Trans-European high-speed rail system: interoperability, implementation. Report

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PURPOSE: to report to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation and effects of Directive 96/48 concerning the interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system. CONTENT: The report provides a first assessment on the progress made towards achieving interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system, as requested in Directive 96/48/EC. Following the Treaty (Arts. 154 and 155), the Community shall contribute to the establishment and development of trans-European networks in the area of transport. to achieve these objectives, the Community shall implement any measure that may prove necessary to ensure the interoperability of the networks, in particular in the field of technical harmonisation. As regards the rail sector, a first step has been taken by the Council in 1996 with the adoption of Directive 96/48/EC on the interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system. The Directive defines interoperability as 'the ability of the trans-European high-speed rail system to allow the safe and uninterrupted movement of high speed trains which accomplish the specified levels of performance. This ability rests on all the regulatory, technical and operational conditions which must be met in order to satisfy essential requirements'. These requirements are defined with particular attention to safety, reliability, health and environmental protection for the following sub-systems: infrastructure, energy, control-command and signalling, rolling stock, maintenance, environment, operation and users. technical specifications for interoperability (TSIs) are being drawn up by the European Association for Railway Interoperability (AEIF) which acts as the joint representative body defined in the Directive, bringing together representatives of the infrastructure managers, railway companies and industry. In 1997, a model structure for the TSIs was agreed by the Committee set up according to the provisions of the Directive; it is expected that the final draft TSIs will be delivered in 2000. TSIs determine the interoperability constituents and interfaces which must be covered by European specifications, including European standards, existing or to be developed; in the latter case, a mandate has been agreed with the European standardisation bodies (CEN/CENELEC/ETSI) to ensure that the European standards will be available. A methodology to assess the estimated costs and benefits of the technical solutions proposed has also been agreed in 1998; this will assist the Committee in order to deliver its opinion on the draft TSIs. Once the TSIs have been adopted and published by the Commission in the Official Journal of the EC, the Member States have to ensure that future high-speed lines projects follow these technical specifications. overall, progress has been made in the TSI definition process, thanks to a structured approach and an early involvement of Member States, through the Committee which has met regularly since late 1996. Basic parts of two TSIs have already been presented to the Committee: those related to the 'control-command andsignalling' and 'maintenance' sub-systems. The other TSIs will be discussed in 1999 and 2000. The deadline for the transposition of the Directive was 08/04/1999, and there are some concerns about the absence of notification of all national measures necessary to ensure the correct implementation of the Directive. In addition, only two bodies have beenpre-notified for carrying out the procedure for the assessment of conformity or suitability for use of interoperability constituents and sub-systems. An overall planning of all tasks needed as a follow-up to Directive 96/48 is given in the Annex, as well as a detailed planning of the development of draft TSIs by the A2EIF. A programme for the development of European standards has been launched on the basis of the work already undertaken for the preparation of the TSIs. The authorities are supervising the creation of those bodies responsible for the conformity evaluation. Major efforts are deployed to ensure that from the year 2000, new HS lines and upgraded lines can be built according to already adopted TSIs and are therefore interoperable. in addition, the conditions to allow a real opening of the rail market for equipment and new forms of operators, should finally be met. One of the clear effects, although not yet very tangible, of the work under the Directive is a change in the traditional relationship between the various infrastructure managers, railway companies and industry. Relations between the bodies have improved with increasing awareness that creating the railway of tomorrow will be beneficial to all concerned. However, it will be important to pay close attention to the

following issues: - the scope: many new and upgraded lines are being built and therefore TSIs need to be applicable as soon as possible. As to the rolling stock, tilting train technology has to be taken into account; - the conventional network: both networks are inextricably linked and interoperability has to go beyond HS lines. the Committee has established the limits of its competences and these limits should be examined more closely. Equally, the Committee recognises that it would be counter-productive to have differing approaches to achieve interoperability on both networks. this also applies to the business and marketing levels. The Commission will soon issue a communication on the subject; - the network in third countries: the greatest possible continuity at borders needs to be guaranteed. the subject needs more in-depth analysis. Acceding countries should not enter in the meantime into any bilateral or multilateral agreements which do not comply with the provisions of the Directive.