

The risks of increasing transport capacities

The planned increase of transport capacities, mainly for road transport, bears several risks for the regional development, the social and environmental situation in the Pyrenees.

The already high number of long distance freight trucks may increase even more. This will have negative economic, social and environmental impacts. The recently opened connection through the Somport in the western part of the Pyrenees is a point of concern as regards to the increase in freight transport.

The central Pyrenees which are an important tourism region may suffer from increasing truck traffic and thus suffer economic losses. This means that the original objective of the infrastructure building, i.e. contribute to the regional development may not happen, on the contrary, regional

development can be harmed.

Citizens along the transit routes with increased traffic will be even more exposed to noise and air pollution while air emissions reach a level above the legal limits already today.

The attraction of more trucks due to the improved network may lead an increase of accidents on the feeder secondary roads which are not adapted to a high amount of heavy vehicles traffic.

The new links will use land which is scarce in mountainous region and serves the local citizens for their needs of housing, agricultural farming and developing economic activities. It may also endanger precious habitats and biodiversity.

The alternatives

All these risks seem to contradict to the original objective of improving inner-Pyrenean transport and thus contributing to local development. In order to achieve these objectives, existing, up-graded and new transport infrastructure through the Pyrenees must be economically managed according to the scarcity of resources.

Therefore, an alternative transport policy is needed applying a wide range of instruments, or toolkit, in order to achieve a sustainable transport system which serves the citizen, and the environment without damaging the sensitive Pyrenean area. Such a transport policy should be focused on the following objectives:

- ▶ Improve the use of already existing transport infrastructure at the boundary of the Pyrenean area
- ▶ Shift long distance freight transport from road to rail and maritime

transport

To achieve these objectives the following measures should be taken:

- ▶ All infrastructure plans and programmes should undergo a strategic environmental assessment according to European law and comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.
- ▶ Heavy vehicles should pay distance related charges which makes discourage long distance traffic on road.
- ▶ Reopen the rail link between Zaragoza and Bedous through Canfranc and improve the existing railway links on both sides of the Pyrenees.
- ▶ Increase the capacity of the existing rail links between Spain and France by fitting them with European gauges (e.g. Zaragoza – Huesca)
- ▶ Promote intermodal transport by improving access to rail infrastructure and ports (e.g. short sea shipping on the Atlantic Arc).

SOURCES

Communauté de travail des Pyrénées , 2001: Infrastructure et transport, un défi pour les pyrénées.

Direction Régionale de l'Équipement de Midi-Pyrénées, 2002 : Atlas transpyrénéen des transports.

Generalitat de Catalunya, Direcció General de Ports i Transports , 2002: Estudio de posibles trasvases de mercancías de la carretera al ferrocarril en Cataluña.

Gobierno de Aragon, 2002 : Estudio informativo de la Travesía Central de los Pirineos, Tunel de Baja Cota.

Ministère de l'Équipement des Transports et du Logement / Ministerio de Formento, 2003 : Observatorio hispano francés de Tráfico en los Pirineos.

TCP 2003 : Traversée Centrale des Pyrénées.

This fact sheet is produced with support of the partners of T&E's project 'Safe and Sustainable Freight Transport', i.e. the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management , the Swedish Rail Infrastructure Authority Banverket, the Swiss Ministry of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication, the regional governments of Aragon, Basque Country and Catalonia and Swiss NGOs.

Author: Markus Liechti | Date: 03 June 2003 / updated 11 June 2004

© T&E • T&E is Europe's primary NGO campaigning on a Europe wide level for an environmentally responsible approach to transport.

