

Trans-European networks for transport, telecommunications, energy: granting of Community financial aid

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The European Commission has presented its 2001 Annual Report on the Trans-European Networks (TEN) to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2001 was the first year of implementation of the 2001-2006 Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Transport TEN set up under the TEN Financial Regulation (Council Regulation 2236/95/EC). The MIP was established to streamline and improve the management of the transeuropean transport network: it encompasses the on-going "Essen" priority projects plus the new policy priorities, namely the Galileo project, the removal of bottlenecks on the TEN-T rail network, cross-border projects and intelligent transport systems for the road and air systems. Concrete progress was made in the following areas: - Energy: by the end of 2001, the state of play with the Essen priority projects was as follows: six priority projects were completed (the five gas projects and the Portugal-Spain electricity link), one priority project was being implemented (the Italy-Greece electricity link) and three priority projects were in the redefinition/authorisation phases (the France-Spain, France-Italy and East-West Denmark electricity links). In fact, the Italy-Greece electricity link entered the final construction and test phases during 2001, and went into operation in July 2002. - Telecommunications: increased attention was paid to business plans by means of the support project BPS (Business Planning Service), which gave expert advice to the project participants to help them redress this deficit. - Transport : 2001 can be described as a successful year for the implementation of the 14 projects identified by the Essen European Council. Two of these projects were completed, most of the others progressed well in line with the foreseen schedule, and only a few encountered constraining problems or delays. - Intelligent Transport Systems : in 2001, various phases of projects funded before the MIP was adopted were completed, and the six projects begun within the MIP framework produced their first results. The six euro-regional projects now covering 14 Member States have led to the deployment on the trans-European road network (TERN) of inter alia traffic and weather monitoring systems, data exchange, and traffic control and information applications (e.g. variable message signs). Particular achievements have been made in the field of information systems and services, with a focus on the development of Internet-based information services provided to users by motorway operators. The results achieved in 2001 also indicate the substantial development of and potential for using new sources for data collection and provision of services: for example, pilot studies have focused on the use of mobile phones to calculate and provide travel times services on motorways. The appropriations allocated under the TEN 2001 budget amount to: - Transport: EUR 563 million; - Energy: EUR 19 million; - Telecommunications: EUR 30.4 million. As regards transport, the Commission received 439 requests for financial assistance in 2001 (242 for MIP and 197 non-MIP, see point 4 for further details), a few of them for relatively minor sums. The measure to limit financial assistance for transport projects to a minimum of EUR 1 million was broadly applied in 2001 and helped successfully to reduce the number of decisions (only 18 actions received support of less than EUR 1 million). The total requested support was EUR 2 270 million (EUR 1 016 million for MIP actions and EUR 1 254 million for non MIP). The TEN-T financial assistance Committee met three times in 2001. Two favourable opinions were delivered covering 137 projects and studies (53 non-MIP and 84 MIP), for which the Commission proposed financial assistance totalling EUR 563 million. As can be seen from Table 3, the Commission has continued to concentrate a large part of its available resources (44%) on the 14 specific "Essen" projects. While priority projects (three of which have been completed: Malpensa airport, Cork-Dublin-Belfast-Larne railway line and Oresund Fixed Link) and other projects absorbed a smaller share of commitment appropriations than in previous years, the share going to ITS (intelligent transport systems) actions increased. Concerning energy, the financial assistance Committee approved 13 feasibility and other studies for which the Commission proposed financial assistance of EUR 18.9 million.

On the issue of telecommunications, the Committee delivered a favourable opinion on the Commission proposal to grant Community aid to 35 projects of common interest selected from among the responses to the 2000/02 call. The total support proposed was EUR 29.5 million. A number of actions in TEN were financed by the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, and by the European Investment Bank (EIB) loans. Lastly, the PHARE, CARDS, TACIS, MEDA, ISPA instruments ensured financing of actions in candidate and third countries.