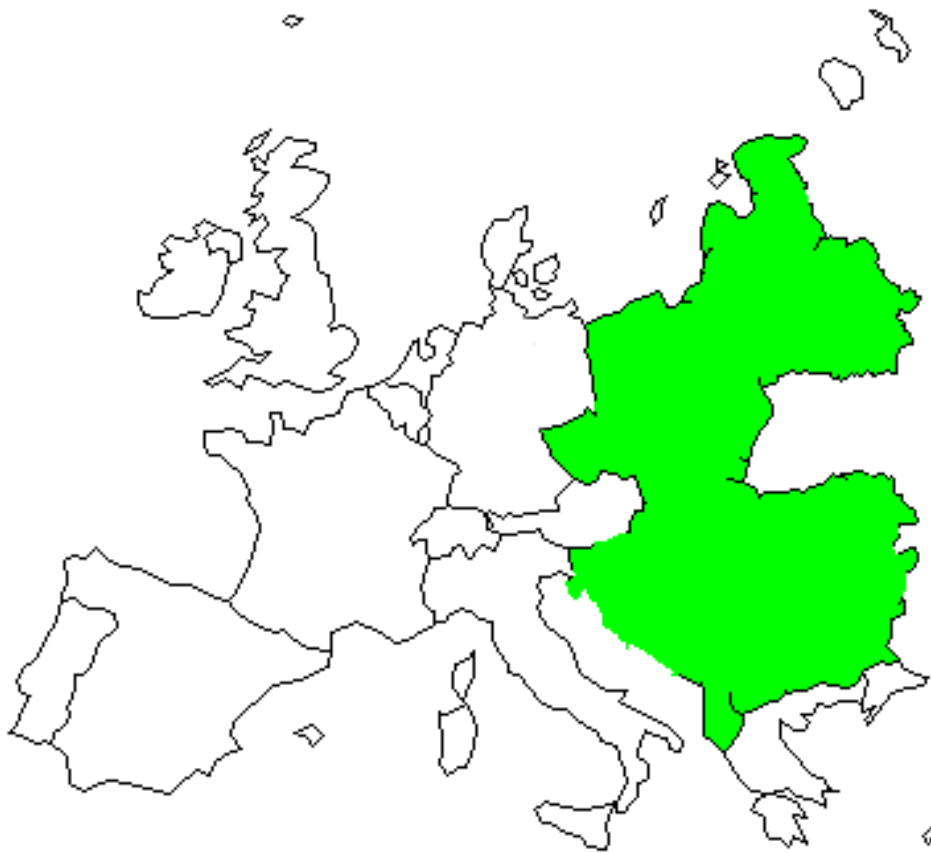


Conference Proceedings:

T&E conference on transport,
enlargement and the environment



By Malcolm Fergusson

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

These proceedings reflect the content of a conference on 16 and 17 March 2000, hosted by the European Federation for Transport and the Environment (T&E), on the environmental consequences of transport in an enlarged Europe.

The conference was held to mark T&E's tenth anniversary, but also a renewed commitment to addressing central and eastern European issues during its second decade as the European umbrella group for transport non-governmental organisations (NGOs) campaigning on transport and environment-related issues. Enlargement is viewed by T&E as a critical issue for future European transport policy, with potentially major implications for the environment and economic and social development.

The conference was financed primarily through a grant from the Directorate-General for Environmental Protection at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands.

The Institute for European Environmental Policy in London provided advice and technical support for the conference, and was also responsible for the production of these proceedings. Responsibility for any errors, omissions or misrepresentations in the proceedings remains with the author.

Structure and Content of the Conference

Approximately 90 participants attended the conference, including campaigners and independent experts from across the EU and central and eastern Europe (CEE). Representatives of the Commission, the European Parliament, the European Environment Agency and many member states also participated. Participation from the various attendees took the form of speaking in plenary sessions; responses from panel members; interventions from the floor; and contributions and reports back from workshops.

The first day of the conference was a half-day session comprised mainly of formal presentations, designed to generate a common understanding of the main points of information and the key issues to be addressed. Presentations covered the following main areas:

- Opening address
- Chair's introduction
- Keynote speech on transport and sustainable development
- Current Trends in Transport and the Environment in Central and Eastern Europe
- Policy Overview of Transport and Enlargement
- The Trans-European Transport Network in an Enlarged EU
- Funding Sustainable Transport in CEE

The morning of the second day was devoted to two sets of three parallel workshops, with participants attending on the basis of issues of greatest interest, concern or expertise from their own perspectives. Each workshop had a chairperson to animate and control the discussions, and a rapporteur who summarised the discussion and reported the main points back to the afternoon plenary session. In some sessions the chair or rapporteur

opened the discussion with a brief presentation or remarks: in others, discussion was completely open. The workshop topics were as follows:

- TINA – Priorities for Transport Infrastructure
- Urban Transport in CEE
- Freight and Transit Traffic
- Environmental Assessment
- Best Practice in Transport Policy
- Transport and Effective Regional Development

A full agenda and list of registered participants are attached as Annexes II and III respectively to these proceedings. A background paper, designed to inform the discussions, was published and circulated by T&E in advance of the conference, and is attached as Annex I to these proceedings. Biographical notes on the main speakers are available in Annex IV.

The sections which follow summarise the content of the various presentations, workshop discussions and concluding plenary discussions in turn.

2. Formal Presentations (Day 1)

2.1. Opening Address

Matthias Zimmermann

T&E President

Verkehrsclub der Schweiz

Mr Zimmermann began by welcoming all participants, and thanking the sponsors of the conference.

He then introduced T&E and its work, outlining its historical development and future plans. He stressed that the conference marked T&E's tenth anniversary, during which period it had developed from a small grouping of interested individuals in a few European countries to become the recognised NGO umbrella group for transport and environment policy in Brussels, and a member of the 'G8' group of Brussels-based NGOs.

1999 had been T&E's own 'year of enlargement' in which it grew in size to five full time staff in order to reflect the growing demands on the organisation to address an ever-wider range of policies and issues, and an ever-growing geographical scope. The conference, he stressed, was a reflection of the fact that the year 2000 was to be a second but very different 'year of enlargement' for T&E, in which it would engage increasingly in issues arising from the EU's own enlargement and forge stronger working relationships with its broad network of member organisations across central and eastern Europe (CEE).

2.2. Chair's Introduction

Beatrice Schell

T&E Director

Ms Schell explained the agenda and objectives of the conference, which were designed to establish some operational and practical recommendations to ensure that the enlargement process would help to deliver sustainable transport systems in CEE. She expressed a hope that the countries of CEE would be able to avoid some of the problems and mistakes which are evident in western Europe rather than to repeat them.

She emphasised that the focus of the discussions should be on the way in which western institutions could contribute positively to this process, rather than on lecturing representatives of CEE on how they should develop their own policies. She stressed that few people in the EU could claim to understand the diverse situations in CEE countries fully, or to prescribe ideal solutions. Instead she expressed the wish that all the participants could learn something from one another in order to work towards improving co-operation in the future.

2.3. Keynote Speech: Defining Sustainable Transport

Dr Axel Friedrich

German Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt)

Dr Friedrich referred to a range of studies involving UBA and others, sponsored by the OECD, on a definition of environmentally-sustainable transport (EST), but stressed that it was still not easy to answer the question as to what would constitute sustainable transport. He argued however that it is far easier to identify elements of transport systems and behaviour which are *not* sustainable, and argued that current trends in most OECD countries (and in most developing countries) were clearly not sustainable when assessed against a range of environmental criteria.

Considering first the requirements of air quality, he demonstrated that technical measures such as pollution abatement equipment would not be enough to reverse this conclusion. A further improvement by a factor of between 4 and 10 would be needed, especially to tackle CO₂ emissions. Even the most advanced technologies such as hydrogen powered vehicles do not alter this conclusion for the foreseeable future. At present, furthermore, passenger cars are getting heavier as a result of greater power, comfort and other advanced features, counteracting improvements in engine efficiency. On the freight side there are also problems, because road haulage takes an increasing market share, even though it is less energy-efficient than rail.

He also noted that noise is a major problem for the transport sector, although it has not received as much attention to date as atmospheric emissions. He showed the results of surveys which suggest that in Berlin, a half of all streets have unacceptable levels of noise - and this is largely as a result of road (and sometimes rail and air) transport.

Instead, it would be necessary to tackle behaviour change, economic structures, changing land use patterns and other adverse trends as well in order to alter the structure of transport demand. Better integration of land use and transport policy is also essential. These approaches, he stressed, are far more difficult even to model than were physical transport systems, so the necessary measures and their effects have a significant degree of uncertainty attached to them.

The most problematic sectors in OECD countries are aviation and private road transport, for both passenger travel and freight haulage. Aviation in particular presents serious problems because the likely pace of technical progress to reduce fuel consumption is far outstripped by growing demand, and a recent report from the Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that the effect of emissions at high altitude is significantly greater than that of CO₂ alone.

At present, however, there are significant contrasts between travel patterns in north-western Europe and in CEE countries. An average person in the EU travels 10 000 kilometres per annum by car, whereas in CEE countries the figure is typically around 2 500km. Distances travelled on public transport are typically far more similar, although this figure varies more markedly from country to country as a reflection of government policy towards public transport. As a result of these patterns, individual CO₂ emissions from transport use were on average far lower at present in CEE than in western Europe. The vital question, however, is how to deliver to CEE the social and economic advantages of modern transport systems without losing these environmental advantages at the same time.