Contact: markus.liechti@t-e.nu

European Federation for Transport and Environment | Boulevard de Waterloo, 34 | Tel: +32(0)2-502 99 09 | Fax: +32(0)2-502 99 08 | www.t-e.nu

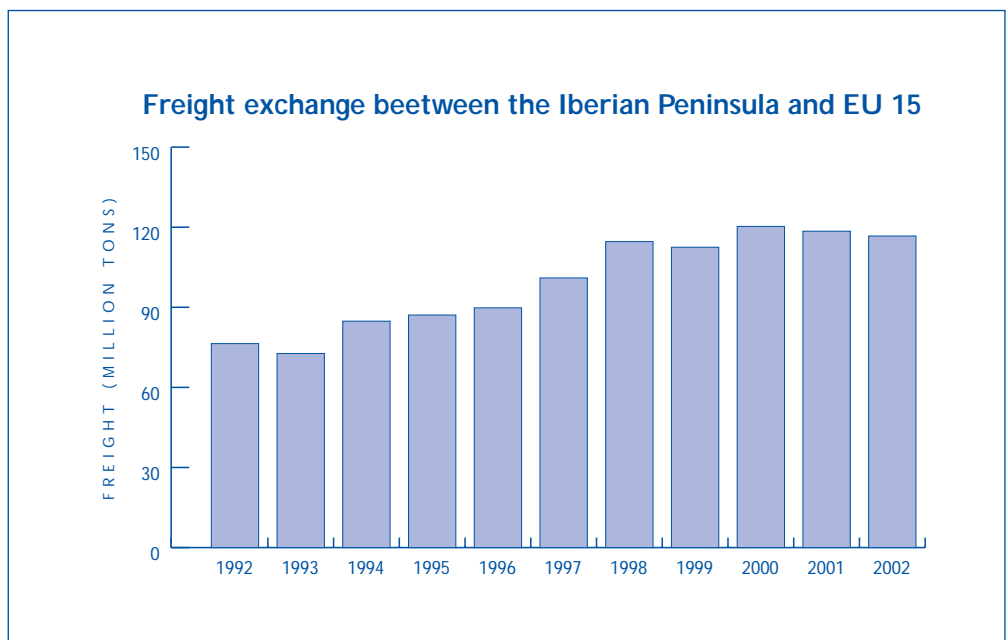
Pyrenean Freight Transport

The Pyrenees: transit and frontier region under pressure

The Pyrenees build a 700 km long chain of mountains between the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Mediterranean in the east. In the north-south dimension the chain is only 50 kilometres. The Pyrenees build the frontier between France and Spain and include also the small republic of Andorra. 212 mountains in the Pyrenees have a height of over 3000 m. The economic activities of the four Spanish (Basque country, Navarra, Aragon and Catalonia) and three French (Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrennés and Languedoc-Roussillon) regions around the Pyrenees and of Andorra are divers with a strong agricultural sector in some regions (e.g. 10 % in Aragon), and important industrial activities e.g. around Toulouse, Barcelona, Zaragoza or in the Basque country. One of the most important and growing economic sector in and around (on the Mediterranean or Atlantic coast) the Pyrenees is tourism. Parts of the area have been growing substantially over the last years, both economically and with regard to the population. In addition, since Spain and Portugal have joined the European Union, transport has been growing significantly. All these developments have increased the pressure on the Pyrenees which build a natural barrier between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe.

