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TRANSPORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Transport developments in the Mediterranean Region

Conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on the Motorway of the Sea
Ljubljana, Slovenia, 24 January 2006

Note by the secretariat

1. In its transport White Paper of September 2001, the European Commission proposed the development of "Motorways of the Sea" as a "real competitive alternative to land transport." The White Paper states that European funds should be made available to help these lines develop in future. These "motorways of the sea" should be part of the Trans-European network (TEN-T).
2. The "motorways of the sea" concept introduces new intermodal maritime-based logistics chains in Europe, which should bring about a structural change in transport organization. These chains are expected to be more sustainable, and should be commercially more efficient, than road-only transport. The concept is based on high quality, frequent and regular maritime links between sea routes and a limited number of ports or port regions with sufficient capacity and with very good hinterland connections. In addition they can bypass natural barriers such as the Alps and the Pyrenees and will ensure better access to peripheral regions.

3. Road freight transport in the European Union is currently expected to increase by 70% by 2020 and even double in the new Member States. Motorways of the sea will offer a competitive alternative to road transport, and can absorb a significant part of this increase. Motorways of the sea are thus expected to improve access to markets throughout Europe, and bring relief to over-stretched European road system. For this purpose, more efficient use will have to be made not only of maritime transport resources, but also of potential in rail and inland waterway, as part of an integrated transport chain. Intermodal transport based upon short sea shipping is more energy efficient, emits fewer pollutants, is less noisy and takes up less land compared to road transport – the success of the project will help to make the European transportation system more sustainable.

4. The adoption of Article 12a of the TEN-T Guidelines of 29 April 2004 by the Council and European Parliament gives a legal framework for funding the “motorways of the sea”. Article 12a TEN-T gives three main objectives for motorways of the sea projects:

- (a) freight flow concentration on sea-based logistical routes;
- (b) increasing cohesion;
- (c) reducing road congestion through modal shift.

5. Four corridors have been designated for the setting up of projects of European interest:

(a) Motorway of the Baltic Sea (linking the Baltic Sea Member States with Member States in Central and Western Europe, including the route through the North Sea/Baltic Sea canal) (by 2010);

(b) Motorway of the Sea of western Europe (leading from Portugal and Spain via the Atlantic Arc to the North Sea and the Irish Sea) (by 2010);

(c) Motorway of the Sea of south-east Europe (connecting the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus) (by 2010);

(d) Motorway of the Sea of south-west Europe (western Mediterranean, connecting Spain, France, Italy and including Malta and linking with the Motorway of the Sea of south-east Europe and including links to the Black Sea) (by 2010).

6. These corridors provide one essential part of the projects: the "floating infrastructures" of European seas. However, it is up to industry, Member States and the Community to implement financially and operationally sound projects to use these maritime resources better for new intermodal maritime-based transport systems. By 2010, a fully-fledged network of motorways of the sea should be established throughout Europe on the corridors mentioned above.

7. To make motorways of the sea a success, three conditions must be present for each project:

(a) First, in order to obtain the necessary concentration of freight flows, choices have to be made concerning ports and intermodal corridors and services;

(b) Second, all actors in the supply chain have to be committed to these projects;

(c) Third, Motorways of the Sea need to feature the best available quality throughout the chain in order to be attractive for users.

8. The first Ministerial Conference on the preparation of the future Motorways of the Sea, was held in January 2006 in Slovenia. Co-hosted by the European Commission, the conference gathered over 100 participants from industry, Member States and the European Parliament to discuss the challenges and opportunities of the Motorways of the Sea. Key issues on the agenda of the conference included the selection of ports and port regions, maritime links and the question of financing.

9. Highlighting the importance of the initiative, Vice-President Barrot said: "In order to remain competitive, European industry needs an efficient and reliable transport system. Shifting more freight transport to the sea will contribute to more environmentally friendly traffic and reduce congestion. Motorways of the sea can be a practical and relatively low-cost solution."

10. One of the challenges is to concentrate the efforts of all actors concerned - both public and private - in order to identify the routes and subsequently implement the projects.

