



Europe's voice for sustainable transport



TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORKS

Options for a sustainable future



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Introduction

The TEN-T were introduced as a requirement in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (Article 129b to 129d and Article 130d). Later, they were grouped under a separate *Title XV - Trans-European Networks* in the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties and became a key element for the creation of the Internal Market and the reinforcement of Economic and Social Cohesion. But while Articles of the Treaty themselves defined the TEN-T, there are no explicit *requirements* for additional infrastructure construction to form the basis for the TEN-T in these articles. Rather they stipulate that the Community action “*shall aim at promoting the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as access to such networks*”¹.

It has, therefore been a great disappointment to NGOs that the Commission and Member States have consistently placed the emphasis on implementation of the TEN-T via infrastructure construction, and have not given sufficient consideration to the link between the TEN-T and other parts of Community law - the Water Framework Directive or the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives for example². These concerns were exacerbated once the Amsterdam Treaty came into force with a strengthened legal requirement to integrate environmental protection and sustainable development requirements into the definition and implementation of EU policies³. These strengthened commitments place more onerous requirements on both the Commission and the Member States in their implementation of the TEN-T.

An important issue that is persistently missing from the Commission’s evaluations is an assessment of whether the TEN-T are in themselves desirable. We share the view of many Transport economists that the job creation potential of the TEN-T has been greatly over-estimated and potential drawbacks such as the additional congestion and environmental impact resulting from the traffic generated by TEN-T construction have only received scant attention⁴, while the zero option is constantly dismissed with economic growth arguments.

Merely by placing the TEN-T under a separate title in 1996 has given it a much higher profile and endorsed its strong priority status, despite economic, social and environmental arguments against its realisation. As such, the revision of the guidelines cannot bring together the TEN-T and transport policy in general, but it can trigger a larger discussion ahead of the next inter-governmental conference in 2004, which has the mandate to make changes to the Treaties. The TEN-T should be integrated into the larger Common Transport Policy and observe all sustainability requirements of the Treaties, rather than constitute a stand-alone Title, with its own commercial objectives and priorities.

1. Trans-European Transport Networks: time for revision

This paper looks at the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) and the discussions surrounding the revision of Decision No 1692/96/EC⁵, and the Regulation 2236/95⁶. The first chapter aims to give an NGO view on the revision of the TEN-T guidelines, while at the same time raising some issues related to the transparency of the process. In a second chapter we will look at what needs to be changed and propose a set of recommendations for a better transport system in Europe.

Given the imminent accession of eight countries in Central and Eastern Europe⁷ to the European Union, this publication will also examine the challenges raised by the extension of the TEN-T and will propose a set of new objectives for the networks, so as to take into account the sustainability objectives promoted by the European Union.

1.1 The TEN-T revision process

To give a better understanding of the guidelines revision, here is an outline of the most important events and expected developments in the process, from 1996 until 2004:

- 1996 – After a long debate between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, the TEN-T Guidelines are adopted (Decision 1692/96/EC), together with the financial guidelines (Regulation 2236/95/EC). The Decision asks for a report before 1 July 1999, with indications for further revision, and regular reports every 5 years after the entry into force of the decision (first in 2001).
- 1998 – The Commission issues a Report⁸, which identifies six main points where changes are needed and announces a broad consultation procedure for the revision of the guidelines, with a White Paper in 1999 and a revision proposal in 2000.
- September 2001 – The Commission publishes the White Paper on “European Transport Policy for 2010: decision time!” which identifies the potential new priority projects for TEN-T.
- October 2001 – The Commission publishes the proposal for a revision of the TEN-T (COM/2001/0544), adding six new priority projects (already mentioned in the White Paper) and repealing three projects that have been already completed. It also proposes to change the 10% ceiling, specified to the financial regulation on TEN-T, to 20%.
- May 2002 – the Parliament adopts the proposal with significant amendments (including an amendment to Article 8, which asks the

Commission to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the TEN-T and TINA (Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment)⁹ immediately.

- September 2002 – The Commission publishes an amended proposal (COM/2002/0542), but as the Council cannot agree on the proposed priority projects, it later announces a new proposal for the end of 2003.
- December 2002 – The Commission, consulting with the Council establishes a High Level group, chaired by Karel van Miert, ex-EC Commissioner, in charge of identifying new priority projects and assisting the Commission to draft the new revision proposal (expected in December 2003). Along with the High Level group, an internal Task force team as well as a number of specialised committees will work on the revision.

