



European Federation for Transport and Environment

Secretariat 34 Bd de Waterloo, 1000 Brussels, Belgium Tel : + 32 / 2 / 502 9909 Fax : + 32 / 2 / 502 9908 e-mail : t+e@arcadis.be

## *Creating a sustainable transport future for Europe*

# Memorandum to the German Presidency

**E**ach of the bulleted items overleaf will be the topic of a short T&E position paper. The object of this paper is to place each of the issues within the overall context of the German Presidency as well as to highlight some priorities.

Following an outline of *Overall Objectives* the presidency should strive for the items are grouped (overleaf) into 3 kinds of issues :

1. priority issues,
2. unfinished business
3. perennial problems.

### **Overall Objectives :** ***Move from principles to practice***

**T**he joint Transport and Environment Councils of the UK presidency should be followed up by at least one joint Transport and Environment Council under the German Presidency. These events must, however, begin to move away from general discussions and towards the adoption of practical policy initiatives. Transport ministers and their staff no longer need to be taught the vocabulary of sustainable transport. They have learned a great deal during the processes leading to the Pan European transport conference in Helsinki and the UN ECE regional conference in Vienna both of which took place last year. The debate now needs to focus on what policies the union can now initiate to put these principles to work.

## 1. Priority Issues :

These fall into two kinds : ones that events have made a priority i.e. where the presidency has to be reactive to some extent, and those where the presidency has an opportunity to be proactive

- Agenda 2000 and infrastructure building - The key element of European policy making during the German presidency will be the adoption of the Agenda 2000 package due for adoption in March. At the same time the Commission is undertaking a review of the TENs guidelines. Ensuring a sensible approach to decision making is established for EU infrastructure projects should be a priority for the German presidency. The approach should in particular ensure that a comprehensive assessment of alternatives is included before finances are allocated ;
- Aviation - The Commission intended to respond to the growing concern over aviation's environmental impact with a Communication on before the end of 1998 - this is now due in the first part of 1999. Additionally a report on kerosene tax requested by ECOFIN should be completed during the German Presidency. The presidency should deal with the issues raised by these reports and ensure that the tax treatment of aviation is brought into line with other transport modes ;
- Climate change - the Commission communication on CO2 and transport made clear that further measures may be needed. With transports share of climate change gases continuing to increase, a valuable role the presidency could provide would be an initiative to re-examine what measures can be taken to reduce transport emissions at all level from the local to the European.

## 2. Incomplete Business :

Dossiers that will need attention if the UK presidency can not complete items before July :

- Auto Oil - The proposal for revised emission standards for heavy duty vehicle engines needs to be adopted using the same approach as the first raft of Auto Oil proposals - with tighter and mandatory standards in 2005;
- Rail revitalisation
- Integration policy
- Road freight package

## 3. Perennial Problems :

A dossier where the new German administration could take a strong position in comparison with its predecessor, and which successive presidencies could not resolve, is the revision of the Directive on minimum excise duties for mineral oils and its extension to cover energy products in general. This is particularly important given the desire of the new German administration to promote a shift in taxation away from labour and towards polluting activities.

With recent splits between European left of centre governments over tax harmonisation highlighted by the media over this issue, progress is even more desirable. Concentrating on one element as a first step may prove fruitful. The UK continues to be hostile to any European tax policy, yet has a progressive policy on transport fuel taxation. Revision of the Directive concentrating on the fuels *which it originally covered* and which the UK charges, and is committed to continue charging, rates substantially higher than the average would thus provide an approach that engages all members in a productive discussion.

The European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E) is comprised of 32 members in 19 Countries all of whom share the common aim of securing sustainable transport policies in Europe.