Transport: public services and state aid

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The Transport Committee unanimously approved the draft resolution on public transport and State aid. In his report, Mr Frits CASTRICUM (PSE, N) began by examining the three essential roles of public transport, namely the social role - which relates to the user's non-absolute right to mobility - , the economic role and finally the 'environmental' role. On this basis he went on to define as public any collective transport system which is accessible, for a payment, to each citizen and which is organised according to a pre-established timetable and in a regular network where connections can be made; this meant that charter flights, for example, would be excluded from the 'public transport' category. The rapporteur then went on to discuss the efficiency and profitability of public transport services and his diagnosis of the current situation lead him to acknowledge the demands of public transport companies for greater autonomy, something which did not necessarily signify their privatisation, together with the establishment of a competitive system (for example, by public tendering arrangements for the local and regional rail and road transport sectors). Finally, Mr Castricum examined the conditions and procedures for granting aid to public transport services, concluding in the draft resolution that aid should be subordinate to proper financial allowances, that it should not be used to cover up for business losses and that it should not discriminate between different transport providers, but be as transparent as possible. The draft resolution also advocates that a new article, devoted specifically to public services, should be included in the Treaty revised by the IGC.