sustainable future for transport

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The Presidency submitted to ministers draft conclusions on a Commission communication on the sustainable future for transport. The discussion showed that while there was very broad agreement on the text, not all Member States were able to support all of its elements. The Presidency therefore drew the conclusions under its own responsibility. The main points are as follows;

The Council states the following:

- it welcomes the Commission Communication and the latter's decision to start the preparatory process to update and renew the European transport policy for the next decade 2010-2020;
- it acknowledges that the current economic situation offers lessons to be learnt and recognises the need to prepare the transport sector to face future challenges, as well as the need to better exploit all modes of transport. It also recognises the need to take positive measures to encourage a shift to the use of those that are more energy efficient and environment friendly, as well as a more efficient use of all modes of transport and seamless inter-modality, i.e. co-modality and its promotion, considering that these are key elements of a sustainable, eco-efficient, accessible and integrated transport system;
- the Commission should promote one fully integrated multimodal transport system, particularly through the revision of the TEN-T policy, the Marco Polo programme and the Naiades Action Programme, and other Community policies, which have a positive impact on the transport system, while taking into account the need to mitigate the present regional differences within the EU, the needs of the Member States at the periphery of the EU, as well as the major transnational traffic flows;
- the TEN-T policy should pay due attention to the timely completion of priority projects and their effective integration in the comprehensive network, nodes (ports, airports) and inter-modal connections (such as connections between rail, road, inland waterways, ports and airports), multimodal green corridors, missing infrastructure links, cross-border sections, the elimination of bottlenecks, interconnections with neighbouring countries and regions and building on the extension of existing corridors;
- proper funding mechanisms, coming from Community and other sources, should be considered important in order to ensure an effective implementation of transport infrastructure projects. The Council supports the general principle of internalisation and implementation of external costs in all modes of transport, taking into account, inter alia, the need to ensure a level playing field between different modes;
- the Council acknowledges the need to break the transport sector's fossil fuel dependence and reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases inter alia through the introduction of innovative and energy efficient technologies for traffic management tools. It supports a comprehensive approach which includes a variety of measures such as alternative drive concepts, alternative fuels, electric mobility and its relevant infrastructure, and a transition to renewable energy sources;
- it encourages the continued development of a fair and balanced regulatory environment aimed at the completion of an internal transport market, properly regulated and without restrictions, that will allow the EU's businesses to prosper and the EU's citizens to move seamlessly throughout Europe, exploiting the potential of competitive transport services across all modes;
- there is a need to promote changes in individual behaviour, inter alia, through awareness campaigns, in order to meet environmental challenges and improve safety in all modes of transport. The Council invites the Commission to present the Fourth Action Programme on road safety (2011-2020) and, in this context, acknowledges the need to enhance coordination between European Agencies and national competent authorities;
- the safety and security of transport users and workers should remain a priority and the rights and needs of transport users should be assessed and taken into account;
- the promotion of quality employment and training in the transport sector needs to be enhanced:

The Council calls on the Commission to ensure proper implementation of the Community acquis and existing projects and to adopt where necessary additional measures. It stresses the importance of developing more flexible legislative and non-legislative instruments, respecting the principles of subsidiarity, transparency and better regulation, whilst aiming at reducing administrative burdens.

Lastly, the Council looks forward to the Commission's reports on the outcome of the consultation process and invites the Commission to take note of Member States' further reflection and to inform the Council about the developments in the preparation process for the forthcoming White Paper which is expected by the end of 2010 / beginning of 2011.