Connecting the Union's tranport infrastructure network. A cooperative pan-European transport network policy

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this communication is to define the outline of a pan-European transport network policy, grouping the EU, the countries of central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics and the countries of the Mediterranean region. The goal is to create interoperable infrastructures which use intelligent transport systems and are compatible with environmental objectives. SUBSTANCE: The interconnection of the EU's transport infrastructures with those of its neighbours calls for the establishment of a pan-European strategy. The Commission believes it is vital to define a global strategy for a pan-European network, from the vantage points of both geographical scope and aspects covered. The pan-European network will cover not only western Europe but also the countries of central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics and the Union's partners in the Mediterranean region. This global approach will have to take account of the particular situation of the applicant countries, which are in process of evaluating their transport infrastructure needs together with the Union. - The Commission's approach presupposes the creation of a large-scale partnership mechanism encompassing five areas of action for sustainable mobility: 1) the definition of pan-European corridors and areas, as a framework for ensuring efficient transport services with all the Community's neighbours. The Commission will encourage all the countries of Europe, the international financial institutions and the private sector to make every effort to establish these corridors. Hitherto, the main corridors have concerned road and rail transport and, to a lesser extent, inland waterways (e.g. navigation of the Danube). However, the aim of a specifically pan-European corridor is to promote multimodal transport from the moment of conception. The corridor model is far less suitable for the Black Sea and Aegean regions, the Mediterranean basin and the Adriatic. The notion of 'zone' has therefore been added to complement it, the aim being to institute an improved combination of links, nodes and navigation and aviation facilities; 2) extension of the trans-European networks to the applicant countries as part of the pre-accession strategy; 3) a common European approach to transport technology, especially so as to ensure interoperability (the main concern here is to harmonize the technical specifications and standards applicable to transport); 4) the promotion of intelligent transport technologies across the pan-European network (telematics, automatic signalling, etc); 5) R & D cooperation (especially within the fifth framework programme for research and technological development, in which a substantial part of strategic transport research has been concerned with bringing in the countries of central and eastern Europe). The Commission considers that attention must be paid in all circumstances ro environmental concerns in the planning and development of the pan-European transport network: sustainable mobility in Europe taken as a whole must be an integral part of the development of transport infrastructures. Strategic environmental assessment, accompanied by social and economic evaluation, must be the cornerstone of the entire strategy for the pan-European network. Partnership will also have to embrace the financial, institutional and legislative aspects: - Concerning the financial aspects, most infrastructural investment will come from national sources (a large proportion being supplied by the public sector). The necessary investment will, however, also require private-sector support, as well as appropriate Community funding to trigger it off. In the case of the applicant countries, aid will be supplied by the international financial institutions (the BERD, the World Bank, the EIB, the EIF). - With respect to the pre-accession strategy instruments, a trans-European networks programme must be created involving a number of countries. This will strengthen the overall functioning of the market economy in the applicant countries and accelerate their adoption of the acquis communautaire and the full development of joint policies. For the TACIS countries and the Mediterranean basin countries, consideration will be given to putting more stress on expenditure on transport networks. The Commission will take the necessary action to ensure horizontal coordination and compatibility between the various budget instruments for transport network investment. - The institutional and legislative aspects of

partnership will be based on the broad spectrum of existing organizations: the Helsinki Pan-European Transport Conference, the G-24 transport working group, the ECMT and the conference of transport ministers of the Mediterranean countries.