For the future, he stressed that the emphasis of transport policy should be,

to establish clear goals in terms of environmental carrying capacity, and then to implement policies which will deliver the necessary changes through modal shift and changing patterns of demand, as well as further improvements to transport technology.

2.4. Current Trends in Transport and the Environment in Central and Eastern Europe

Dr László Ruppert

Institute for Transport Sciences (Budapest)

Dr Ruppert presented a broad outline of current trends in transport and environment in a range of CEE countries, with reference to historical trends since the breaking up of the former Soviet bloc in 1989.

He presented figures which demonstrated that transport activity actually fell throughout much of the 1990s in most CEE countries. This occurred mainly for two reasons: a collapse in economic activity, and the establishment of new industrial structures which were less transport-intensive. During the same period, he pointed out, freight traffic growth rates in the EU actually outstripped the rate of GDP growth – clearly an unsustainable trend.

Recovery is now under way, although in many countries GDP is only now returning to what it was in 1989. This recovery has been associated with an upturn in freight traffic. At the same time, there has been a huge upsurge in international trade, 70 per cent of which is with the EU. Road haulage has gained ground at the expense of rail in this process – but rail in most CEE countries held by far the largest share of freight beforehand, and it still stands at around half of the total, which is far above what is typical of western Europe.

He also emphasised that freight activity, as measured in tonne-kilometres, remains at a quite high level in relation to the size of population, particularly when one considers the far lower average GDP.

Car use is also growing rapidly in many areas, leading to increasing emissions of NO_x and CO₂. Accidents are declining, but only after a very marked peak around 1989. Thus they are in effect returning to previous levels. By analogy with rail freight, however, bus ridership is still far higher than in the west – typically 28 per cent of mileage as against around 8 per cent in the EU.

Dr Ruppert outlined the interrelationship of the so-called Helsinki corridors (which reach eastward beyond Moscow); the pan-European Transport Network, and the more limited Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment (TINA) network. He pointed out that motorway standard roads in CEE are very scarce indeed – EU countries typically have 2 to 5 times the density of motorways of CEE.

Crucial challenges facing CEE, he concluded, would be to manage the modal shares of traffic to best effect, ideally making use of the capacity in public transport while still promoting economic growth and change. Furthermore, attention should not focus too much on infrastructure, as the rolling stocks of all modes of transport are very old, and are currently being modernised at a very slow pace.

2.5. Policy Overview of Transport and Enlargement

Malcolm Fergusson

Institute for European Environmental Policy (London)

Mr Fergusson outlined some key elements of western European policy towards CEE. These included, primarily, the *acquis communautaire* of legislation which accession states will be required to implement; the political priorities of EU enlargement; the process of integrating environmental concerns into other policy areas; and the use of structural funding to promote regional development.

The *acquis* comprises a wide variety of measures which are of relevance to transport and the environment. These include, for example, measures which would be required to implement EU emissions and air quality policy, but also policy towards free trade, transport liberalisation and transport infrastructure investment which had an important (but often disregarded) environmental dimension. While some of these measures are likely to bring environmental benefits to CEE, he argued that the effects of others would be far more mixed and difficult to predict.

He also raised some concerns as to the political priorities which underlie the accession process for the countries of the CEE. He argued that, in practical terms, measures relating to the single market will receive the highest priority for implementation, in order to ensure that economic distortions are avoided as far as possible. Most of the measures in the transport *acquis* will be treated in this category, but environmental measures may receive less attention and their implementation be delayed. Furthermore, the entire *acquis* represents a huge legislative and administrative burden upon the accession states. There is therefore a danger that all political and administrative attention is being devoted to accession, while other essential elements of a sustainable transport policy which fall outside the *acquis communautaire* are largely ignored.

He also outlined the development of the environmental integration agenda within the EU itself. While valuable progress has no doubt been made, this has come too late to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated 'from the outset' in the enlargement process as was intended. He argued that slow progress on trans-European Networks and the TINA network were especially worrying in this context.

He then explained the background of structural funding as a means of ensuring that peripheral areas of the EU do not fall behind in economic terms as a result of being disadvantaged in the single market. He then went on to outline the means by which current arrangements are affecting and will in future affect the countries of CEE, and the extent to which these funds are currently oriented towards transport infrastructure. It is implicit in much of this funding effort that transport links are an effective means of stimulating economic growth; but Mr Fergusson outlined the findings of recent research by a highly respected group of independent experts from the UK, which found that this is not necessarily the case. With this in mind, he therefore proposed a set of alternative priorities which might in future be applied to transport funding in CEE.

2.6. The Trans-European Transport Network in an Enlarged EU

Dr Winfried Grüter

European Commission, Directorate General Transport and Energy, unit B2

Speaking for the Commission, Dr Grüter summarised recent developments designed to improve the environmental compatibility of the trans-European transport networks, and their extension into CEE countries. He spoke partly in the context of the ongoing review of the TENs guidelines, as a revised Regulation is expected shortly.

In this context, he identified three priority objectives to make TENs policy sustainable over the next ten years. These were to make them efficient, safe, and friendlier towards the environment – stressing that ‘friendlier’ was in his view the only realistic aim, in that some level of environmental impact is unavoidable from any major infrastructure programme.

Other priorities would be to improve intermodality, optimising the use of each mode to exploit its comparative advantages. He also stressed the single market policy dimension that is of relevance to TENs, and hence to related EU policy initiatives including the freight freeway concept; the liberalisation and internationalisation of rail companies; extension of cabotage rights; and further liberalisation to create a single European market in transport services.

To achieve these ends, he argued that TENs policy would move away in emphasis from the construction of specific pieces of infrastructure, and more towards a network orientation. The latter would, for example, involve increased research and development funding to improve network operations, and thereby to strengthen the networking aspects of TENs.

He noted that the extension of TENs to CEE was also a priority under the current review, and would feature as an element in the revised guidelines. He therefore summarised the development of the TINA process to date, emphasising the process whereby the network was elaborated, the generation of traffic forecasts, and the use of standard assessment techniques supported by the international funding institutions in order to assess costs and financial paybacks.

He outlined a cost budget for the network of around 80 to 90 billion Euros by 2015. This he suggested was quite high if one assumed that the majority would need to be funded from government's own budgets, but should be possible on the assumption of a moderate level of GDP growth. He emphasised that rail improvements should be covered by the current programme, but that the demands for road improvements appeared to be more pressing owing to the poor state of roads and concerns over safety and accident rates.

He noted that no accepted tool had been available in order to undertake a strategic environmental assessment of TINA, but that these techniques were now advancing rapidly in relation to TENs and would be applied to TINA in due time.

2.7. Funding Sustainable Transport in CEE

Ms Magda Stoczkiewicz
CEE Bankwatch

Finally, Ms Stoczkiewicz outlined the lending policies of various multilateral institutions towards transport projects in CEE – notably the World Bank (WB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the EU's European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EU's own funds, primarily the Phare programme and the pre-accession funding instrument (ISPA). Echoing a remark by Dr Friedrich, she argued that it was difficult to agree what funding for sustainable transport would be like, but that it was far easier to identify elements of funding which were unsustainable. She indicated that there were many faults in current arrangements, and that a greater collective political will from all funding parties was required if future transport investments were to be sound and sustainable.

She began by stressing that transport accounts for an enormous share of the total of grants and loans to CEE by the multilateral development banks (MDBs), taking 70 per cent of the total funding. Of the MDBs, the EIB is the leading investor in transport infrastructure.

Looking in more detail at the distribution of transport funding by the MDBs, she began by showing that the World Bank spent 65 per cent of its transport funding on roads; 10 per cent on rail, and 21 per cent on urban projects. In spite of the fact that this represents two thirds to road projects, she went on to stress that the WB is in her view by far the most sustainable of the MDBs in its approach to transport. In particular, she stressed that a significant proportion of the road funding went on maintenance and rehabilitation of existing roads, which was likely to be far more cost-effective, and lower in environmental impact, than the new road infrastructure which tended to be favoured by other lenders. Equally, the WB had funded a large number of urban transport projects, such as modernising public transport systems. This too she felt was a vital element in preserving high modal shares to public transport, but one which was not favoured by other lenders.

In contrast, she argued that the European Investment Bank was the worst of the MDBs in terms of the sustainability of its very large scale funding of transport. Its funding could be classified as 54 per cent to road, 26 per cent to rail, 6 per cent to air and 5 per cent to urban projects. Of this she stressed that the bulk of the rail funding was for high speed links on the trans-European Network, and pointed out that spending on air transport outweighed that on all urban transport schemes. The EBRD exhibited a somewhat similar pattern, but with 23 per cent of its funding devoted to car manufacturing.

She explained the development of Phare funding, and the progressive increase in funding of infrastructure, particularly for roads, since 1994. Historically, 60 per cent of Phare infrastructure funding went to roads. The new 'accession-driven' arrangements will now result in 70 per cent of the funding being directed towards infrastructure, and only 30 per cent to capacity building. The ISPA programme is intended to be split 50-50 between transport and environmental infrastructure, but currently demand for transport far outstrips that for environmental projects. Ms Stoczkiewicz stated that, in practice, only TINA projects were eligible for ISPA funding.

