

Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network

2001/0229(COD) - 14/04/2004 - Council position

The Council subscribes to the necessity that the Community legal framework governing the development of the trans-European transport network be adapted to the needs of an enlarged Europe so as to achieve a coherent, efficient and sustainable transport system. The Council introduced the following amendments: - as regards the "priorities" for the trans-European transport network : the Council highlights the importance of promoting the interconnection of national networks, whilst also taking into consideration the high transport costs of islands and peripheral areas. The common position refers generally to the gradual achievement of an interoperable rail network including routes adapted for freight transport. The Council also subscribes to the promotion of long-distance and short sea shipping as well as to the development of sustainable mobility of persons and goods; - environmental protection in the framework of transport projects: the Council clearly states that that Member States shall take account of the results of environmental assessments in the preparation of plans and programmes. The Commission shall consider these results in its report on the guidelines and in possible legislative proposals for their review; - introduction of the new concept of the "motorways of the sea": the specific projects - which give concrete expression to the concept of "motorways of the sea" - shall be defined by the Commission within 3 years. The Council is of the opinion that this new framework should also allow for existing links to be improved; in that regard, it should be possible to promote transport of persons and goods, when freight is dominant. The common position states unequivocally that public funding (start-up aid) in the framework of "motorways of the sea" may not lead to distortions of competition. This aid should be granted on the basis of the same criteria as those applicable under the Marco Polo programme, whilst the granting of Community financial assistance under the two instruments should not be cumulative; - the Council endorses the possibility to designate an European Coordinator in order to coordinate the implementation of projects. The Council emphasises in its common position the particular competence of the Coordinator for cross-border projects and the importance of the cooperation with Member States in fulfilling the tasks assigned to the Coordinator; - with regard to the projects of common interest, which are considered priority projects : the Council's common position underlines the importance of speeding up the implementation of the TEN-T projects, the Council welcomes the provisions on the declaration of European interest for Trans-national projects (Article 19a), which will allow a priority treatment of these projects in the framework of the Community funding. The Council states that this declaration is made in accordance with the Treaty. Given that cooperation between all Member States is a main element for the realisation of the projects, the Council deems it appropriate that the Commission consults all Member States concerned in case of a significant delay. Considering the financial and technical importance of the projects, the situation shall be examined by the Commission in an active follow-up, possibly resulting in the adoption of appropriate measures, while Member States have the opportunity to submit observations. The Commission should refrain from any measure that would penalise a Member State not responsible for the delay. As regards coordinated actions and trans-national enquiries concerning technically and financially indivisible cross-border sections, the Council is of the view that the Member States concerned shall deploy their best efforts within the existing framework. The Council could agree to the list of priority projects as proposed by the Commission - which was established on the basis of the work of the Van Miert High Level Group -, on which work should start before 2010; for technical reasons, one project was added to the list. The Council's common position incorporates the main features of the amendments as adopted by the European Parliament in its first reading of the proposal of 30 May 2002 and its renewed referral of 11 March 2004 respectively. However, and as a matter of principle, in the common position, no reference is made to specific projects in the text of the recitals or in that of the enacting terms; such references can only be found in Annex III, where the projects are clearly identified. - the Council shares Parliament's view that, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty, any decision on Community guidelines for the development of trans-European transport network, including on specific projects

following these guidelines, has to be taken via the co-decision procedure; - the Council shares Parliament's concerns in relation to the protection of the environment in the framework of the preparation and realisation of transport projects. The provisions on the strategic environmental assessment have been adapted accordingly; - fully in keeping with Parliament's opinion, the Council has introduced some modifications of the text in order to underline the necessity of territorial cohesion by linking islands, peripheral regions and regional airports to the network. Furthermore, the common position reflects the Council's agreement with Parliament concerning the importance of inland waterways; - like Parliament, the Council is of the opinion that public support in the form of start-up aid for "motorways of the sea" projects should not lead to distortion of competition. The Council also endorses that waterways or canals linking two motorways of the sea or sections thereof shall be part of the TEN-T and that activities ensuring year-round navigability may form a project; - as regards the European Coordinator, the Council adheres to Parliament's view that the Parliament has a role to play in the designation of Coordinator and should be informed about his work. The common position reflects furthermore the importance of the consultation of regional and local authorities; - finally, Annex III on priority projects: several amendments to priority projects in Annex III of the Parliament are accepted: clarification of alignment at Divaca and Ronchi south in project 6; explicit mention of Algeciras-Bobadilla freight line as part of project 16; explicit mention of the North/Baltic Sea canal; inclusion of Prague-Linz as a branch of project 22. The inland waterway project Seine-Scheldt is also accepted as a new project no 30, as it supported both by the Common Position and the Parliament.