

Sustainable future for transport

2009/2096(INI) - 17/06/2009 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to launch a debate on the sustainable future of transport (towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system).

BACKGROUND: transport is an essential component of the European economy. The transport industry at large accounts for about 7% of GDP and for over 5% of total employment in the EU. The European Transport Policy has contributed significantly to the Lisbon Agenda for Growth and Jobs. More limited, however, have been the results with respect to the goals of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: as indicated in the progress report of 2007 ([COM\(2007\)0642](#)), **the European transport system is still not on a sustainable path on several aspects.**

In 2001, the Commission issued a [White Paper](#) setting an agenda for the European transport policy throughout 2010. This programme was updated in the [mid-term review of 2006](#). Approaching the end of the ten-year period, it is time to look further ahead and prepare the ground for later policy developments.

To this end, the Commission launched a reflection exercise, comprising an evaluation study on the European Transport Policy; a debate within three 'Focus Groups'; a study – 'Transvisions' – identifying possible low-carbon scenarios for transport; and a consultation of stakeholders, notably through a High Level Stakeholders' Conference on 9-10 March 2009.

The present Communication summarises the results of this wide reflection. It refers to recent developments of the ETP and outstanding issues. It also looks at the future, identifying trends in transport drivers and the likely challenges they could pose to society. It proposes some intermediate policy objectives, which could be pursued to address the emerging challenges in the transport sector. It describes some available instruments and possible lines of intervention for achieving the stated objectives.

The ideas put forward in this Communication are meant to stimulate further debate aimed at identifying policy options, without prejudging the formulation of **concrete proposals in the next White Paper of 2010.**

CONTENT: this Paper states that it is difficult to anticipate which factors will have the greatest influence in shaping the future of transport, but it identifies **6 main trends** that will certainly pose challenges to our mobility system: (i) ageing; (ii) migration; (iii) environmental sustainability; (iv) fossil fuel scarcity; (v) urbanisation and (vi) globalisation.

The goal of the European Transport Policy is to establish a sustainable transport system that meets society's economic, social and environmental needs and is conducive to an inclusive society and a fully integrated and competitive Europe. The ongoing trends and future challenges highlighted above point to the need for **satisfying a rising demand for 'accessibility'** in a context of growing sustainability concerns. The most immediate priorities appear to be the better integration of the different modes of transport as a way to improve the overall efficiency of the system and the acceleration of the development and deployment of **innovative technologies.**

The communication transforms the above priorities into more operational goals, proposing **seven broad policy objectives** for consideration:

1. **quality transport that is safe and secure:** an improvement of the overall quality of transport, including personal security, the reduction of accidents and of health hazards, the protection of

passengers' rights and the accessibility of remote regions, must remain a high priority of transport policy. Road safety will remain an issue of concern. It is also necessary to: (i) improve safety and security conditions, attention should be given to the issue of privacy and data protection that can arise in relation to the means employed for surveillance, registration and control purposes; (ii) supply people with reduced mobility with comfortable transport solutions; (iii) ensure a safer and more secure urban environment.

