Transport: public services and state aid

1995/2102(INI) - 15/01/1997

The rapporteur, Mr Castricum (PSE, NL), was in favour of including in the Treaty a commitment to reinforce the public aspect of the transport service. As regards the issue of subsidies, he made a distinction between new networks and the costs of modernising and operating existing networks. The Commission, in his opinion, should comprehensively assess the situation throughout the EU and decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether additional rules should be laid down at EU level to regulate the market, particularly in the cross-border regions. Commissioner Kinnock did not agree with the idea of including a specific article on the public service in the Treaty. Instead of a new legal basis, he advocated inserting in Article 3 of the Treaty a reference to the promotion of services of general interest, as proposed by the Commission in its ad hoc communication. This reference would also cover the area of transport. As for financing this type of service, Commissioner Kinnock stressed that the relevant decision should be made by the competent authorities at national level. However, the Commission should establish a reference legal framework valid for the whole EU and should regulate the issue of subsidies according to the principles of transparency and proportionality, thus avoiding any sort of state aid being used to cover losses caused by inefficient management of the public service.