Transport policy: proposals and action programme for 2010. White Paper

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The committee adopted the report by Juan de Dios IZQUIERDO COLLADO (PES, E) on the Commission's White Paper. In its introductory remarks, the report called for responsibility for transport policy to be shared between the Union and the Member States in the future constitution and urged the Commission to establish a clear timetable for the proposed policy measures. The committee also stressed that a balance must be struck between sustainable, environmentally-friendly transport systems and the need for transport policy to contribute to economic and social cohesion. It pointed out, for example, that the road network was of great importance in outlying and sparsely populated areas, whose needs must also be taken into account. Enlargement was also considered a vital issue in the framework of a future transport policy. The Commission was urged to submit a communication on the transport situation in the applicant countries, the level of sustainability, the incorporation of the 'acquis communautaire' and the effect this had had, including specific proposals to deal with them before 2004. With regard to land transport, the committee proposed that high-capacity north-south and east-west corridors be created, in order to optimise goods traffic and ensure operational links with the applicant countries. The Commission was also urged to submit a report on best practices for an EU-wide uniform benchmarking system for urban transport, covering public passenger transport as well as motorised private transport. On trans-European networks, the committee said that the timescales for some of the projects were too long and should be speeded up, particularly those relating to the Alps and Pyrenees. Focusing on rail transport in particular, it called on the EU to promote and finance EU-wide harmonisation of gauges and to create rail lines designated for fast freight transport, incorporating the extensive European network of abandoned rail lines. With regard to sea transport and inland waterways, the report called for coordinated measures to be taken in the areas of shipping, ports and intermodality policy in order to boost the role of ports as transport network hubs. The regulatory framework for short sea shipping and inland waterway transport should be simplified by encouraging the creation of one-stop offices and easing administrative and customs formalities. MEPs insisted that with regard to market access to port services, equal conditions of competition in and between ports should be created. The committee also wanted to see various measures taken to boost inland waterway transport. As regards air transport, the committee expressed support for the single sky and called for Community accession to Eurocontrol at the earliest opportunity. The Commission was also urged to work vigorously within the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) for the introduction of an aviation fuel tax. Turning to transport safety, the report proposed that a European road safety agency be set up with the aim of providing policy support, speeding up developments in road safety and providing access to road safety data and best practice information across the EU. The Commission was also urged to adopt as soon as possible the third Road Safety Action Programme 2002-2010. On the question of charging for transport use, the committee supported levying charges for the use of infrastructure and related external costs for all transport modes and welcomed the Commission's intention to present a proposal on this subject. Finally, MEPs called for a European transport fund to be set up within the Financial Perspective as a financial instrument with a substantial budget allocation, which would be applied across all the Member States and deal with all modes of transport.