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

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In adopting the report by Mr Joaquín SIS CRUELLAS (PPE, E) on the pan-European transport network, the European Parliament supported the concept of pan-European partnerships for the development and coordination of transport networks between the Union and its neighbouring states. It was convinced that improving transport links between the European Union and the neighbouring countries would contribute significantly to the growth, employment and overall competitiveness of the Union. Improving transport infrastructure would also help the applicant countries to prepare for accession (especially landlocked regions). It stressed the importance of coordination of the various participants in this context and called for all relevant Memorandums of Understanding to be concluded so as to make progress on implementing the relevant corridors, and supported the Commission's approach, in selecting projects for support in the neighbouring countries, of applying the same criteria already established in the guidelines for the trans-European networks for selecting projects in the EU. At the same time it called for the aim of shifting traffic to more environmentally friendly modes of transport to be borne in mind when developing transport corridors to neighbouring states, and called on the Commission in this connection to devote particular attention to promoting combined transport and public passenger transport and expanding the rail freight freeways and inland waterways. In the field of research, it stressed that the main emphasis should be placed on strengthening intermodality and the interoperability of different transport systems. It recommended that the concept of pan-European corridors be supplemented with four new transport zones (Europe's Arctic region, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic and Ionian Sea region) and welcomed the new transport route which had been added in south-east Europe (former Yugoslavia). It also welcomed the proposal for an agreement negotiated by the Commission with Switzerland concerning land transport in the Alps. Parliament welcomed the reorientation of the PHARE programme with a view to the forthcoming enlargement, and recommended the establishment of horizontal project infrastructure facilities with which interregional and cross-border projects of European significance could be promoted. It called, in future deliberations on the reorganisation of TACIS and MEDA, for infrastructure improvements, particularly with respect to environmentally friendly rail and inland waterway transport, to be regarded as worthy of encouragement. It called on the European Investment Bank to play a greater role in the expansion of the transport infrastructure in regions neighbouring the EU with long-term and low-interest loans. It called on the Commission to bring the TINA process of assessing the transport infrastructure needs of the associated countries to a swift conclusion and to present the European Parliament with the scheduled report on the economic feasibility of projects in these countries without delay. In the financial field, in the light of the limited financial resources available in the EU's neighbouring countries, Parliament suggested that the concept of public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be extended to infrastructure projects in these countries and called on the Commission to ensure that the appropriate framework conditions were put in place. It expected from the Commission a regular assessment of the implementation of the planned strategy (funding, timetable, etc.) in the applicant countries, and called on it to report on the coordination of the various programmes so far established (PHARE, TACIS, MEDA, INTERREG, TEN).