Expected events

- *April 2003 – The Van Miert Group presents its report and the list of priority projects.*
- *April 2003 – The Accession Treaties with the 10 Accession Countries are signed. The Trans-European Networks in these countries are part of the Transport maps of the Accession Treaties.*
- *June 2003 – The Commission is expected to publish a Communication on the Pan-European Corridors, indicating the way in which the Eastern European Network will be included in the TEN-T network*
- *December 2003 – The Commission is expected to publish a new proposal for the revision of the TEN-T guidelines, broadly along the lines proposed by the Van Miert high-level group, including the priority projects identified by the group.*
- *2004 – The Inter-Governmental Conference decides on the new Treaty/Constitution.*
- *July 2004 – The Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)(2001/42/EC) enters into force throughout the Union, and all Member States are legally required to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment for TEN-T plans and projects.*

Some general concerns appear however in relation to both the priorities of the revision and to the manner in which the whole process is conducted. Since the beginning of the revision plans, NGOs have made the case for greater participation and transparency. This issue is even more important as all the Community institutions seek ways of bringing the Union closer to the citizen. Given these desires and the additional provisions of the Århus convention on public participation, NGOs hope that the Commission will ensure that they are included in the relevant decision-making fora on this key Community policy area.

As can be seen from the timeline, the revision process of the TEN-T guidelines has already been delayed on several occasions (in 1999, then 2002 when the first revision proposal was dropped). In order to catch up, the whole schedule for the 2003 revision seems to have been drastically reduced, in order to meet the deadline agreed by the European Council in Gothenburg (before the mandate of the present Commission expires), allowing very little, if any, public consultation and comments from the involved stakeholders.

Besides the schedule for the revision, another set of NGO concerns relates to the way in which the Commission has chosen to interpret the need to set new priorities. While Article 5 of Decision 1692/96 refers to a whole array of priority areas¹⁰, the common view adopted by both Member States and the Commission is that the main element of the revision is the definition of priority infrastructure projects to be financed under the TEN-T budget line and the Cohesion Funds. Such a view not only fuels constant arguments between the Member States, but also misses the opportunity to make any radical changes in the way the whole network is integrated into the life of EU citizens, with its environmental and social impacts as well as economic ones.

Although thorough studies have been commissioned and a handful of internal Commission groups are working on the revision, in order to secure support from the Council on the new list of priority projects, DG Transport has called for help from a High Level group chaired by former Commission Vice-President, Karel van Miert. The work of this group, composed of representatives of all Member States and observers from the Accession Countries, will only be known in April 2003 when it is due to report back to the Commission. NGOs are concerned, as little information is available about this High Level group, whose work will set the agenda for the full TEN-T revision. Despite the existence of a methodology for the selection of the new priority projects, there are fears that the process may become dominated by the political agendas of the Member States. NGOs believe that key principles such as Strategic Environmental Assessment, decoupling of transport growth and economic growth, and cost-benefit analysis must instead guide the work of the group.

In the following chapters, we will focus on three main issues: the definition of priorities, the enlargement of the network to the Accession Countries and beyond and the implications of the revision on sustainability.

Summary: the TEN-T revision process

- The decision-making process must be transparent and inclusive
- The revision process must be guided by key principles such as Strategic Environmental Assessment, decoupling and cost-benefit analysis

1.2 Priorities

The 1996 guidelines established the objectives of the TEN-T and, deriving from these, they identified large areas of priority work. However, over the course of recent years, the focus seems to have shifted from the priorities dictated by the Trans-European Networks objectives to pure investment objectives. This could lead to some confusion and a shift in the focus from a question about form to one about content, especially given the important role that the Van Miert High-Level group is playing in the revision process.

Our position is that the priorities have to be set in terms of how we want the transport system to look and what type of development it is foreseen to generate, rather than focus on the bottlenecks and missing links. Although the 2001 Common Transport Policy indicated a preference for the balancing of transport modes, there is no guarantee that simply allocating more money to the “motorways of the sea” or high-speed railway networks will solve the sustainability problems of the European transport system. Similarly, investments in sustainable transport modes may not actually reduce the importance of road transport in the European economy.

The shift in focus from investments in infrastructure to investments in the quality of the service should be the main concern of all further revisions. The assumption that increased infrastructure investment automatically has the greatest economic benefit will only act as a brake to improved transport policy. Increased financial and environmental constraints on new infrastructure construction, together with the potential for new technology to upgrade existing infrastructure, indicate that the priority should be improvements to the system, rather than its extension.