She went on to describe a range of steps which Bankwatch felt were necessary to place transport funding on a sustainable footing, as follows:

- Before any investments take place, national sustainable transport policies should be elaborated which would take into account international, national and local needs;
- Environmental, health and safety goals should be incorporated into the decision-making process for transport planning and investments;
- International financial institutions (IFIs) should co-ordinate their lending activities more effectively, and develop sustainable transport policies to govern their investment decisions;
- Phare funding (and ideally ISPA as well) should be made available for funding urban public transport.

2.8. Responses from Panel Members

A number of respondents then began a dialogue which was to continue through the workshops on the second day of the conference.

Philippe Crist of OECD stressed the difficulty of reconciling competing goals. Clearly nobody would wish to see a doubling of carbon dioxide, more and more noise, or habitat loss. However, economic growth remains important as well, and no country appears as yet to have a clear vision of what sustainable development would look like in terms of transport. He nonetheless commended some important sustainable transport projects which had already been undertaken in CEE, and expressed the view that we might move closer to the goal of sustainability by mutual learning.

Anna Ottiavanelli of the Community of European Railways (CER) pointed out that her organisation represented rail operators in CEE as well as western Europe, and therefore had a strong interest in the health of the rail systems under enlargement.

In practice, she argued, a number of factors had contributed to the current relative positions of road and rail transport in western Europe, whereby rail was rarely competitive except in unusual circumstances such as those in Switzerland. Beyond this, however, she pointed out that rail freight could still compete effectively at distances above 500km provided that it had an adequate level of geographical coverage, and still held one third of the freight market at these distances.

She stated that her organisation's research showed that the level of subsidy was not generally the key issue in determining the health of railway systems, but rather, the degree of internalisation of external costs by each mode. That is, road haulage was too cheap as well as being flexible. She added that road transport benefited from relatively lax regulations on loading levels, speeds, working hours etc by comparison to the railways, and what regulations did exist were far less strongly enforced. Here too a more level playing field would help to benefit the rail sector.

Ian Clark of the Commission's DG Environment revisited the state of play on the accession negotiations. He insisted that environmental protection is a high priority for both the Council and the Commission, on a par with single market measures, and cited a number of published documents and other statements to this effect. He accepted the point that the *acquis* did not in itself reflect a sustainable transport policy, but emphasised that, under the principle of subsidiarity, other areas of policy remained the responsibility of national governments.

He considered that a number of instruments could help to ensure a high level of environmental protection under enlargement. For example, he stated that environmental impact assessment would be a priority for new projects under the aegis of the

Community, and reminded the audience that strategic environmental assessment would soon be a formal requirement under EU law, and hence part of the *acquis* which accession states would be required to follow. He also suggested that the polluter pays principle might be used to help guide priorities under ISPA funding of transport infrastructure.

3. Workshop Reports (Day 2)

Various themes emerged including the need to apply strategic environmental assessment and ways to promote best practice in transport policy; changing priorities to ensure best use of existing infrastructure, and to modernise rolling stocks as well as tracks; and promoting better information to the public and to governmental agencies at all levels to ensure that the best return is achieved in spending the limited funds available for transport regeneration.

3.1. Priorities for Infrastructure and the TINA Network

There was agreed to be a serious lack of clear objectives or priorities for the TINA network. For example, it was not clear whether greater attention was being paid to long or short distance travel. Equally, national policies were not always explicit, and often seemed likely to replicate western mistakes. It was recognised however that CEE governments are generally keen on TINA infrastructure, believing that it will not only lead to economic regeneration, but will also bring about a short-term economic boost. Some questions were however raised as to whether all ministries would accept this view, as TINA was often addressed exclusively by transport departments or other closed groups of ministries.

Several criticisms were raised of the TINA project selection and evaluation process. There was for example argued to be a lack of transparency and a lack of appropriate involvement of environmental authorities or NGOs, which was not compatible with the principles of the Århus Convention.

The quality of the environmental appraisals which had been undertaken was also questioned by a number of NGO representatives from CEE. More broadly, the absence of a strategic environmental assessment of the TINA proposals, nor even of any preparatory work to undertake one, was seen as a major weakness in the environmental integration process.

At the same time, the financial appraisal of schemes appeared to be based around traffic extrapolations and financial returns based on individual time savings. It was argued that this approach was inadequate, and was now being superseded by more sophisticated analytical techniques in western Europe. It was further suggested that a fully intermodal assessment should be applied to all projects and programmes, in order to redress the modal imbalance.

The EU's own priorities were questioned, and it seemed likely that EU finance would be channelled as far as they could be towards infrastructure projects for the completion of the Helsinki corridors, rather even than to the broader aspects of TINA. Thus it seemed that neither the less environmentally damaging aspects of TINA, nor TINA refurbishment projects and other urban transport projects were likely to be supported unless additional arguments for regional regeneration could be deployed.

As a result, domestic financial resources might also be diverted and not used to best advantage. More generally, the overall cost estimated for the TINA network was a concern, and it was argued to be disproportionately high relative to the resources available in CEE. This could starve out many other important projects in transport as elsewhere, and place too much emphasis on infrastructure rather than other important elements e.g. proper management and maintenance, renewal of rolling stock, etc.

It is clear that currently the majority of ISPA funds are going to roads infrastructure, and while the amounts spent at present are quite limited, they may well set a pattern for larger scale funding in future years. It was felt that there was much more scope for new railway funding, for example to establish logistics centres to help rail to compete on long range freight haulage. This was felt to be important, as increasing the proportion of transit freight on rail could have a big benefit in environmental terms.

It was felt that railways should be developed as an *intermodal* means of travel with good access for other modes, and greater attention to the high proportion of short journeys. This implies greater attention to conventional rail, as high-speed lines do not fulfil this function. This must be accompanied by open access to rail infrastructure and radical reform of railway institutions.

3.2. Urban Transport in CEE

It remains difficult to establish meaningful priorities for CEE countries. For example, it was pointed out that Romania has a sustainable development strategy, developed with significant input from independent experts and the participation of environmental NGOs – but transport priorities continue to reflect traditional priorities in western Europe. Equally, current trends in all CEE countries continue to be characterised by increasing car ownership and use, coupled with a declining market share for public transport.

This is essentially a local problem, but it was noted that the priorities of EU measures (e.g. around TINA and ISPA) do nothing to help with urban transport problems. There are however good examples which can be cited, e.g. in Krakow, which began to develop coherent transport plans in the early 1990s. As a result, it has maintained a high modal share for public transport, and has kept the increase in car use to relatively manageable levels (see also discussion under ‘Best Practice’). Not only was it thought necessary to look into the underlying factors which made these examples work, but also to recognise that there were often powerful and visionary figures who played a central role in bringing the plans into reality.

A number of main conclusions were generated by the workshop:

- Coherent transport *and land use* plans were needed at local level, and that these should fall within an overall sustainable development strategy;
- Means must be found to give a higher level of priority to urban public transport investment;
- Both ‘carrot and stick’ measures were needed in order to tackle car use while creating the right sort of incentive in terms of more attractive public transport systems;
- More attention needed to be paid in urban transport planning in CEE to ‘softer’ engineering solutions such as traffic calming, pedestrian areas and bicycle lanes;
- Opportunities must be sought and taken to link in growing demand from tourism (and the income which this generates) as a source to support public transport rather than growing car use;
- More should be done to monitor EU-related spending in urban areas and to ensure that this was primarily in support of public transport and other sustainable modes.

3.3. Freight and Transit Traffic

There appears to be a lack of widely agreed goals for freight transport policy in most CEE countries, and no broad-based public debate has been undertaken. In one sense this is a problem as sustainability principles do not underlie current policy – but on the other hand, there is a political opportunity to establish a set of sustainable goals if an appropriate dialogue can be established.

Lack of information on goods and financial flows make it difficult to make clear assessments of the impact of freight transport, or of suitable policy actions. Much infrastructure remains neglected, while elsewhere, costly parallel investments are under way. Smuggling, corruption and lack of enforcement measures generally were seen as a particular problem in the regulation of long distance freight.

There was felt to be a need to establish that an ever-growing volume of international trade in goods was not the only path to improved economic welfare for the countries of CEE.

Also, problems caused by the international dimension of freight transit, and conflicting priorities, can work against environmental protection measures. An obvious example cited was the EU's pressure on Hungary to drop its road freight transit tax.

Recommendations from the group included the following:

- To establish a better statistical and factual basis for trade in goods across CEE, and to publish material broadly via a website in order to tackle the myths and distorted facts which hinder proper debate on freight traffic;
- A clear legal framework is needed to establish equitable conditions for all modes of freight transport (e.g. safety standards and working hours) – but as yet, the *acquis communautaire* will not do this;
- For environmental reasons, many NGOs felt that the EU should *allow* discrimination against transit traffic on account of the scale of environmental problems which it caused – but it was noted that this is very unlikely to happen;
- High transport prices to reflect external costs are essential to the delivery of sustainable freight transport, but are not sufficient – other measures, such as railway reform, are also essential;
- 'Soft' measures could also help to improve the competitive position and capacity of rail freight, without the need for major infrastructure investments, but logistics centres were again cited as a useful development.