Freight transport and transport infrastructure through the Pyrenees

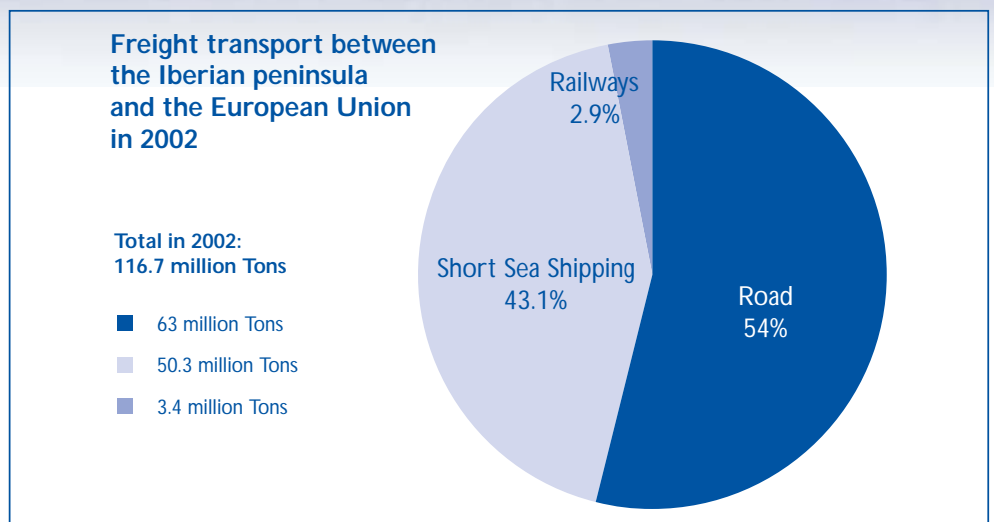
With the economic integration of Spain and Portugal in the European Union, the exchange of goods and people between the two areas has increased very importantly. According to EUROSTAT, freight transport has grown by about 50 % from 76.4 Million tons in 1992 **to 116.7 Million tons in 2002**. The long distance freight transport takes mainly part between Spain and France, Germany, UK, Italy and Benelux. About 50 % of terrestrial traffic between the Iberian Peninsula and France is among the Pyrenean regions.



Source: Eurostat and Observatorio hispano-frances de trafico en los Pirineas, 2003

Trans-Pyrenean transport is very uneven allocated to the different transport modes. Over 90 % of land transport is road transport (**66.4 Million tons in 2002**). Railways play only a small role with **3,4 Million tons in 2002**. 43% of freight exchange between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe is done by short sea shipping.

Source: Eurostat and Observatorio hispano-frances de trafico en los Pirineas, 2003



Land transport is concentrated on the east and west coasts. The big majority of heavy goods vehicles are using the motorways A63 / AP8 between Irun and Bayonne and A9 / AP7 between Girona and Perpignan. There are quite a few road links through the central Pyrenees, but they are mainly used for passenger transport and local goods delivery. However, over the last years though the number of heavy goods vehicles has increased notoriously on the links through the central Pyrenees.

There are only three open rail links between France and Spain. The main links are again on the coast between Irun and Hendaye on the Atlantic coast and between Port Bou and Cerbère on the Mediterranean. The third one is a steep connection in the eastern Pyrenees links Toulouse with Barcelona via La Tour de Carol and Pugjerdà. A fourth link between Toulouse and Zaragoza is only open on the Spanish side till Canfranc but closed on the French side. Currently a project is carried out on the Spanish side to improve the access to this link. All rail transport between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe is faced with the problem of lack of interoperability. The width of the gauges of the French and the Spanish rail network is different. This reduces the capacity of the rail network and is one reason for the low level of rail freight between Spain and France.

The transport projects

For reasons of the land development of the Pyrenean regions, a number of transport infrastructure projects are planned through the Pyrenees, among them quite a few road projects.

The works of the following projects have been recently completed or is under construction:

- ▶ Somport: In 2003, a new road tunnel has been opened on the Somport between Zaragoza and Bedous, situated in the French side of the Pyrenees.
- ▶ Improvement of the existing rail link between Huesca and Pau (Canfranc)
- ▶ Vielha: the existing road tunnel is being doubled on the link Lleida – Toulouse.
- ▶ High speed rail link Madrid – Barcelona – France is being built on the Mediterranean coast including a new railway tunnel across the Pyrenees.
- ▶ Basque Y: new high speed railway link on the Atlantic coast.

The following projects are at the moment under consideration for the future:

- ▶ Multimodal corridor Portugal – Central Europe on the Atlantic coast: this is one of the priority projects of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- ▶ Vignemale: A new rail link of high capacity and UIC (European) gauge will be built for the transport of trucks (piggyback) to better link the areas of Zaragoza and Toulouse
- ▶ Road tunnel Salau: New road tunnel should improve the link between Lleida and Toulouse.
- ▶ Road axis Andorra: A high capacity road transport axis including 12 tunnels should be built through the republic of Andorra.
- ▶ Rail link Tour de Carol: the existing rail link between Barcelona and Toulouse should be equipped with and European gauge.

