

Consultation on the Revision 1692/96/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 July 1996 of Community Guidelines on the Development of the Trans-European Transport Network

POSITION PAPER ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN BARGE UNION

1. Well balanced advice of High Level Group Van Miert on the revision of the TEN-guidelines an advised priority projects for the trans-European Transport Networks up to 2020.

The High Level Group has proposed a well balanced and well considered advice to the Commission as regards the Trans-European Networks up to 2020. It proves a very serious approach in examining the conditions of financial support of TEN and priorities which due to a major European interest deserve support.

Stimulation of sustainable development by modal shift

Being aware of the importance of a fully integrated transport network as a prerequisite for the working of the internal market in the European Union a number of major traffic axes has been defined as basis for the definition and nomination of priority projects of a high European added value. Against this background the High Level Group has proposed to support mainly the elimination of bottle necks and missing links in favour of alternatives to road. The Group thus selected projects of a strong socio-economic benefit which are able to improve the quality of transport.

This new corridor approach deserves support .

2. Inland Waterway priority projects

1. In general the proposed Lists with Priority Projects give evidence of a well balanced choice out of a huge number of proposals by the Member States. The decisions in favour of the projects show an overall approach based on well defined criteria.

2. From a socio-economic point of view many Inland Waterway Projects deserve support. In terms of sustainability Inland Waterway Transport has proved to pay an important contribution to the demands

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within the European policy. It is therefore of great importance that the capacities of this mode of transport are used more adequate and as many as bottlenecks in infrastructure are removed. Against this background misunderstandings and differences in interpretation as regards all relevant aspects need to be eliminated.

3. A positive first step towards realisation the aims in European Transport policy in terms of modal shift thus can be seen in the listing of some Inland Waterway Projects in the proposed lists.

The importance of one of the huge Inland Waterway Corridors, the **axe of Rhine-Main-Danube** has been underlined by listing the elimination of several bottlenecks on List 1 of priority projects.

The High Level Group's advise to upgrade one of the major bottlenecks on the Rhine-Main-Danube line – the Straubing-Vilshofen section - according to the demands of the inland navigation industry, which guarantees a draught of at least 2.50 metres during all seasons, deserves full support and should be followed by the Commission equally.

Taking into consideration that this project origins from the existing list of priority projects, it should be implemented without delay.

4. Improvement of the connections between the Seine and the large waterways in Belgium and France offers a substantial contribution to the future development of Trans European Networks. Against this background it is highly regrettable that the Inland waterway **Seine-Scheldt** only is located on the long term list 2. Given the high added value in terms of socio-economic benefit this project needs to be listed on priority list 1 as soon as possible.

5. Many still existing bottlenecks on other major Inland Waterway axes need to be removed without delay and deserve immediate support as well. Amongst them the **East-West Corridor** with bottlenecks on for instance Elbe and Mittellandcanal.

It is therefore highly regrettable that so far Member States failed to propose and support as much as possible Inland Waterway Projects in favour of a modal shift.

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3. Financing and co-funding

1. Under investment in infrastructure of the waterways characterises both the current and the future Member States. Given the scarcity of funds in the national budgets and the actual national infrastructure investment plans this situation seems not improve in the near future.

2. According to the principle of territory the Member State in the current situation is responsible for public financing and the risks inherent in each project which endangers the listing of major projects of a high European added value.

The Group therefore clearly votes in favour of a greater European support for projects of exceptional importance for the European community.

3. The idea of differentiating the intervention rates of Community financing according to the benefits going to other countries, in particular the neighbouring countries could contribute to strengthen the commitment of the Member States in realising the projects and might support the proposed closer cooperation between countries concerned with the same axis.

However it is necessary to remove the discrimination between the different modes with regard to financial support. It is therefore expected that financial support for Inland Waterway projects will be up to at least 20 % as well.

4. Follow up

Experience from earlier projects has shown the necessity of assessment and permanent revisions of priority lists in order to guarantee the realisation of the common aims. While the completion and implementation of projects defined has to be followed carefully new projects which have not yet been defined under the current lists have to be evaluated permanently in order to guarantee the ongoing process within the realisation of the European transport policy.

Many projects with a European dimension still are waiting for on mid and long term completion which without European co-funding might hardly be realised.

The Groups realistic vision supports a future approach in which no single Member State can claim to have an overall picture when determining the priority projects. The suggestion of setting up a

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European Transport Observatory guaranteeing a pan-European approach when defining new projects deserves support and could pay an important contribution to a better overall coordination of the transport needs in an enlarged Europe.

5. Conclusion

The High Level Group has proposed a well balanced and well considered advice to the Commission as regards the Trans-European Networks up to 2020. The findings should seriously be considered as basis for the Commission's considerations when working on the revision of the TEN-guidelines and determine the priority projects within this frame.

In order to stimulate a sustainable development of European society awareness with regard the possibilities and advantages of alternative modes of transport in terms of capacity and environmental friendliness both at national and European level needs to be supported.

As a prerequisite for the proper working of the internal market the realisation of a fully integrated transport network needs to be supported. Against this background any discrimination between modes with regard to general and financial support has to be removed.

Brussels, Rotterdam, August 2003

The European Barge Union EBU was founded on 14 December 2001 by 8 national organisations representing the national inland navigation interests in six different European countries.
The association has its seat in Brussels and in Rotterdam.

EBU represents the interest of inland navigation on a pan European level and deals with all questions, arising out of the future development of the inland navigation industry and inland waterway transport.

To realise this aim EBU is active in the field of

- the development of the European transport policy
- the improvement of the economic position of inland navigation
- the structured cooperation with national and international institutions
- the exchange of information and experience between the parties involved

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