2. **a well maintained and fully integrated network:** a better exploitation of the network's capacity and of the relative strengths of each mode could contribute significantly to reducing congestion, emissions, pollution and accidents. With regard to passenger transport, the integration of aviation with high-speed rail will be a crucial development. Concerning freight transport, an intelligent and integrated logistic system must become a reality, where development of ports and intermodal terminals is key element. The above-described urbanisation trend will make 'modal shift' towards more environmentally friendly modes particularly important in the context of urban transport. Infrastructure should be well maintained and improvement works coordinated. New infrastructure should be planned and prioritised with a view to maximising socio-economic benefits taking into account externalities and effects on the total network.
3. **more environmentally sustainable transport:** lowering consumption of non-renewable resources is essential for all aspects of transport systems and their use. For some aspects, in view of the long time required to effect change, long term strategies are required to provide assurance for different actors in the market. In devising the future of the transport system, all elements of sustainability should be taken into account. This concerns the operation of transport means (emissions, noise) as well as the provision of infrastructure (land occupancy, bio-diversity);
4. **keeping the EU at the forefront of transport services and technologies:** "soft infrastructures", like intelligent transport systems for road (ITS) and traffic management systems for rail ([ERTMS](#)) and aviation (Single European Sky's [SESAR](#)), backed by Galileo, can optimise the use of the network and improve safety. Innovative vehicle technology can lower emissions, reduce oil dependency and increase comfort. Lastly, the development of technological solutions for sustainable transport is also important to promote growth and safeguard jobs;
5. **protecting and developing the human capital:** transport workers in some sectors may be displaced from their jobs as a result of the adjustment to a radically different economic and energy context. It is important to ensure that such change is well anticipated and managed, so that changing conditions will also be a source of new jobs and that transport workers can participate in, and respond to, the process. This can be done through a range of instruments, including information and consultation of workers, social dialogue, early identification of skills shortages, training, and ensuring that any restructuring is carried out in a socially responsible way. It must also be ensured that working conditions are maintained or improved. Differences in rights and social conditions between Member States should not result in a race to the bottom and become a factor of competitiveness.
6. **smart prices as traffic signals:** in transport, like in any other sector, there cannot be economic efficiency unless the prices reflect all costs – internal and external – actually caused by the users. The transport system would particularly benefit from better price signals. The next decade is likely to be one of transition for the transport system. New practices and new technologies will emerge; long-term investments, for example in infrastructure, will be made. Europe will have to live with these choices for a long time: it is therefore essential that they are guided by correct price signals.
7. **planning with an eye to transport: improving accessibility:** many public services have been progressively centralised with a view to increasing efficiency. The distances between the citizens and the service providers (schools, hospitals, shopping malls) have been on the increase. Firms have followed the same trend by keeping a smaller number of production, storage and distribution centres. The trend towards the concentration of activities has produced a large amount of 'forced' mobility, owing to a worsening of accessibility conditions. When taking land-use planning or location decisions, public authorities and companies should take into account the consequences of their choices in terms of travel needs of clients and employees in addition to the transport of goods. Sound planning should also facilitate the seamless integration of the different transport

modes. Transportation needs can also be reduced by increasing ‘virtual’ accessibility through information technology (teleworking, e-Government, e-Health, etc.).

The Commission puts forward **some suggestions on how the available policy instruments could be activated** to reach those goals and respond to the sustainability challenge:

- the optimal functioning of the transport system requires **full integration and interoperability** of the individual parts of the network, as well as interconnection between different (modal) networks. Well focused infrastructure expansion will help avoiding congestion and time losses. In this respect, infrastructure needs to be carefully planned and prioritised with a view to optimising transport chains and the overall transport network;
- **find the resources for sustainable transport**: the transition towards a low carbon economy will impose a substantial overhaul of the transport system which will require considerable and well coordinated funding, but the necessary resources will be difficult to find;
- **accelerate the transition to a low-carbon society and lead global innovation**: (i) adopt technologies to build lower and zero-emission vehicles and for the development of alternative solutions for sustainable transport; (ii) set open standards, ensuring interoperability, increasing R&D expenditures for technologies that are not yet mature for market application; (iii) define a clear legal and regulatory framework – e.g. for liability and privacy issues – and promoting best practice examples; (iv) foster R&D expenditures towards sustainable mobility, for example through the European Green Cars Initiative and Joint Technology Initiatives;
- **improve the legislative framework**: (i) further promote market opening and fostering competition; (ii) include administrative simplification aiming at reducing unnecessary burdens on transport companies; (iii) evolve the regulatory framework towards harmonised environmental obligations, effective supervision, uniform protection of workers conditions and users’ rights;
- **educate, inform and involve citizens**: greater public involvement in transport planning can be ensured by recourse to participatory instruments, namely open consultations, surveys and stakeholders’ representation in decision processes;
- **improve governance** through effective and coordinated action, notably in two areas: (i) interoperability standards; (ii) the urban challenge.
- **promote the external dimension**: the European transport policy needs therefore to think and act internationally to ensure further integration with its neighbouring countries and advance Europe’s economic and environmental interests in the global context.

The Commission encourages all interested party to contribute to the consultation exercise launched by the present Communication by **30 September 2009**.