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GREEN PAPER

TEN-T: A POLICY REVIEW

TOWARDS A BETTER INTEGRATED TRANSEUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK AT THE SERVICE OF THE COMMON TRANSPORT POLICY

**Final statement of the
Association of European Border Regions
(AEBR)**

**20 April 2009
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Preface

Founded in 1971, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) is the only European-wide international organisation dealing with cross-border cooperation all over Europe. Our more than 100 members are representing more than 200 border and cross-border regions. This “Statement on the Green Paper: TEN-T: a policy review” was developed on behalf of our members. Therefore it is focussing on cross-border cooperation (some arguments had to be repeated under different headlines).

1. General

- The Association of European Border Region is appreciating the presentation of the Green Paper to date.
- Like the Commission, AEBR’s point of view is that the **results of TEN-T** achieved up to now are vindicating not only a review of the present policy and an update of the plans, but moreover a **fundamental revision of the TENT-T policy is required**.
- **Transport networks** for the EU mean not only (like before) to connect essential national networks for the common carriers. They require rather a **conceptual political approach**.
- A TEN-T policy should provide the necessary infrastructure to **ensure the access to the transport networks** and to **support** the economic, social and territorial **cohesion**.
- Beyond the common **objectives of the transport policy** (support of economic, ecologic efficient and reliable transport services) it should **ensure** that:
 - this services are as efficient as possible,
 - they base on an integrated and innovative infrastructure which can keep up with the technical development,
 - good connections to all neighbouring countries are guaranteed,
 - an essential European master plan is going to be linked wisely with the national strategies in the individual member states.
- A **European network concept** where priority projects are well integrated seems to be a good approach. Thereby the **different requirements** of commercial transport and passenger traffic has to be taken into account as well as the key role of the airports and ports in the globalisation of the commercial transport logistics and of the transport on waterways in the EU with important links to great seaports (e.g. highways of the sea) and great industry areas (e.g. in-land water ways).
- According to statements of the Commission **cross-border connections** are thereby of **crucial importance**.

2. Possible options for further TENT-T development

The Commission considers **three options** for further TEN-T development to be possible:

- (1) Maintaining the current dual layer structure with the comprehensive network and (unconnected) priority projects,
- (2) Reducing the TEN-T to a single layer (priority projects, possibly connected into a priority network),
- (3) Dual layer structure with the comprehensive network and a core network, comprising a – geographically defined – priority network and a conceptual pillar to help integrate the various transport policy and transport infrastructure aspects.

3. Statement of the AEBR on the structural options on the creation of TEN-T

Option 1 with dual layer: Comprehensive network and priority projects: The current structure of TEN-T policy **should not be pursued**. The disadvantage of lack of influence of the EU on the due-process and entire completion as well as the insufficient effect of the network is too serious. The advantages can be further realised with option 3.

Option 2 with one new layer: Priority projects - possibly in extended form: The concentration on the main community instruments is a progress. Within the priority projects (core network) this would result in reviewable and verifiable improvements for border and cross-border areas.

The **lacking influence on the comprehensive network with additional political transport functions is a decisive disadvantage**, especially as the EU-level would no longer take care of intersections, gateways, cross-border links, hinterland connections and accessibility of ports and airports in border areas not belonging to priority measures.

Option 3: Dual layer with a comprehensive network and a "core network": The **whole European transport network** with all carriers and transport management systems will **remain in the political field of action of the EU**. At the same time priority projects can create considerable advantages by the scheduled core network with a geographical pillar (deduced from the present constellation of priority projects) and a conceptual pillar (to determine further projects on the basis of common criteria). Especially, the EU can connect the core network and comprehensive network. This will guarantee a better concentration on the priorities.

All border and cross- border areas will stay in the focus of the EU-policy and possible measures. Even peripheral areas and their access and opening for airports, ports and cross-border secondary networks in connection with the primary networks will remain under their political monitoring.

Disadvantages like lack of funds and "uncertain" factors in the TEN planning **are not so severe**. Even today there is a lack of funds, also on EU-level, so that the main responsibility remains to the national member states. Plans are always related with "uncertain" factors.

Conclusion: For border and cross-border areas **option 3 is the best solution** due to their European-wide political approach while emphasising the priorities at the same time, the connection of cross-border transport routes, the allocation of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) as well as provision for airports and ports in border areas. Some border areas will even gain more benefit because they are located in priority corridors. Others can argue considerably better, offer solutions and carry out lobby work as within option 1 and 2 because they remain in the focus of the EU-policy.