3.4. Strategic Environmental Assessment

It was agreed that there was an urgent need to develop strategic environmental assessment (SEA) techniques to help tackle the pressing environmental problems arising from transport growth in CEE. It was on the other hand necessary to recognise that SEA had caused difficulties in western Europe as well, and could not be regarded as a straightforward proposition. Nonetheless, some basic principles were agreed. These can be roughly described as *Why, What, When, Who and How*.

Why? It was agreed that a key feature of SEA was to help to spot serious environmental problems at an early stage, and thereby to improve the strategic planning and policy-making processes in environmental terms. SEA could also help to improve public participation and transparency in decision-making. One possible argument against SEA in

CEE, therefore, might be that it was already too late to be effective in relation to processes such as TINA. This point was not generally accepted however – it was felt that there was still value in implementing SEA, and that the ‘too late’ argument should not be accepted as an excuse for further delays.

What? It was not seen to be straightforward to attach SEAs to planning processes, especially when these were not themselves transparent. As a prime example, lack of clarity as to the future of the policymaking process in relation to TINA made it difficult to make recommendations for a future SEA. It was however suggested that an SEA could be undertaken of the application of new legal instruments from the *acquis communautaire* to transport systems in CEE, or to derogations from these. It was also noted that national level planning and assessment should complement a global SEA.

When? In general terms, SEA should be undertaken as soon as possible. However, SEA should ideally be built into the policy/planning procedure, and this made it difficult in relation to TINA, as noted above.

When? It was agreed that SEA should not be left wholly in the hands of the planning authority whose plans or policies were under assessment. Independent expertise, regional authorities and environmental NGOs should also be allowed to participate fully in the process.

How? A number of tools do exist already – such as the Commission’s DG TREN manual of SEA. It was stressed that any SEA should have a broader scope than just infrastructure – it must take full account of the linkages between transport policy itself and other relevant areas, such as land use and environmental policy. Public participation was again emphasised to be a key feature.

It was still seen as a major weakness that there were no clear links between SEA activity and the decisionmaking processes, so a better legal framework is still needed. Without this, SEA will remain a *post-hoc* rationalisation of decisions already taken rather than a proper strategic planning tool. High level commitments have already been made to SEA, notably in the EU Council of Ministers and by the ECMT, but the follow-through from this was still badly lacking.

A further recommendation was to form a network of NGOs with interests in the TINA network, in order to press on the issue of SEA for TINA. This could be a vehicle for capacity-building for SEA, and to fund related activities.

3.5. Best Practice in European Transport Policy and Projects

Discussion began with the *concept* of best practice. It was generally recognised that, although some common elements might be seen in the ‘horizontal’ aspects of many high quality projects or sustainable policies, it would not be possible to identify a single ‘template’ of best practice in most respects. That is, the sort of approaches which were highly successful in one place might well be inappropriate and unsuccessful in others. Since the term ‘best practice’ implies that there might be a single best solution, it was agreed that the term ‘good practice’ is in fact preferable.

Equally, there is a converse to good practice which should not be ignored - that avoiding bad practice might be at least as important as emulating the good, and perhaps easier to

achieve. It is however difficult to achieve consensus on bad practice, in that operators of bad practice will rarely accept the weaknesses of their own policies, owing to vested interests and entrenched perspectives.

Benchmarking was agreed to be a useful approach in some areas, and the Commission's involvement in this field (notably on public transport) was approved. It was agreed that consultants' reports provided useful data to help move towards good practice standards. Attempts to collect good examples (such as the ELTIS website – <http://www.eltis.org>) were a useful start in disseminating information, but lacked a clear definition of good practice as yet.

It was generally felt that clear *criteria* are needed to assess what is truly good practice, as a subjective or self-assessment is inadequate. It is also useful in assessing good practice if the project or policy has its own explicit objectives (e.g. modal shift, cutting congestion, improving accessibility, internalising external costs, reducing emissions, noise, etc) and a properly measured baseline against which the success of a scheme or policy can be measured. Appropriate system boundaries must also be set for this evaluation, as analysis based on a single mode or transport link can easily miss the point by overlooking other (potentially adverse) changes which have resulted elsewhere. Practical effectiveness should be set alongside clear assessments of the cost and cost-effectiveness of measures, and other factors such as institutional arrangements, consultation and public participation, etc should also be recorded. The key requirement is that analysis must lead to some sort of guidelines for practice which can be transferred and reproduced – otherwise it is of limited value.

The scope of best practice was agreed to be hard to define, and should certainly not be confined to the project level. Best practice in policies and strategies, including issues such as integration, effective implementation, the integration of transport and land use policy areas, and novel partnerships between stakeholders were all agreed to be important. This however also gives problems of definition at all level, as packages of measures are also important. The examples of Basel and Krakow (see below) were cited in this regard

Other specific areas of good practice were mentioned, for western Europe, CEE and beyond:

- In Krakow, a new season ticket at 20% lower price was introduced and has been heavily taken up. A partnership between the local authority and the bus company includes clear quality criteria which affect the level of subsidy given; new rolling stock has been introduced for buses and tramways; bus shelters have been upgraded with private sector sponsorship, and timetable information has been improved and made more widely available, including via internet. The results have been successful by both customer satisfaction and objective criteria, and have not required increased subsidy owing to increased use and increased revenue.
- Some benchmarking of road haulage has been undertaken in Hungary, but significantly, it has thus far been confined to joint ventures involving transnational companies from outside Hungary. This is still in its infancy, and requires further effort to be extended to other companies.
- Good standards of intermodality were seen in the Netherlands and Switzerland; with positive attitudes to cycling policy especially visible in the Netherlands and Denmark.
- Positive steps in rail management were also discussed – notably moves to harmonise technical standards at Commission level; Spain's first moves to the standard track gauge; and changing electrification standards in the Netherlands.
- In Austria, population distribution in one small town was such that it was once thought impossible to serve through public transport – but a successful system was introduced

which is being emulated elsewhere in Austria and in Germany.

- In Basel, public transport improvements were accompanied by measures to encourage cycling, and increasing restrictions on road vehicles, including an extension of 30kph zones. In Zurich, improvements to public transport also led to increased levels of use, such that the improvements were self-financing.

3.6. Transport and Regional Development

The initial discussion focused on the 1999 report of the UK Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) on *Transport and Economy*, recognising that its findings were of potentially great significance for transport policy in CEE. That is, the doubts over the direct link between road building and economic growth go directly against many of the underlying assumptions being pursued both by the EU and by CEE governments themselves.

It was recognised that there were potential limits to the applicability of the SACTRA findings in CEE, as much of its evidence centres on areas with well-developed road networks, and concludes that an additional road link makes little difference in these areas. However, several of SACTRA's findings certainly are relevant:

- SACTRA stresses that transport is not the only type of bottleneck which limits economic growth, and may not be the most critical - shortages in skills, labour and other local infrastructure are also important, and these are highly relevant issues in most CEE countries.
- In Hungary, an official report on the M3 motorway showed little impact on economic activity, and implied that there might be more productive ways to invest the money.
- The 'two way road' argument clearly applies, in that new infrastructure can take wealth out of a peripheral area just as easily as it can put it in, and some evidence of CEE trade suggests that this is happening already.

More generally, it was agreed that there was a need to understand the other drivers of transport demand growth, and how, if at all, these interact with regional development. Clear goals were agreed to be necessary for environment, society and economy, all of which should be applied to infrastructure development decisions.

Far more advanced analysis of the costs and benefits of new infrastructure were agreed to be needed. SACTRA produced detailed recommendations on this issue, and it was agreed that these needed to be considered both by the EU institutions and by CEE governments.

The question also arose as to what money should be invested in, if new roads were found not to be productive. There was found to be a need to generate active discussion at regional level on alternative means to stimulate innovation and economic growth. Again the likely advantages in spending money on repairing existing infrastructure were suggested - e.g. that it may create more jobs per unit of investment, stimulate local economies, and do little damage to the environment. It was pointed out that in Basel, the authorities had simply asked the local population what were its priorities for transport investment, and that a significant reorientation towards public transport had resulted. In Denmark, it had been made clear that new infrastructure could be built only by cutting down on the maintenance of existing roads - and again, people had favoured repairing the later.

More generally, it was felt that the importance of SACTRA as an 'official' report needed to be stressed, and it was agreed that T&E would try to do more over the coming year to publicise its findings and to stimulate debate on its significance for EU regional policy and transport infrastructure. It was also noted that ECMT had taken an interest in the report and was likely to develop further work on this issue.

4. Summary of Discussion and Conclusions

4.1. General Conclusions

Although there have been dramatic changes in CEE countries in transport use over the past decade, significant differences from western European norms remain. Despite rapid decline since 1989, for example, modal shares for rail freight and public transport remain high. Critical challenges facing CEE are to manage the modal shares of traffic to best effect, making use of the capacity in public transport while still promoting economic growth and change.

It was pointed out that bribery and corruption were important determinants of some aspects of transport practice in CEE; this would need to be tackled in order to allow effective implementation of sustainable policies.

4.2. Railways

There was some debate over the capacity of the rail network in CEE to provide extra freight capacity. While some argued that it has limited ability to substitute for road haulage, it was also pointed out that there has been a dramatic fall in rail use since 1989, and that much of this capacity is still available or could be recovered.

It was felt that the extension of the rail freight freeways concept into CEE would be beneficial, as national carriers in both east and west have served the interests of competitive long distance freight poorly in the past. It was also pointed out that internationalisation of rail companies in CEE, which is supported by the Commission's work programme, is desirable because most CEE countries are too small on their own to be able to maintain a competitive environment for long haul rail freight. There was also extremely wide support for an opening up of rail systems and a radical reform of the CEE rail operators, who were not thought to have done enough to improve their competitive position or to serve their customers.