An explicit aim of the recent Commission transport policy documents has been the improvement of the fairness and the efficiency of the European transport system, through a fairer pricing for infrastructure use. The methodology paper and the infrastructure pricing legislation announced in the White Paper on the Common Transport Policy¹¹ have the potential to become one of the best instruments for managing costs and needs related to the transport infrastructure. Such instruments should be given equal importance when discussing the priorities of the TEN-T.

It is also necessary to link the revision of the TEN-T guidelines to ongoing developments in other areas, such as the process of integrating environment into transport policy, also known as the Cardiff process. The original intentions of a trans-European network - efficient transport infrastructure and enhanced economic and social cohesion - will only be achieved when ‘soft’ policy measures will become as important as infrastructure investments. The TEN-T should improve the functioning of the system rather than merely seek to expand that system.

The functioning of the Single Market, seen as vital for European competitiveness, was assumed to require additional infrastructure when the network was designed. This assumption was driven at the time by calls from

some transport lobbies for completion of “missing links” in Europe’s transport infrastructure. To some extent this assumption continues to hold sway. As we have seen, however, this theory is seriously flawed and the extent to which inefficiencies in the system are related to any missing links is particularly questionable. With an increasing realisation in the Commission of the importance of quality issues to drive the development of the TEN-T, it may be possible to move towards a transport system that is fairer, more efficient, and consistent with the sustainability requirements of the Treaties.

Therefore, before any new projects are identified as priority, a careful assessment is needed, which includes far more than cost-benefit analyses, financial risk analyses or simply political preferences. A global impact assessment of the entire spectrum of possible interventions on the transport strategy needs to be carried out, before any European political commitment to undertake any investment is made.

Summary: Priorities

- The TEN-T revision should give priority to the quality of service, rather than to the quantity of available infrastructure
- It should encourage ‘soft’ measures like fairer pricing for infrastructure use, before earmarking money for more transport investments
- The revision must do its best to respect Treaty requirements and to ensure the integration of environmental concerns into the TEN-T policy.

1.3 Enlargement

The preparation for enlargement has to date focused on negotiating the network in the Accession Countries, starting from the already identified TINA corridors. The accession process has thus the same focus on infrastructure construction for TEN-T development as was seen at the start of the TEN-T projects. The functioning of the transport system across the current EU border into the accession countries should not however use the same assumptions of the economic benefits of infrastructure construction. To do so would be to fall into the same trap of confusing quantity with quality and replicate a system that raises huge sustainability problems (in economic, social and environmental terms).

The use of the TINA network as a basis for the extension in the Accession Countries raises also serious environmental sustainability concerns. At the time of the compilation of the TINA report, no environmental assessment of the proposed transport network had been undertaken, and since then, no thorough strategic environmental assessment has been carried out. Therefore, the extended TEN-T maps included in the Accession Treaty¹² send a very bad signal to the Accession Countries, practically giving the

political “go ahead” for a network negotiated on the basis of the political agendas, rather than on systematic assessments.

The Accession Countries still hold extensive natural habitats and rich biodiversity, the protection of which should be a top priority. There are several hundred sites identified as candidate Natura 2000 sites in the Accession Countries, including the Danube Delta and the Biebrza marshes, some of the most important sites in Europe. However, according to research by the authors of this paper the existing transport development plans already threaten many of these sites. For example, in a study on the impact of TINA, BirdLife identified 85 sites that may be affected by such developments, representing 21% of all Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the 10 Accession Countries. Out of these 85 sites roads affect 52, inland waterways affect 34 and rail projects 15. Concerning the 10 Helsinki corridors, the Danube corridor might have the biggest impact affecting up to 16 sites, including the Danube Delta itself. WWF found that no less than 26 potential Natura 2000 site are threatened in Poland by the construction of the Danube-Odra-Elbe waterway⁹.

The up-coming revision, together with the formal accession to the EU of ten new members and the discussions on a Constitutional Treaty, provides an excellent opportunity to make some much-needed changes. While the maps of the transport network in the new countries have been already agreed, there is still room for improvement in terms of traffic demand management policies, social and environmental impact assessments and cost-benefit analysis.

The TEN-T should not adopt a “trans-Europe axis” approach, but instead one focusing on real needs for travel and trade, in a quality of life context. As it stands now, the network needed in the Accession Countries requires far greater financial and institutional commitments than the EU can offer to these countries. The Accession Countries will thus spend more than they can afford on EU priority projects, rather than first meet the needs of their national priorities. Large-scale infrastructure will only encourage the development of transit routes to and from more distant markets. Even if some revenue can be derived from such transit traffic, its contribution to social and economic cohesion is minimal, while the long-term systemic consequences may outgrow the added value brought by such investments.

