

# Agenda 2000: trans-European networks, rules for granting Community financial aid

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The importance and potential of the transeuropean networks (TENs) for economic growth, competitiveness and jobs is now beyond dispute. As the first programming period for the TENs (1995-99) draws to a close, the Commission is presenting a proposal to amend Regulation 2236/95. This will cover the period 2000-2006, i.e. the period of the next Financial Perspective and enlargement. The TENs come under Agenda 2000 in connection with their funding, which is drawn from various sources: budget headings B5-700, 710-720 and 721, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Investment Fund (EIF) and the EIB. The report by Edward KELLETT-BOWMAN (EPP, UK) was adopted under the cooperation procedure. (N.B. If the Amsterdam Treaty enters into force before the procedure is completed, the codecision procedure will apply to this report.) While judging the Commission's proposal favourably, the committee puts forward a number of amendments to improve the initial text. -Several amendments are designed to obtain more information: \* With regard to the various sources of funding for TENs projects, the committee believes it is not enough simply to know the overall cost of a project. Information is needed on all components of the funding provided and the origin of the resources (whether from the EU or other sources: national, regional or local government bodies or the private sector). The Commission is asked to provide such information for projects in the three areas of the TENs: transport, energy and telecommunications. MEPs also want any application for financial assistance to include the results of a cost/benefit analysis, including an assessment of the potential economic viability and financial profitability of the project. Applicants are to be required to provide the Commission with any relevant additional information it requests. In addition, in order to obtain a good and full understanding of a project, information on its consistency with regional planning and its foreseeable socio-economic effects should be included. A further selection criterion will be the impact of projects on national, regional and local planning. \* Another improvement with regard to information: the Commission is requested to report annually to Parliament on the content and implementation of the programmes. In order to raise the profile of EU funding, plaques with the EU emblem, showing that the Community has provided financial assistance for a project, should be placed on sites visible to the public. - As regards the overall reference budget proposed by the Commission for 2000-2006, the amount of 5.5bn (as compared to the 2.345bn allocated for 1993-99) is not challenged by the committee. However, it does point out that the level of appropriations will be set each year by the budgetary authority subject to the ceiling laid down in the new Financial Perspective. Regarding the areas on which funds are to be spent under the heading of transport networks, the committee proposes that 55% at least should go on rail projects, 25% at most on road projects and 15% on traffic and telematics projects. The remaining funds should be allocated to waterways, seaports, airports and inland waterway ports. The committee also says that EU funding for these areas should be shared equally (50-50) between priority projects (the Essen list of priority projects) and other projects. With a view to enlargement, MEPs stressed the need to ensure coordination between the TENs, the Phare programme and the pre-accession structural policy instrument (ISPA). Lastly, the committee proposes introducing a review clause in case the regulation is extended beyond 2006.