It was felt that railways should be developed as an *intermodal* means of travel with good access for other modes, and greater attention to the high proportion of short journeys which are undertaken. This implies greater attention to conventional rail, as high-speed lines do not fulfil this function.

It was noted that a progressive programme for harmonisation of technical standards for rail will soon be adopted and become part of the *acquis communautaire*, at which point it will become a future requirement for CEE as well. On the other hand, some problems in EU are expected to be repeated in CEE to the detriment of rail – such as the 'head start' in liberalisation for road over rail freight, and the much tighter regulation of rail than of road.

4.3. Infrastructure and Funding

There are enormous contrasts in the funding policies of the various international financial institutions (IFIs), with some favouring very large scale road projects quite heavily. For the future they should co-ordinate their lending activities more effectively, and develop sustainable transport policies to govern their investment decisions. For IFIs and national governments, environmental, health and safety goals should be incorporated into the decision-making process for transport planning and investments.

The EU's own funding priorities were questioned, and EU finance may be channelled primarily towards completion of the Helsinki corridors, rather even than to the broader aspects of TINA. Thus it seemed that neither the less environmentally damaging aspects of TINA, nor TINA refurbishment projects and other urban transport projects, are likely to be supported unless additional arguments for regional regeneration can be deployed.

There has been an implicit assumption in much of the transport funding effort to date that transport links are an effective means of stimulating economic growth; but recent research by a highly respected group of independent experts from the UK found that this is not necessarily the case. Some experience in CEE already supports this view as well. With this in mind, alternative priorities beyond new infrastructure are needed which might in future be applied to direct transport funding in CEE:

- Before investments take place, national sustainable transport policies should be elaborated which would take into account international, national and local needs;
- While roads in CEE are often in bad condition, it was argued that rail infrastructure is also in a poor state in most of the countries of CEE;
- better maintenance of existing infrastructure would be good for local jobs and economic regeneration, and would probably be more cost-effective and far less damaging to the environment;
- rolling stocks of all modes of transport are very old, and are currently being modernised at a very slow pace;
- Phare funding (and ideally ISPA as well) should be made available for funding urban public transport, and all IFIs should direct more of their activities towards sustainable transport projects.

4.4. Urban Transport

This is a neglected area of transport policy in much of CEE. Although it is recognised to be primarily a local issue, it was felt that the EU's priorities distract badly from the pursuit of sustainable local transport systems. Main conclusions were:

- That coherent transport *and land use* plans are needed at local level, within an overall sustainable development strategy;
- That both 'carrot and stick' measures should tackle car use and create more attractive public transport systems;
- That more attention needs to be paid to 'softer' measures such as traffic calming, pedestrian areas and bicycle lanes;
- That tourism should be used to support public transport rather than growing car use.

4.5. Future Activity

It was agreed that NGOs working on TINA should pool their resources to work more effectively on aspects of the assessment of TINA proposals, including strategic environmental assessment of the network.

T&E and its members now anticipate working more actively on the issues raised at the conference, notably on the debate about the links between transport infrastructure and regional development, and the promotion of more sustainable priorities for CEE transport policy.

It is hoped that the EU institutions and others will renew their efforts to incorporate environmental concerns fully into all aspects of their policies and activities towards transport in CEE.

Annex I

Background paper to the conference

Introduction

It is now more than ten years since the destruction of the Berlin Wall, which came to symbolise the spectacular political changes which were to sweep across the states of central and eastern Europe (CEE). Although much has changed in this time, political and economic stability remain fragile for many countries in the region. As a result, enlargement of the EU to the east is now seen as a central and urgent priority for the EU, to ensure both economic prosperity and political stability. This process is having, and will continue to have, important repercussions for future transport and environment policy in an enlarged EU.

Indeed, dramatic changes have already taken place in transport activities across CEE, and more are likely to follow. Not all of these changes have been for the better. This paper begins by outlining some recent developments affecting transport and the environment across CEE. It then addresses some of the major policy areas which will have an influence on this process, with particular emphasis on the effects which EU and other outside institutions are having, or are likely to have, on CEE.

Trends in Transport and Environment in CEE

Transport Trends in Outline

It is not possible in the space available to characterise recent trends in the EU's applicant countries and other states of central and eastern Europe (CEE) in any detail. Equally, it should be emphasised that significant differences exist between the situations in different countries, so broad generalisations do not always hold good. Equally, due account must be taken of these factors in making any assessments or policy recommendations for CEE.

However, most CEE states are characterised by rapid increases in levels of road traffic and private vehicle ownership, particularly in those which have experienced growth in average prosperity as their economies begin to align with those of the EU. Between 1970 and 1995, for example, road freight in the 11 central and eastern European members of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) grew from 56 btkm to 132 btkm. This was slightly faster than the growth rate in the EU, in spite of dramatic decline during the transition period of 1988 to 1992. In absolute terms the level of road freight traffic in CEE remained much lower than that of the EU, but traffic growth is now very rapid.

It is important to note that, in proportion to GDP, freight traffic intensities in CEE are typically far higher than those in the EU. This may in part reflect an underreporting of private sector GDP through the 'grey' and underground economies, but the differences are too large to be explained by this alone. On the other hand, it is likely that the level of freight activity in small enterprises is also underreported in many places, which means that official figures may understate the true total. The statistics must therefore reflect other structural differences in the freight transport sector between CEE and the EU, but these are not well understood.

Over the same period, private car use in the west grew from 1567 billion passenger-kilometres (bpkm) to 3551 bpkm per year, and in CEE from 9 bpkm to 102 bpkm. The latter was of course a very rapid rise, from a very low base by western European standards. However, car ownership levels in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in particular are now rapidly approaching those typical of EU countries.

Reliable statistics on car travel remain scarce, and again the pattern of rising car ownership and use is not uniform. Thus for example, car use in Hungary fell in 1995 on account of rising fuel taxes and other austerity measures, in spite of rising car ownership.

In contrast to road, rail use is stagnant or in decline in many areas. Rail freight traffic declined drastically in most CEE countries from 1989, and has only recently shown signs of some recovery. This reflects not only changes in the structure of the industry, but also difficulties inherent in adapting to major changes in the pattern of freight movements. In essence, it has been far more difficult for rail freight than for road to adapt to a shift of trade away from the Soviet bloc and towards the EU.

It should be stressed that the modal share of rail freight remains extremely high in most countries of the CEE by comparison to those in the EU, but is declining rapidly as a result of the trends outlined above.

For public passenger transport, both rail and bus/tram, the decline since 1989 has been equally severe, and in most places shows few signs of recovery. The main causes are rapid fare increases during economic restructuring, coupled in some cases with increased competition from private car travel. This in particular is not universally the case, and reliance on public transport remains high in many areas in spite of greatly increased costs.

Environmental Impacts

Further high levels of growth in transport use (and particularly road transport) are expected, which in turn are likely to lead to a doubling or tripling of emissions and very high abatement costs for applicant countries according to the European Environment Agency. Growing use of road transport also poses particular issues for urban air quality.

Increasing traffic levels and a changing economic structure are now associated with a strong interest amongst CEE governments and the Commission in the modernisation and development of transport infrastructure - most notably through the Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment (TINA) process, which is discussed in greater detail below. This emphasis on infrastructure development, and the accompanying risks of environmental damage, are of particular concern in the light of the high conservation value of natural areas in these countries. The European Commission's *Agenda 2000* Communication of 1997 reflects this point as follows:

‘CEECs still have large extensive habitats of major importance for Europe: forests, wetlands and steppes. They also have areas of biodiversity-rich farmland, which supports important populations of globally threatened species, such as the corncrake and great bustard, as well as large numbers of commoner farmland birds, such as the skylark, which are declining rapidly in western Europe’.

The Enlargement Process

The Acquis Communautaire

The accession process for each CEE state seeking to join the EU is essentially a process of conforming its own laws, procedures and other structures to the requirements of all EU legislation – otherwise known as the *acquis communautaire*. This process is already well advanced for the first wave of applicants, involving detailed assessments and negotiations on the different areas of the *acquis*, which for these purposes is addressed chapter by chapter. In principle, the entire *acquis* should be implemented by the date of accession, but this is unlikely to be true in practice, as the *acquis* as a whole is placing enormous administrative, legislative and financial burdens on the accession states. In reality, therefore, significant delays may be allowed for some of the more difficult or expensive requirements.

A number of the chapters of the *acquis* are of relevance to transport and environment policy. For example, the transport chapter is concerned primarily with promoting common standards and other measures to protect the free movement of goods and passengers. These include, for example, rules governing cabotage and other aspects of international road haulage; licensing of road hauliers and railway operators; common safety standards; etc. The trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) also falls within this chapter, and is discussed in greater detail below.

The Commission's Green Paper on fair and efficient pricing, and the more recent White Paper on infrastructure charging, also fall within the transport chapter, but these do not constitute legislation with which Member States need to comply. The only measures which are of particular relevance to transport pricing and the environment are the Eurovignette Directive and the Mineral Oils Directives, which are discussed below.