An example where the “big-project” approach may be unexpectedly dangerous is inland navigation. Although water-based transport is often seen as a more environmentally friendly option, making waterways ready for large volumes of transport is usually done through the construction of costly, vastly damaging infrastructure (dams, barrages, sluices, ports, etc.). Large areas of relatively pristine wetlands and floodplains can still be found in Accession Countries when compared to the current EU-15. Current plans to create the Danube-Odra-Elbe waterway or deepen the Danube for cargo ships could inflict untold damage to the hydrological regimes, floodplains and valuable riverside habitats along the major rivers in Europe. The devastating floods during the summer of 2002 in Central Europe showed that traditional flood protection measures are not a viable option for the future¹³. Clearly

more ecological, innovative floodplain management measures should be sought, these should include a better assessments of river infrastructure projects and the adjacent roads and railroads. This is also consistent with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive for maintaining good ecological status and integrated river basin management.

Moreover, up to this point in time, the TINA process has largely focused on the infrastructure of the Accession Countries, while tackling perceived problems of lower infrastructure density. If interoperability is to be maximised however, the extent to which existing accession country infrastructure can be harnessed will need far greater scrutiny. The maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure, rather than the construction of new infrastructure should be the priority. This requires careful analysis to ensure that the potential for existing infrastructure is maximised, and the provision of an adequate framework for financing such work.

Summary: Enlargement

- Development of transport the accession countries should be based on maintaining and improving the current infrastructure, taking into consideration real needs for travel and trade in the countries themselves.
- Planned developments of transport networks in the accession countries threaten valuable conservation sites and natural habitats, which should be protected under EU environmental legislation.
- Improving the navigability of inland waterways through large-scale infrastructure projects can be disastrous for river floodplains, water regimes and natural habitats and is contradictory to the objectives of the Water Framework Directive

1.4 Sustainability issues

The 2003 revision of the TEN-T guidelines should answer the challenges of sustainable development and bring changes that reflect the latest commitments of the EU Heads of State and the Commission, while at the same time making sure that legislation, such as the Water Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directive, and the SEA Directive, is respected.

In May 2002, the European Parliament made a crucial decision in this direction. During the first reading of the 2001 proposal of the Commission for a revision of the TEN-T guidelines (COM/2001/0544), Members of the European Parliament adopted a number of amendments that would help to increase environmental integration into the transport sector. The most

important of these was the decision to amend the guidelines proposing that the TEN-T immediately be subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

This particular amendment (to Article 8 of the Decision No 1692/96/EC) demanded that “*Strategic assessments of the corridors shall be undertaken immediately by the Commission in such a manner as to reflect the principles and procedures of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and utilising the methodologies that have been developed for this purpose*”. However, at that time, the Commission rejected this amendment and agreed only to continue to develop improved methods of analysis, arguing that doing more would mean a duplication of the Member States' work.

We argue that the Commission would not necessarily 'replace' the obligations of the Member States to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment on transport plans and programmes, but that it would rather play a complementary role. This could, for instance, involve the overall coordination of environmental assessments – a task that is not mentioned in the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC. There are indeed a number of good reasons for having the Commission *co-ordinating* SEAs on TEN-T by ways of amending the current guidelines.

Another reason for concern is compliance with the Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (CE/92/43), also known as the Habitats Directive, and the Directive on the conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC). These Directives aim to contribute to the protection of biodiversity by establishing a European-network of protected areas, called Natura 2000, and protecting threatened species in their natural range.

Any extension of the TEN-T will impact beyond the human and natural environment of the countries planning a project. Impacts will stretch across the network and pose environmental threats to other areas than those crossed by a particular TEN-T corridor. Moreover, both current and future EU Member States have the explicit obligation to establish the Natura 2000 network of protected areas, which already covers more than 15% of the current EU Member States. The needs of maintaining and improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network must be integrated into the TEN-T network as a priority in order to avoid the fragmentation and loss of key habitats and animal and plant populations. In order to assess these “systemic” consequences, Europe deserves to have an impartial body capable of ensuring social, economic and environmental sustainability. This body must be capable of mediating between the often-conflicting interests of individual countries and other third parties, as well as between various Community policies. The Commission cannot hide from this genuine responsibility. It cannot create trans-national plans and programmes and then withdraw from assessing their environmental impacts. Instead, it should be obliged to evaluate carefully the implementation of a European policy like the TEN-T for its overall social, economic and environmental impact, and reinforce the Member States' obligations in this regard.