11. Conclusions adopted by the Conference are reproduced below.

Ministerial Conference on the Motorway of the Sea
Ljubljana, Slovenia, 24 January 2006

Conclusions adopted by the Conference

1. Maritime transport is the backbone of international trade and it offers a great potential to enhance intra-community commercial exchanges. Our economies need reliable and efficient maritime links. Any policy for enhancing them has to be in line with the needs of industry. The European maritime industry already successfully operates a number of such links based upon market demand.
2. “Motorways of the Sea“ is a new concept in European transport policy which will build upon this experience. They are set up in order to combine the efforts to promote modal shift and cohesion and improve maritime links, taking into account initiatives by Member States and by the Commission.
3. The ambitious objectives of high quality Motorways of the Sea to concentrate the flow of goods in maritime-based logistic links requires very good preparation that should include the following elements:
 - (a) the identification of maritime links that have the potential to become Motorways of the Sea, on the basis of the analysis of existing or new and viable maritime links, that are regular and frequent, to reduce road bottlenecks and/or improve the access to insular or peripheral regions and States. This must take account of traffic demand and corresponding market studies as well as the social and environmental impacts;
 - (b) a systematic analysis of the needs of social and economic actors that should be made aware of the advantages offered by these new maritime links which can only become viable where there is a commitment to use them;
 - (c) the identification of the criteria and needs for the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea, essential for the identification of ports to be integrated into the logistic chain of the Motorways of the Sea, taking into account the characteristics of each Motorway of the Sea corridor;
 - (d) measures that should lead to a concentration in the traffic on the Motorways of the Sea ports or port regions and links which are very important for the viability of the Motorways of the Sea. These include the selection of Motorways of the Sea links in conformity with the TEN-T Regulation and by using quality criteria. Here, the impact on competition requires close attention, in particular for existing maritime links. Therefore any selection made should be open and transparent;
 - (e) the in-depth analysis of the Motorways of the Sea projects from a financial, legal and technical point of view and coordination of community, national, regional and private sector investments for financing the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea;
 - (f) the removal of the remaining obstacles that hinder the development of Motorways of the Sea, e.g. by reducing administrative burdens for customs and inspections and by developing electronic one stop shops;

(g) the use where appropriate of the existing possibility of alternative security agreements for short sea shipping as provided for in Regulation (EC) N° 725/2004, guaranteeing an adequate level of protection, while decreasing the administrative burden;

(h) The Motorways of the Sea should preferably also include inland rail and/or inland waterways freight transport services thereby contributing to more sustainable and integrated door-to-door services;

(i) Quality Motorways of the Sea require new state of the art technology which, if included and promoted accordingly, will attract young people to the maritime profession;

(j) The cooperation between the Member States concerned by the Motorways of the Sea corridors should be developed for instance through Memoranda of Understanding or through master plans for these corridors. It is also important to ensure a good exchange of information between actors involved in the preparation of the different Motorways of the Sea corridors in order to maintain coherence of the overall approach;

(k) Member States are urged to give a clear priority to the Motorways of the Sea in the framework of the TEN-T programming and to involve the private sector in order to turn the concept of the Motorways of the Sea into concrete initiatives. The Commission will present in 2007 the first list of specific Motorways of the Sea projects of common interest, resulting from the selection of projects submitted by the Member States in the framework of the TEN-T programme;

(l) It is desirable to organize in due course an event at Ministerial level in order to evaluate the progress made with the preparation and the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea and to ensure adequate EU funding for the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea;

(m) Given the importance of the Motorways of the Sea and the complexity of implementation, the nomination is welcome of a European coordinator to act as a facilitator and to help with the development of a coherent strategy for the implementation of the Motorways of the Sea;

(n) The national and regional public authorities should support the extension of the mandate of the national centres for the promotion of short Sea shipping to include the aspects of intermodality and become also centres for the promotion of intermodal transport and contribute in this context to the Motorways of the Sea;

(o) The Commission, for its part, will take concrete initiatives to enable exchange of information, to identify and promote good practice and to regularly take stock of progress made;

(p) The Member States and the Commission reiterate the importance of the Presidency Conclusions of the Informal Transport Council, Amsterdam, 10 July 2004 on short Sea shipping in the enlarged European Union as a determinant factor for the success of the Motorways of the Sea.