Various aspects of the environment chapter are also of relevance, directly or indirectly, to transport policy. Those relating directly to road vehicles include new vehicle emissions standards, requirements for road vehicle testing, and emerging developments on CO₂ emissions. Other relevant legislation includes the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, requirements to designate and protect sites under the birds and habitats Directives, and the various air quality standards.

Political Priorities

There are three major concerns associated with the adoption of the *acquis* by the countries of the CEE. The first relates to the priorities which will be established between the implementation timetables for the different measures. In practical terms, measures relating to the single market will receive the highest priority, in order to ensure that economic distortions are avoided as far as possible. Most of the measures in the transport *acquis* will be treated in this category.

There is, however, a possibility that some of the environmental measures listed above will be regarded as being of lower priority, and hence that their implementation might be delayed. Such importance is attached to the geopolitical considerations which are driving the accession process that there is a danger that environmental considerations will be postponed or overlooked, especially if they appear expensive or likely to hinder economic expansion. If the

priority attached to environmental protection is not improved, there could well be important environmental consequences arising from rapid economic changes during and after the accession period.

A second concern is that imposition of the *acquis* will further open up transport operations in CEE to international competition and market forces generally. Whether or not this is regarded as desirable in the longer term, it may cause further disruption in a sector which has already experienced rapid change (and severe economic contraction) over the past decade.

The final point is that the whole of the *acquis* taken together represents a huge legislative and administrative burden upon the accession states, often coming on top of severe social, economic and other difficulties. Also, the political importance attached to accession by governments both inside and outside the EU, creates further pressure to adhere to a very tight timetable for implementation. In these circumstances, it would not be surprising if the *acquis* were taking a central role in the political agendas of many CEE states.

However, as the brief outline presented above illustrates, the relevant parts of the *acquis* represent only isolated elements of transport policy in total, and do not claim to add up to a coherent or integrated framework for sustainable transport. This in fact was recognised in the Commission's Fifth Environmental Action Programme, which identified a wide range of stakeholders (including national and local governments) who would need to apply appropriate measures to move transport systems towards sustainability. There is a danger, therefore, that the importance attached to the *acquis* will result in the neglect of other essential measures, such as supporting public transport services and creating sustainable urban environments which encourage walking and cycling.

From TEN-T to TINA

Plans are currently being developed to extend the trans-European Transport Networks for transport (TEN-T) across CEE in order to construct a pan-European network. This process has incorporated a planning exercise known as the Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment or TINA. TINA is closely modelled upon the development of the TEN-T, and shares many of its underlying assumptions.

Thus for example, the introduction of the most recent report on TINA states that 'the network should be in line with the criteria laid down in the EU guidelines for the development of the TENs'. However, the objectives and criteria of the TEN-T are themselves rather unclear, and have led to the accumulation of various national priorities into the supposed network. Therefore a more rational and transparent approach is needed for TINA, or past mistakes will be replicated.

Indeed, there is a danger that projects will be added primarily on the basis of total costs and available funds rather than a clear assessment of needs or priorities. Furthermore, the assessment centres around estimates of traffic growth which appear inconsistent, and do not reflect the fact that freight transport intensities in CEE are already very high by EU standards. Also, there are growing doubts over the relationship between transport investment and economic growth, as described below in the discussion of the recent SACTRA report. In the light of this new evidence, the lack of any detailed assessment of the regional development implications of the TINA network is extremely worrying.

There exists a clear possibility that a great deal of much-needed money will be spent, and environmental damage caused, without bringing any clear economic benefit to CEE countries. On the contrary, as explained below, opening up transport corridors could actually damage the vulnerable economies of many regions by exposing them to external competition. It is therefore open to question whether money spend on the TINA network will give the countries of the CEE the greatest possible economic benefit, or the lowest environmental cost.

Funding of Transport and Regional Development

The EU's Cohesion Policy Objectives

Fostering economic development in areas of the EU which have a GDP well below the average is an established feature of EU policy. This is in order to ensure that disadvantaged or peripheral areas do not suffer unduly from competition within the single market and that a degree of social cohesion is maintained. Obviously these objectives will be particularly relevant to the enlargement of the EU to include countries with much lower per capita GDPs than the existing members.

Funding of transport infrastructure has traditionally featured quite heavily in this process, particularly in the case of the Cohesion Fund, which was designed to help Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland to catch up economically when they joined the Community. Clearly priorities have changed little, as the same model has now been established for the countries of CEE through the (virtually identical) new Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA), from which 50 per cent of the funds available are expected to be spent on transport.

Unlike the earlier Cohesion fund, however, ISPA sets out a minimum price tag of EUR 5 million for the measures to be undertaken. This reinforces the likelihood that funds will be focused on major infrastructure projects, and will be unable to fund smaller scale or less capital-intensive investments. It is also likely to reinforce the existing institutional bias of other funding bodies towards large scale projects.

Perhaps equally important, the ISPA Regulation does not incorporate strong environmental safeguards, and the wording in this respect is weaker than that of the corresponding Cohesion Fund Regulation.

The Effects of Inward Investment in Transport

Inward investment is estimated to have constituted 41 per cent of all transport investment in CEE countries over the period 1991-95. Inward investment comes in the form of loans, grants, and private investment. The principal institutional sources of funding to CEE are the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Phare funding programme of the EU, and the World Bank, in descending order of scale of funding. Their contributions to different types of project in different countries vary considerably, and cannot be characterised in detail here.

However, past analysis has illustrated the disproportionate and potentially distortionary effect of inward investment which is already apparent in Cohesion countries. That is, the Funds

have also diverted scarce national and local sources of investment and funding priorities towards large-scale infrastructure projects, possibly to the detriment of other priorities.

Similarly, the Commission's 1997 Communication on the pan-European networks makes clear the anticipated importance of inward investment in realising the TINA networks. The TINA Secretariat report of 1999 also confirms the very high level of national investment which will be needed to co-fund the building of the TINA network. The target of 1.5 per cent of national GDP towards TINA is described by the Secretariat as modest; but it is comparable to *total* transport investment as a percentage of GDP in the (much wealthier) EU Member States. Hence there is a very real danger that all available national funding will 'chase the Euros', starving out potentially more productive and less damaging small scale local investments (eg public transport services, repairs and maintenance, facilities for walking and cycling, etc).

It would however be wrong to suggest that the banks and EU institutions were trying to force a particular set of priorities upon CEE countries. Any bias towards large scale international projects does appear to be shared by national governments in CEE as well. It is quite usual for national governments to place great emphasis on prestigious international schemes, but with resources so limited, this may not in this case be the best policy available.

Environmental Assessment of Transport Infrastructure

Within the EU, Directive 85/337 as amended by Directive 97/11 requires an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of most categories of major projects, including large transport infrastructure developments. These do not of course ensure that environmental damage is avoided, but they should provide a framework in which environmental impacts can be weighed against other considerations. In practice, however, the EIAs for major transport projects, including those under TEN-T, are often inadequate to allow this to happen, and further safeguards are needed within the EU. The recent suspension of construction on the ring road around Budapest suggests that similar problems exist and are likely to continue in CEE countries as well.

Beyond this, it is increasingly recognised that project-level EIAs are not sufficient to ensure full integration of environmental concerns into infrastructure policy, because many of the broader aspects of network development are likely to be missed when assessing a single piece of infrastructure. For this reason a proposal is under discussion to require a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of major programmes of work such as TEN-T and TINA.

In the context of TEN-T, a number of corridor analyses of environmental impacts have now been undertaken, and these represent useful progress towards a broader assessment. Equally there is still a great deal yet to be done. In general, while corridor analysis is a valuable addition to project EIA, it is likely to be primarily a tool for intermodal comparisons. As such it is far less well suited to address policy alternatives such as demand management and land use changes. For these a higher level strategic assessment remains essential. It is also probable, at current rates of progress, that a full set of corridor analyses even for the EU will not have been undertaken by the year 2010 - the target date for completion of the TEN-T network.

Beyond this, the Guidelines which set out the TEN-T network in Decision 1692/96 required that a full SEA of the TEN-T should be undertaken. In 1998 the European Environment

Agency published a preliminary analysis of the environmental risks and possible impacts of the TEN-T in a systematic way, and made other important methodological recommendations. Other working documents have also been produced. In spite of this, however, we still appear to be some way from formulating and undertaking a full SEA of TEN-T, in spite of the time which has elapsed since the guidelines set out the requirement for this to be done.

For CEE and TINA, such environmental safeguards seem to be even less well advanced. The Commission's documents on extending TEN-T into CEE have stressed the importance of SEA, and stated explicitly that 'strategic environmental assessments will be integrated in the TINA process'. However, no timetable appears to have been set out for this to occur, and there are few signs that progress is being made. As a result, as with TEN-T, we have already reached a position where the form and content of the network is essentially agreed, and building work may be far advanced before an SEA is carried out.

Some Further Issues for Transport and Enlargement

How Best to Encourage Regional Development

As noted above, funding of transport infrastructure plays an important role in regional development policy in Europe. Implicit in this is the assumption that this funding helps to promote economic growth, without causing the sort of economic distortions which can occur through direct subsidy to other economic sectors. However, the UK's influential expert group, the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment or SACTRA, has recently published a detailed report on its research into the link between transport investment and economic regeneration. This suggests that there is in fact no clear link between road building and economic growth, and that the effects on the local economy could even be negative under certain circumstances.