The new proposals for the revision must ensure that the SEA of the whole network is made compulsory, even if such a proposal may come before the entry into force of the SEA Directive. The extension of the TEN-T network should be the primary focus of such an SEA, in order to avoid the development of projects which conflict with the rest of the *acquis communautaire*, such as the Via Baltica in North-eastern Poland¹⁰, the Kresna Gorge in Bulgaria or the D8 motorway in the Czech Republic. Although requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are already in place in these countries, such an EIA will only occur at a late stage in the process that cannot offer major opportunities to change the course of a damaging road, especially when the road comes recommended by a EU Directive.

Thus the TEN-T guidelines should ensure that national authorities and the European Commission do not allocate any funds to transport projects that endanger present or future Natura 2000 sites. Many of these are already under threat. National governments must ensure that all decisions on spatial planning comply with the EU's environmental *acquis*. In addition to the requirements set out by articles 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive, compliance with the obligations concerning EIA, access to environmental information; protection of freshwater ecosystems as well as river basin management is essential to ensure that new developments and land use planning is undertaken in a way that uses and profits from natural capital without undermining or destroying it.

Apart from purely environmental consequences, the TEN-T revision should retain the element of improved cost-benefit analysis methodologies, and specifically ask for the evaluation of the zero option or the business as usual scenario.

Summary: Sustainability issues

- It is essential to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the whole TEN-T network to evaluate the large-scale environmental social and economic impact of the network; the European Commission is best placed to coordinate this work
- Maintaining and improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas should be integrated into the TEN-T network
- No funds should be allocated to transport projects which may endanger existing or future Natura 2000 sites in the enlarged EU

2. How to make TEN-T part of a sustainable transport policy

This chapter outlines an alternative interpretation of Trans-European Transport Networks. It lists a number of key steps to alter the social role and environmental impacts of TEN-T. The aim is to render the concept of Trans-European Transport Networks socially just, economically fair and environmentally sound, so that they will make a true contribution to sustainable transport development in Europe.

2.1 Reconstructing the basis

The Treaty of Amsterdam, as well as the draft EU Constitution, both consider Trans-European Transport Networks as an important element in bringing about European Integration. The vision is that the extension of transport infrastructure across Europe will provide a fairer distribution of wealth and reduce regional disparities throughout the Union. Motorways and high-speed railways are particularly seen as key to improving the mobility of European goods and citizens.

The Trans-European transport infrastructure projects now have an extraordinary relevance for the Common Transport Policy, because they indeed establish the structure of transport in Europe. But they do this without being linked to the principles of sustainable transport development. They are currently disconnected from sustainable transport policy-making because their sole constitutional function is to fuel European integration rather than to foster sustainable transport in Europe. The crux, however, is that there will not be a truly integrated Europe without sustainable development. In fact, the unsustainable practice of planning and implementing costly large-scale transport infrastructure projects across Europe will prevent and delay European Integration. In many cases it will even cause the disintegration of certain regions and regional economies, due to a decrease of their relative accessibility. This decreasing accessibility is a consequence of an inherent tendency in the TEN-T towards greater political centralisation and economic concentration. Despite the hope that trans-national high-speed rail and multi-lane motorways would make peripheral regions more accessible, it has not been demonstrated that TEN-T do actually decrease regional disparities¹⁴.

Hence, there is a serious need to re-open the debate over whether the current interpretation of trans-European transport networks really meets the aim of furthering European integration. It needs to be shown that the current approach of bringing about integration through the building roads is fundamentally flawed. Bigger and longer roads themselves bring neither wealth nor integration – and by no means do they make transport more sustainable¹⁵.

In addition to the revision of the role of TEN-T in the Acquis Communautaire, the role of transport infrastructure provision in the Common European Transport Policy has to be altered accordingly. In general, the construction of roads, bridges and tunnels follows the dubious belief that increased and faster transport will make the economy stronger. This strategy seeks to enable the distribution of goods and movement of people at a higher frequency and a lower price over longer distances. Such an “acceleration strategy”, however, has a fundamental problem: it can never be successful, because it presumes that there is never enough transport. The inherent limit of inducing ever-more transport with ever-more infrastructure is *that there is no limit*. It lies in the nature of the current TEN-T strategy that they cannot answer the question: “when is there enough transport?”.

