Green Paper on the future of TEN-T policy

2008/2218(INI) - 31/03/2009

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Eva LICHTENBERGER (Greens/EFA, AT) on the Green Paper on the future TEN-T policy. It asks the Commission and Member States to pursue efforts aimed at the enhancement of the existing priority projects. Medium to long term investment shall be continued in coherence with the objective of completing the whole network

The committee welcomes the Green Paper but does not see the rationale for introducing a vague notion of TEN-T conceptual pillar overloading the list of priorities. Members agree to develop a more integrated network approach, reflecting the needs for intermodal connections for citizens and freight. Priority must be given to rail, ports, sustainable maritime and inland waterways and their hinterland connections or intermodal nodes in infrastructure links with and within new Member States. Particular attention must also be paid to cross-border transport links, as well as to better links with airports and sea ports in the trans-European networks.

The report calls on the Commission to provide particular support for priority projects with intermodal links and consistent interoperability that pass through several Member States, since connecting economic areas along these priority projects is a national task.

It notes with approval that environmentally-friendly forms of transport receive a disproportionately large share of consideration in the list of priority projects. Member States are urged to integrate European environmental legislation into decision-making and planning for TEN-T projects, such as Natura 2000, SEA, EIA, Air Quality, Water Framework, and Habitat and Bird Directives.

The report also calls on the Commission, and Member States, as appropriate:

-to intensify its efforts to improve European coordination of territorial development and transport planning by taking account of regional accessibility through improved networks between the regions;

-to give particular priority to key projects relating to the main rail, road and inland waterway routes to ensure cross-border connections with the new Member States and with third countries;

-to integrate green corridors, rail freight networks, European Rail Traffic Management System corridors, maritime "highways", such as short sea shipping, existing inland waterways with limited capacity, dry ports, and urban mobility nodes, as well as the projected extension of the TEN-T to the ENP, Eastern and Mediterranean countries into an intermodal TEN-T concept;

-give sufficient European support to develop the inland waterway infrastructure in Europe, in order to use the full potential of the inland waterways as a sustainable mode of transport;

-to ensure that the expansion of rail freight transport is intensified with a view to higher network efficiency and faster transport;

-to speed up the infrastructure projects linked to TEN-T and financed under the Structural and/or Cohesion funds. Member States should reassess their investment priorities taking into account this approach, in order to speed up the TEN-T projects under their responsibility, particularly in crossborder sections.

Members go on to emphasise the importance of **developing public/private partnerships** to finance TEN-T projects and the need for flexible solutions for problems that arise in works of this scale (geographical and technical difficulties, public opposition, etc.). The committee stresses the need to set up a task force within the TEN-T Executive Agency in order to increase the use of public-private partnership to finance some priority project or sections, and to diffuse the solutions as best practice. Increased reliance on public-private partnerships and the European Investment Bank would not be a substitute for a significant portion of budgetary funding for large-scale projects with an intergenerational pay-back period. Members favour a reconsideration of the TEN-Ts budget by Member States in the context of the mid-term review of the financial perspectives 2009-2010, over drastically cutting back other projects and the ambitions to develop railways and waterways that go hand-in-hand with them.

Lastly, in order to boost the competitiveness of the whole rail TEN network, the Commission is asked to propose a legislative initiative concerning the opening of the rail domestic passenger markets as from 1st January 2012.