The report stresses that empirical evidence of a link between road building and economic growth is very scarce indeed, and the little evidence which is available is disputed. In particular it casts doubt on research which purports to show that there are major benefits from roads beyond the immediate user benefits. It argues that *ex-post* appraisals of transport projects are also unconvincing in supporting the transport and economy argument, because there are major problems in distinguishing the transport-specific effect in the context of changing circumstances, such as economic growth or industrial restructuring.

SACTRA goes on to point out that the theoretical argument for an economic growth effect is stronger, but only in very specific circumstances. That is, *if* an infrastructure project delivers faster transport speeds and hence lower costs, then some of this should be converted into economic benefits, through a number of possible mechanisms. This is not guaranteed to occur, however, and the outcome is strongly dependent on specific local conditions. Perhaps more important, they go on to emphasise that it is impossible to be sure *where* the benefits will accrue, as improving accessibility between any two places may sometimes benefit one at the expense of the other.

These findings are quite fundamental to future policy on enlargement, as they suggest that building large-scale long-distance transport links may actually weaken the economic position of peripheral areas. More specifically, mixed progress in transport and economic development (as described above) underlines the need for careful assessment of local conditions.

That is, infrastructure developments cannot be assumed to bring benefits to local economies in CEE any more than they can within the EU – and perhaps even less so. Recent economic data indicate that economic growth in CEE is currently accompanied by a growing *deficit* in trade with the EU, which amply illustrates SACTRA's point that new roads facilitate movement in both directions. At the very least, these points raise the question as to whether large scale transport infrastructure is the most effective way to promote economic development.

Others are beginning to recognise this point. For example, the Commission in its 1999 Communication on *Cohesion and Transport* notes that 'investment in transport alone will not lead to the reduction of development disparities'. Likewise, the European Spatial Development Perspective (a spatial planning initiative of the EU Member States) states that 'transport and telecommunications structures are not sufficient prerequisites on their own for regional development'.

The Problem of Transit Traffic

There is a particularly acute problem with transit traffic for some applicant countries. The results of recent pilot studies suggest that the proportion of total freight traffic in CEE which is international in character is already remarkably high by EU standards (46 per cent of total tonne-kilometres according to Eurostat). This is particularly remarkable given the perceived deficiencies of long-distance transport links, and once again suggests that excessive priority may be being given to the TINA network.

Clearly the upgrading of TINA corridors will in some cases help companies to gain access to more distant markets or to existing EU Member States. Some applicant countries appear to welcome this possibility as a source of revenue from road tolls. This is understandable, but may not be sustainable. It will clearly do nothing to promote local development, and is likely to bring about environmental damage with little corresponding economic benefit for the areas affected, or perhaps even for national economies.

Integrating Environmental Protection into Transport Strategies

In addition to measures outlined above to limit environmental damage under the environmental *acquis communautaire*, there are other measures that are essential in order to implement strategies and policies for sustainable transport systems.

It is important, for example, to internalise external costs and to adopt other measures on land use in order to ensure balanced development. As argued above, internal market policy continues to be advanced more rapidly than environmental policy. Therefore, pursuing freight transport liberalisation, public transport restructuring and major infrastructure developments without these other measures is bound to result in unsustainable growth in transport use.

Recent work by EEA amongst others demonstrates that transport costs are not yet fully internalised even across the EU, and this is even more the case in many CEE countries. The EU's Mineral Oils Directives set a minimum level of fuel duties which CEE countries will be required to charge on accession to the EU. Some CEE states have already raised duties and are already at or close to the levels specified, but others will need to raise fuel taxes to meet

the requirements. However, the levels specified in the legislation were set at a fairly cautious level in 1994, and are well below what most EU member states now levy in duty.

Changing Funding Priorities

It has been argued above that there are serious problems both with the underlying objectives of transport infrastructure development in Europe, and with their environmental appraisal. Clearly these problems should be addressed *before* the approach used for TEN-T is applied to the TINA network, either implicitly or explicitly.

Efforts have certainly been made recently to shift infrastructure investment away from road and in favour of rail. However, in the EU at least, investment in rail infrastructure is still heavily weighted towards new high speed links as opposed to upgrading or refurbishment of conventional networks. It should be stressed that the former is not only highly capital-intensive, but also more likely to result in serious impacts on land use and biodiversity.

Instead, it can be argued that the best priorities for transport funding (in both environmental and economic terms) are unlikely to be those concerned with major infrastructure investment. Smaller projects which encourage intermodality and interoperability may for example deserve greater attention, along with supporting technologies which can improve the efficiency of transport utilisation without either fostering demand or requiring major infrastructure developments. Some of the Commission's own analysis suggests that such investments can bring high returns at relatively low cost.

More generally, a new hierarchy for priority projects should be considered, which favours the repair of existing infrastructure, and perhaps modifications and upgrades, over new building. These activities will generally have a far smaller impact on the environment, while stimulating local economies both directly and indirectly.

Beyond this, broader policy alternatives must be integrated into the decision-making process for transport policies. These should include regional development paths which require less long-distance transport (eg strengthening regional networks between industries, regional marketing, building upon endogenous potential); investing in other urgent bottlenecks to regional development such as skill shortages, social infrastructure and intra-regional communication; and developing telematics, logistics and road pricing solutions rather than focusing solely on transport infrastructure.

Towards Sustainable Transport Policies

In 1997, environment and transport ministers from around Europe met under the auspices of the UNECE to discuss sustainable transport policies. This was the first regional, sectoral ministerial conference to arise from the 'Earth Summit' in Rio. The resultant Vienna Declaration usefully set out the key principles required for sustainability in the transport sector, including 'seven steps to sustainability'. This Declaration was widely regarded as an important positive step by ministers from across Europe; but as is often the case, fine principles have not yet been translated into practice in many countries.

For the EU, delivering sustainable transport systems became a formal requirement under the Amsterdam Treaty, which came into force in May 1999. This required the signatories to integrate environmental requirements into all of the Community's policies and actions. In

response, the Council of Ministers at the Cardiff Summit of June 1998 asked three Council formations (including transport) to start on this integration process and to present initial integration strategies to the Vienna Council of December 1998.

The first transport report from the Council was disappointing, and represented little more than an outline at that time. However, the three Council formations were asked to develop their strategies further for the Helsinki Council in December 1999. The resulting transport strategy was generally regarded as the best of the three, and a significant improvement on the first draft. It recognised, for example, that an indefinite continuation of the existing trends in the growth of both passenger and freight road transport is unsustainable, and that urgent action is needed to reverse the growth of carbon dioxide emissions from transport.

The strategy clearly stated that environmental concerns should be as important as social and economic factors in the development of transport policy. In order to put the existing unsustainable trends in transport onto a sustainable footing, it underlined the need for packages of policy measures to influence transport demand and travel behaviour. The report called for a number of initiatives, some of which were new demands on the Council itself, and on the Commission. These included a call for greater progress in the implementation of fair and efficient pricing; promotion of better land use planning to reduce the need to travel; improving the balance between public and private transport; and better integration of the different modes of transport.

The strategy went on to state that further action is urgently needed to tackle transport growth, notably as a consequence of enlargement. It accepted that further action is also needed in the field of strategic environmental assessment, and for public participation to be incorporated into this process in line with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention. The need to promote inter-regional public transport in the design of both TEN-T and the TINA network was also noted.

For accession states, the development of less damaging transport modes was seen to be particularly important, and the Council noted that 'the allocation of funds to applicant countries could be linked, where possible, to the development of such modes.' This is an important proposal, but the use of the word 'could' rather than 'should' indicates a significant degree of uncertainty on the Council's part.

The Council strategy also called upon the Commission to report on the SEA of TEN-T in 2001, and on the TINA network in the year 2000. It is significant that the latter requirement did not refer specifically to SEA, reflecting a lack of progress on environmental evaluation of TINA.

In spite of general policy statements, then, there are still clearly deficiencies in the ways in which environmental issues are being addressed in CEE, and on the priority given to environment generally in the EU enlargement process. This is clearly inconsistent with Council of Ministers' requirement that environmental considerations should be integrated 'from the outset' in transport policy in CEE, and urgent action is needed to redress this deficiency.

This is not to say, of course, that no positive measures in favour of sustainable transport are in progress, or that there are no positive signs for CEE countries. On the contrary, examples of car-free days, improvements in public transport services and other sustainable transport

measures can be seen in a number of places. Rarely, however, does this as yet amount to a coherent strategy at national and local levels, setting out clear objectives for environmental protection as well as transport provision.

Unfortunately, the EU still tends to impose and replicate its own mistakes in transport policy in practice, in spite of the fact that it has recognised that its own priorities will need to change to deliver sustainable development. It is argued above that the accession process itself, and other policy initiatives such as TINA, continue to exert pressures for unsustainable transport in spite of sustainable development rhetoric.

Equally, it should be stressed that national governments in CEE tend to favour highly visible prestige projects such as new motorways over cheaper and potentially more productive local measures. All accession countries already show a similar pattern of priority given to road construction to that which can be seen historically in the EU, while existing public transport systems fall into decline.

It is also important that all funding agencies should now co-ordinate and review their activities to reconsider whether large scale transport infrastructure constitutes the most productive and cost-effective means available to encourage economic development. It is also necessary to ensure that funding for new infrastructure of this sort does not 'crowd out' other more sustainable expenditure, either in transport provision or elsewhere.