Providing an answer to this question, however, is the precondition for decoupling transport growth from economic growth called for by the Gothenburg Council in 2001. What is therefore needed is a trans-European transport infrastructure strategy that will help to break, and not reinforce, the link between growth of GDP and transport volume. The projects and plans that are developed to improve transport in Europe must not be reduced to filling “missing links” or widening “bottlenecks”. Instead, improving European transport would mean making it more efficient, rather than faster and more distance-intensive. Trans-European transportation networks should be networks that reduce transport, avoid unnecessary trips and generally acknowledge the fact that less, and not more, transport is good for the economy.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that a reduction of transport and traffic is not only beneficial to the economy, but has positive impacts on the quality of life of European citizens, as well as social cohesion within the European Union. Europe is witnessing an increasingly intense debate over the question of “how much and what kind of individual mobility do we want?” The provision of ever-more infrastructure to cover ever-more distance in ever-less time often represents a nuisance to the individual citizen as well as the community as a whole. As it becomes ever easier to travel ever further, Europe’s citizens are often forced to do precisely that, rather than making a voluntary choice to travel from one city to another. By now, the benefits of mobility are often outweighed by the costs they bear for the individual.

Accelerating trans-European transport is neither appreciated by the “frequent flyer”, nor will it improve the quality of life of local travellers. The negative consequences of “hypermobility” are experienced by European citizens, who feel that they simply spend too much time in trains, cars and airplanes. With less high-speed transport infrastructure, such unpleasant experiences would happen less often. In addition, apart from being a nuisance to the “mobile elite” in Europe, high-speed transport development will worsen the situation in many towns and regions, because it will not serve the local mobility needs of poorer households.

It is for these reasons, that the validity of the current TEN-T has to be reconsidered. Moreover, the European Union needs to develop and implement an infrastructure policy that matches the declarations of

European Transport Ministers. They, in numerous fora, have agreed to the principles of sustainable transport. Some initial elements of such a sustainable TEN-T policy are presented in the following section.

Summary: Reconstructing the basis

- The EU needs to develop and implement an infrastructure policy that matches its political commitments for a more sustainable transport.
- The debate over the TEN-T should be re-opened and TEN-T's relation with sustainable development should be redefined.
- The TEN-T should provide the means for decoupling transport from economic growth and encourage less, rather than more transport

2.2 What the TEN-T should look like?

From supply-driven policies to trans-European demand management

Central to any sustainable infrastructure policy is the assumption that good public money should not be spent on bad projects. In other words, if governments really wish to enhance sustainable transport, they need to stop spending money on unsustainable road-constructions or airport-extensions, and start spending it on railroads and regional transport systems. It should not be the case that investments for sustainable transport are only acceptable as long as the road and aviation sector receive their allocation. The policy should not be to spend money on all modes, rather to spend it on the right, i.e. more sustainable, transport mode.

From TEN-T to L-TENS

A more sustainable reading of the Trans-European transport networks would emphasise the need to strengthen other networks than those enshrined in physical infrastructure for international transport. It would promote the establishment of local trans-European networks (L-TENS). Such L-TENS aim at improving local and regional transport infrastructure across Europe. They will help to strengthen sustainable production, distribution and consumption cycles on a regional scale.

From extending to maintaining

The existing infrastructure could serve the transport needs in Europe more efficiently if timely maintenance work is carried out (this is especially true for the accession countries where maintenance is generally neglected). Rather than extending and building more infrastructures, existing infrastructure should be properly cared for and used more efficiently in order to avoid a "maintenance bomb". The example of the railway lines, many of which have been closed because of outdated or degraded infrastructure, should be

taken more seriously and should be specifically dealt with in the TEN-T revision.

From single-mode to integrated multi-modal solutions

This shift in priorities has to go further and the quality of service, rather than the quantity, should dominate the discussion. While there are already sustainable transport options available (railway and shipping for freight, public transport or car sharing/carpooling for private use), there ought to be a real concern for the provision of quality alternatives that combine the best logistical solutions with the most environmentally friendly transport solutions. Initiatives such as the Marco Polo Programme should be allocated more resources, and be placed at the heart of the TEN-T philosophy.

From hard investment to soft policy

The TEN-T have focused so far on pouring in the missing links and widening the bottlenecks. If we aim at a sustainable transport system, the TEN-T focus should move onto soft planning and promotion of Europe-wide traffic management instruments. Decoupling, traffic demand management and fair pricing for infrastructure use should have just as much weight as the infrastructure investment decisions.

From ignoring the environment to integrating it

The planned extension of the TEN-T network has the potential to cause large-scale habitat destruction and fragmentation, which will threaten the full implementation of EU environmental policies, including the establishment of the EU-wide network of Natura 2000 protected areas. The proper assessment of the full, systemic environmental impact of the TEN-T development on the Natura 2000 network should be an immediate priority. The results of this assessment should be fully taken into consideration in the re-design of the TEN-T corridors, in the selection of priority projects, in finding alternative transport options, promoting sustainable navigation and fully mitigating and compensating for any potentially damaging part of the network.