In spite of the remaining difficulties, the current situation in terms of transport provision in CEE still gives the EU an unrivalled opportunity to promote more sustainable development in the future - but not unless current priorities are reviewed and transformed across the board rather than in a piecemeal way, and as a matter of urgency.

February 2000



PROGRAMME

T&E Conference on Transport and EU Enlargement

Organised in co-operation with the Institute for European Environmental Policy, London,
with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

Thursday 16 March

AFTERNOON

T&E Director, **Beatrice Schell**, will chair the afternoon session

14h00-14h30: Welcoming address and Keynote speech

- Welcome by **Matthias Zimmermann**, T&E President
- Keynote speech by **Axel Friedrich**, Umweltbundesamt (Germany)

14h30-15h00: Current state of transport in Central and Eastern Europe

- Presentation by **Laszlo Ruppert**, Hungarian Institute for Transport Sciences

15h00-15h30: Policy overview of transport and enlargement

- Presentation by **Malcolm Fergusson**, IEEP

15h30-16h00: Coffee break

16h00-16h30: The Trans-European Transport Network in an enlarged EU

- Presentation by **Winfried Grueter**, DG TREN, European Commission

16h30-17h00: Funding sustainable transport in Central and Eastern Europe

- Presentation by **Magda Stoczkiewicz**, CEE Bankwatch Network

17h00-17h30: Panel discussion

Panellists include:

- **Ian Clark**, DG Environment, European Commission
- **Axel Friedrich**, Umweltbundesamt
- **Anna Ottiavanelli**, Community of European Railways
- **Peter Wiederkehr**, Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development

18h00-19h00: Cocktail

Friday 17 March

MORNING

9h30-10h00: Plenary & Introduction

- **Beatrice Schell**, T&E Director

10h00-11h15: Workshop 1

Participants choose one of the following:

- 1 TINA: priorities for transport infrastructure**
• Rapporteur: **Ferenc Joó**, Hungarian Traffic Club
- 2 Urban Transport in Central & Eastern Europe**
• Rapporteur: **Razvan Marcu**, Romanian Group for Sustainable Transport
- 3 Freight and Transit Traffic**
• Rapporteur: **Markus Liechti**, T&E

11h15-11h45: Coffee break

11h45-13h00: Workshop 2

Participants choose one of the following:

- 4 Environmental assessment (strategic, corridor & project)**
• Rapporteur: **Ann Dom**, European Environment Agency
- 5 Best practice in transport policy (EU & CEE)**
• Rapporteur: **Malcolm Fergusson**, IEEP
- 6 Transport & effective regional development**
• Rapporteur: **Frazer Goodwin**, T&E

13h00-14h00: Lunch

AFTERNOON

14h00-16h00: Plenary starts

Chaired by **Malcolm Fergusson**, IEEP

16h00-16h30: Coffee break

16h30-17h30: Plenary continues

17h30-18h00: Summary and closing

- Summary by **Malcolm Fergusson**, IEEP
- Closing by **Matthias Zimmermann**, T&E President

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ANNEX IV

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS

Mr Malcolm FERGUSON

is Senior Fellow at the Institute for European Environmental Policy in London, an independent environmental research institute. He specialises in transport and climate change policy issues in Europe. His recent work within the UK has focused on motoring taxation including company car tax and reforming vehicle excise duty. His European level studies have included developments in the European freight and air travel sectors; the potential for alternative transport fuels in Europe; CO₂ controls and environmental taxation in the EC; the environmental implications of increasing car use in central and eastern Europe; funding of transport infrastructure; and the effects of EC transport policy on the environment.

Dr Winfried GRÜTER

is Principal Administrator with the European Commission's Directorate for Transport and Energy, unit B2 (Trans-European Network policy and technological development). He has a diploma as Nuclear Physicist from the University of Aachen, and a PhD from the University of Cologne.

Dr László RUPPERT

is Research Director of **KTI** – Institute for Transport Sciences – in Budapest. He studied traffic engineering and economics, EURO-engineer, FEANI /Paris- Brussels/. He is vice general secretary of the Hungarian Scientific Association for Transport Sciences, guest lecturer of the Technical University of Budapest and the Budapest University of Economic Sciences, executive member of the European Society of Transport Institutes (ESTI-Brussels), and a member of the Advisory Board of the Hungarian Logistics and Promotion Centre (founded by the World Bank). His main research areas are transport policy, infrastructure investment, EU harmonisation in transit countries, transport economy and logistics, analysis and forecasting of transport demand and the transport market.

Ms Magda STOCZKIEWICZ

is CEE Bankwatch Network EU Coordinator. For more than 5 years she has been working for the CEE Bankwatch Network, first in Poland and since September 1999 at the Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) office in Brussels. She was a board member of Friends of the Earth Europe in 1998/99. Due to co-operation between FoEE and CEE Bankwatch Network she is now based in the Brussels office dealing mostly with European Investment Bank activities and pre-accession funds. As a 'Bankwatcher' her main area of work is International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the impact of their financing activities on the environment. For the last 3 years she was focusing on transport sector investments.

T&E PUBLICATIONS

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1993

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T&E 93/5 Taxation and Infrastructure Costs of Heavy Goods Transport

T&E 93/6 Getting the Prices Right. A European Scheme for Making Transport Pay its True Costs (220 p.) (€40)

T&E 93/7 Getting the Prices Right. A European Scheme for Making Transport Pay its True Costs, short version (30 p)

T&E 93/8 External Benefits of Transport?

T&E 93/12 Pour la vérité des coûts - un modèle Européen pour la couverture par les différents modes de transport de l'intégralité de leur coûts (final report of "Internalising Social Costs of Transport"; short version)

T&E 93/14 Air Pollution by Air Traffic - overview of problems and possible solutions

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T&E 94/3 The Concept of Sustainable Transport

T&E 94/4 Taxes on Motor Fuels in the European Community (free)

T&E 94/6 Greening Urban Transport - Cycling and pedestrian policy

T&E 94/6A Greening Urban Transport - European examples of good cycling and pedestrian policy (annex to 94/6)

T&E 94/7 Greening Urban Transport - Parking policy

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T&E 94/9 Greening Urban Transport - Environmentally improved grades of petrol and diesel

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T&E 94/11 Greening Urban Transport - Urban road pricing

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T&E 95/1 Laboratory testing of 31 car models - an analysis of emissions from cars subjected to heavy loads and a supplementary test cycle

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- T&E 96/9 Air Pollution from Sea Vessels - the need and potential for reductions
- T&E 96/10 The Greening of Freight Transport in Norway - Background report of the project "The Greening of Freight Transport"
- T&E 96/11 The Greening of Freight Transport in Germany - Background report of the project "The Greening of Freight Transport"
- T&E 96/12 The Greening of Freight Transport in Europe - final report
- T&E 96/13 Response to the European Commission's Auto-oil Proposals

1997

- T&E 97/1 Memorandum on transport and environment to the Council of Ministers and the Dutch Presidency
- T&E 97/2 Reducing Cars' Thirst for Fuel - position paper on reducing CO2 emissions from passenger cars
- T&E 97/3 Towards more sensible decision-making on infrastructure building
- T&E 97/4 Updated response to the EU's Auto-Oil Programme
- T&E 97/5 Memorandum on Transport and Environment to the Council of Ministers and the UK Presidency
- T&E 97/6 Response to the European Commission's Acidification Strategy (joint paper with EEB and Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain)
- T&E 97/7 Traffic, air pollution and health

1998

- T&E 98/1 Sustainable Aviation - The need for a European environmental aviation charge
- T&E 98/2 Transport and climate change (see T&E 00/1)
- T&E 98/3 Cycle Beating and the EU Test Cycle for Cars
- T&E 98/4 Comments on the Consultation Paper on Air Transport and Environment

1999

- T&E 99/1 Memorandum to the German Presidency
- T&E 99/2 Road Fuel and Vehicles taxation in Light of EU Enlargement

- T&E 99/3 Response to the Commission report on the on the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network Guidelines and Priorities for the Future
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About this paper

T&E has renewed its commitment to address central and eastern European issues. To this end, it held a conference on 16-17 March 2000 on the environmental consequences of transport in an enlarged Europe.

The conference was held in Brussels and involved about 90 participants, including campaigners and experts from across the EU and central and eastern Europe (CEE). Representatives from the EU institutions, the European Environment Agency and many member states also participated.

The series of formal presentations on the first day resulted in a lively dialogue which continued into the workshops on the second day of the conference. Some of the strongest themes to emerge included the need to apply strategic environmental assessment and ways to promote best practice in transport policy; changing priorities to ensure best use of existing infrastructure, and to fully modernise the railways; and promoting better information to the public and to governmental agencies at all levels to ensure that the best return is achieved on the limited funds available for transport regeneration.

This paper presents the conclusions from this ground-breaking conference in a user-friendly format.

About T&E

The European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E) is Europe's primary non-governmental organisation campaigning on a Europe-wide level for an environmentally responsible approach to transport. The Federation was founded in 1989 as a European umbrella for organisations working in this field. At present T&E has 37 member organisations covering 20 countries. The members are mostly national organisations, including public transport users' groups, environmental organisations and the European environmental transport associations ('Verkehrsclubs'). These organisations in all have several million individual members. Several transnational organisations are associated members.

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.

The list of T&E publications in the annex provides a picture of recent T&E activities.

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