2.3 Recommendations

- 1) No more TENs Title and Transport Title in the Treaty/Constitution. The network in itself should no longer constitute a Community investment priority and it should be integrated into the larger Common Transport Policy and observe the sustainability requirements of the Treaty (rather than constitute a stand-alone Title).
- 2) No priority projects should be set out – there are still projects as the Brenner Base tunnel part of the high-speed train/combined transport north-south line, the Betuwe line, etc – which need completion before new projects are added to the list.
- 3) A thorough Strategic Environmental Assessment of the whole network (TEN-T and TINA) must be carried out, co-ordinated by the European Commission – with the full cooperation of the Member States.
- 4) The needs of the planned Natura 2000 network should be fully integrated into the TEN-T plans, so that no net loss occurs to the ecological integrity of the former through the development of the transport infrastructure developments. All candidate Natura 2000 sites should be treated as if they were already legally protected.
- 5) Investigate and promote methods of utilising the transport capacity of rivers while keeping their current ecological status, preserving or restoring their natural habitats, hydrological regimes and floodplains. Large-scale, costly and environmentally damaging infrastructure must be avoided on all rivers.
- 6) It is essential that the revision of the TEN-T guidelines also respect the EU's Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/60/EC) provisions to prevent further deterioration in water and to achieve "good ecological and chemical status" for all waters across the continent by 2015 by applying integrated river basin management.
- 7) There is presently a tendency to centralise the TEN-T projects along a few important trans-continental axes, however, the real added value cannot be achieved unless there is a specific focus on the needs of local networks first. Especially within the accession countries, local and regional transport systems ought to be maintained and improved before national and EU funds are allocated to trans-national transport infrastructure.
- 8) True European added value is not created through massive investments, but through a re-thinking of the priority areas and balancing of the different approaches: regulation, pricing,

investments, all combined with a careful traffic demand management. Integrated mobility management schemes comprising modal shift and transport reduction strategies ought to replace a current EU policy that predominantly revolves around infrastructure extension.

- 9) The cumulative size of the TEN-T projects and the political commitment to finalise them are not criteria for determining their European added value, but rather a reflection of the national development agendas. Any TEN-T policy must have a particular focus on its contribution to sustainable development in Europe.
- 10) The TEN-T revision should include a reference to the zero option, and make the assessment of such an option compulsory, for any infrastructure development plan. The current guidelines helped the Commission develop methods for Strategic Environmental Assessment. This role should now be applied to developing and improving the methodology for cost-benefit analysis.
- 11) Transport growth and GDP growth need to be decoupled. The Community's Sixth Environmental Action Programme and the Gothenburg conclusions set, as a priority goal, the significant decoupling of transport growth from economic growth. The TEN-T guidelines, as well as the whole transport policy guidelines, should refer to this objective.
- 12) Finally, the new TEN-T guidelines should set in place effective mechanisms for stakeholder information and consultation, such as timely information on the possible new projects, full environmental assessments and information on the estimated traffic flows.

ENDNOTES

¹ Article 154, paragraph. 2, in the Nice Treaty.

² For example Directives 92/43/EC (Habitats Directive) and 79/406/EEC (Wild Birds Directive) were given a lower priority than construction of TEN-T in Community Decision 96/15/EC on the Construction of the A20 Motorway in the Peene valley (Germany).

³ In particular in article 2 outlining the task of the Community the focus on “balanced and sustainable development of economic activities” rather than previous references to “sustainable growth” and the provisions of article 6 which states: Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities referred to in Article 3, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.

⁴ The limited details available on the assessments undertaken by the Commission on the economic benefits of the TEN-T do not allow a comprehensive review. The conclusions of this assessment have, however, been questioned by a number of researchers who have had an opportunity to review it in more detail. The interim report on Transport Investment, Transport Intensity and Economic Growth issued by the UK Government’s Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment stated that the committee did “not accept the results of macroeconomic studies (e.g. Auscher (1989)), which purport to identify large returns from infrastructure investment.” They were also “at present unpersuaded by the size of the impact of transport on jobs claimed by a number of European studies (e.g. European Commission (1997))”. This interim report identified several areas where there was potential for miscalculation of the economic benefits of transport infrastructure. The conclusions of the report call for an approach that is both more rigorous and integrated into the rest of the appraisal process.

⁵ Decision No 1692/96/EC⁵ on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.

⁶ Regulation 2236/95 on general rules for the granting of community financial aid in the field of Trans-European Networks.

⁷ Along with another two (Malta and Cyprus) from Southern Europe.

⁸ See the full text of the 1998 implementation report at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/themes/network/english/hp-en/grepdocs/bimprep.htm>

⁹ TINA – Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment report identified a series of transport corridors in Central and Eastern Europe and assessed the economic framework for their development. A final report was published in October 1999 and is available on-line at: <http://www.tinavienna.at/treport.htm>

¹⁰ Decision 1692/1996, Article V, The priorities, taking account of the objectives set out in Article 2, shall be:

- (a) establishment and development of the connections, key links and interconnections needed to eliminate bottlenecks, fill in missing sections and complete major routes;
- (b) establishment and development of infrastructure for access to the network, making it possible to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Community;
- (c) the optimum combination and integration of the various modes of transport;
- (d) integration of environmental concerns into the design and development of the network;
- (e) gradual achievement of interoperability of network components;
- (f) optimisation of the capacity and efficiency of existing infrastructure;
- (g) establishment of and improvement in interconnection points and intermodal platforms;
- (h) improved safety and network reliability;
- (i) the development and establishment of systems for the management and control of network traffic and user information with a view to optimising use of the infrastructures;
- (j) studies contributing to improved design and better implementation of the trans-European transport network.

¹¹ European transport policy for 2010: time to decide, White paper, COM (2001) 0370, see http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/en/lb_en.html

¹² The Draft Accession Treaty is available on the European Parliament's web-site at: http://www.europarl.eu.int/enlargement/access_draft_en.htm

⁹Waterway transport on Europe's Lifeline, the Danube, WWF, 2002. www.panda.org/europe/freshwater/newsroom/newsroom37.html.

¹³ See also T&E Position paper "After the flood is before the flood", on-line at: http://www.t-e.nu/position_papers.htm#Floods92002

¹⁰ See CEE Bankwatch reports on www.bankwatch.org.

¹⁴ For more information see the details of this EU research project SASI at: <http://irpud.raumplanung.uni-dortmund.de/irpud/pro/sasi/antw.htm>

¹⁵ According to the EEA report "Paving the Way for EU Enlargement", the accession countries had a much more sustainable modal split than the EU at the beginning of the 1990s. The subsequent rapid reform of the road sector, while railway operations deteriorated, has resulted in a significant shift from rail to road. In 1993, rail, with its 57% share, was the most important inland freight transport mode in eight countries. By 1999, this share had dropped to 43% (ranging from 28% in Hungary to 75% in Latvia). Equally important driving factors are the rapid increases in car ownership and investments that prioritise the building of road infrastructure.

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ABOUT US

The European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E) is Europe's principal non-governmental organisation campaigning on a Europe-wide level for an environmentally responsible approach to transport. T&E closely monitors developments in European transport policy and submits responses on all major papers and proposals from the European Commission. T&E frequently publishes reports on important issues in the field of transport and the environment, and also carries out research projects.

WWF – European Policy Office is the world's largest independent conservation organization. WWF has been actively involved in the development of the EU's Water Framework Directive and has been keen to highlight the linkages between the planning process to implement Integrated River Basin Management, the extension of the TEN-T to the Accession Countries and the impact that an SEA of the TEN-T network might have on these processes.

BirdLife International is a global alliance of national bird conservation organisations. BirdLife has Europe-wide database on national bird populations and their trends for all species in every country and on the over 3,600 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) on the continent. BirdLife published an assessment of the impact of the TEN-T on IBAs in 1995, and of the TINA in 2001. BirdLife has considerable relevant environmental assessment experience and expertise at both project and strategic levels of decision-making, as well as on various policy areas including transport. We are actively involved in environmental assessment at all levels from the national and international debate on legislation and policy down to practical casework.

The CEE Bankwatch Network is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with member organisations currently from 12 countries of CEE and CIS region. The basic aim of the network is to monitor activities of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in the region, and to propose constructive alternatives to their policies and projects. CEE Bankwatch network has been publishing a series of reports on the use of pre-accession funding, with direct relation to the way environmental legislation is applied in some of the accession countries.

Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) is the largest environmental network in Europe working at grassroots level. FoEE is involved in the sustainable development debate and recognises the need to change lifestyle and consumption patterns. FoEE member groups are united by a common conviction that reaching this goal requires both strong grassroots activism and effective national and European campaigning and coordination. Through these activities, FoEE aims to raise public awareness, enhance the participation of people and environmental citizens' organisations in political processes, and influence political decision-makers, especially at the European level. Together with CEE Bankwatch, Network FoEE has been monitoring use of pre-accession funds in the Accession Countries.