4. Initial position of the border regions as well as future needs and requirements

4.1 Initial position of European border regions regarding future transport developments

Just like the AEBR Charter, the **White paper** of the EU from **2002** "European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide" rightly **highlights** the fact that **in border areas the current infrastructure networks still reflect the narrow national principles** (sometimes going back to the 19th century) which influenced their construction, particularly from the military point of view.

Indeed, **right from its inception (1971)**, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) **took a very close interest in issues related to transport policy in the border regions**. Many border areas have suffered from their peripheral location (national, sometimes even European) for decades resulting from missing transport infrastructure. Only the **removal** of economic, social, cultural, traffic and legal **barriers** and with the integration of Europe into a unity in diversity the previous peripheral situation of many **border regions** can be **transformed into a favourable central location** within Europe. **Border regions at the external borders** of the EU can be released from their isolation through improved connections. Border and cross-border regions will thereby function as **bridges and become touchstones of European Integration**.

Where transport infrastructures still have to be developed, the physical preconditions for cross-border development orientated on the future are often absent.

4.2 General requirements for a future transport policy

- Compared to the national governments the future role of the Commission has to be defined clearly in the framework of TEN-T.
- „**Outline Plans**“ (network schemes for all kind of transport) should preferential developed by the EU (in cooperation with the member states) whereby also national transport policies can be coordinated better.
- A long-term network planning helps to **improve the connection of border- and peripheral regions with the central areas of the EU** so that they can meet the new challenges (climate change, energy supply, need of new infrastructures, connections at the new borders, etc.).

- **Priority projects** in the framework of these “Outline Plans” and long-term network planning should create a **European added value**.
- As the needs of international infrastructures better have to be taken into account, **an isolated national planning is rather obsolete**.
- **Changes of political priorities in a member state** may not cause that investments in an international corridor are hindered or **measures in the neighbouring country** have to be postponed.

4.3 Individual transport sectors

Transport corridors (roads and railways)

- **Road and railways corridors** have to be well integrated in the common network.
- **International transport corridors** for roads and railways must be based on the network users’ **needs** (demand-oriented capacities).
- Internationals corridors are requiring **common quality standards** and an **improved interoperability** (especially railways).

Water transport

- As the transport on water has the **largest transport capacities**, an improved use requires:
 - good infrastructural **connection of the ports** to the hinterland,
 - **cooperation** between **ports** (information networks),
 - integration of ports in **logistic transport chains**,
 - **modern river information systems**.
- Maintenance of waterways and elimination of bottlenecks (especially in border areas).
- Improving the **connection with secondary networks**.
- **Highways on the Sea** with highly integrated transport chains.

Aviation

- Policy of a **Single European Sky** (especially in the field of control and management of the aviation).
- **Airport capacities** with an adequate infrastructure on the ground, “green airports”, etc., to meet the increasing air traffic.
- Airports with an **improved railway connection**.
- More attention for **regional airports** because of their importance for border- and peripheral areas.

New technologies

- Transition from a rather hard infrastructure to **intelligent transport systems** (e.g. Galileo).
- **Innovation and technological development** as rather long-term instruments (e.g. development of hybrid vehicles, etc.).

5. Special needs and requirements of border and cross-border areas

In the Green Paper on TEN-T the European Commission states **that cross-border connection** of transport systems **is one of the main tasks for the future**. Therefore, border and cross-border regions must get special support by the EU. This results in concrete needs and requirements:

- **Spatial development, regional and transport policies** have to be considered together and **coordinated** more efficiently than in the past, if border areas are to enjoy sustainable development.
- **Common cross-border planning** of infrastructure should take into account spatial planning and regional policies on both sides of the border, rather than merely technical criteria (such as traffic volumes and flow).
- Regional policies and cross-border strategies / plans have to make **concrete proposals** for the coordination / harmonisation of infrastructural measures and the elimination of border related barriers.
- The **construction and expansion** (through public and/or private financing) of roads, railways, airports, navigable waterways, ferries and harbours is **extremely important for border regions**, including closing of **missing links** between regional / national and Trans-European traffic axes and networks.
- **International transport connections through border and cross-border regions** must link them with national and regional transport networks and centres. Only the **specific regional connection** and utilisation of large infrastructures **removes** border-related **"bottlenecks"**, makes border regions become bridges between national states and neighbouring regions; and contributes simultaneously to the internal development of cross-border areas.
- **International transport connections** should **not** turn the border and cross-border regions into mere **transit areas** (e.g. vulnerable areas). The construction or expansion of traffic infrastructure has to **take into consideration the interests** of the population and the economy of the **affected region**, as well as the environmental requirements and nature protection.
- **Border and cross-border regions** must use joint development programmes and strategies to **prepare themselves in good time for the realisation of major infrastructure projects** crossing their border areas, to exploit any opportunities that arise, and to alleviate any disadvantages. Major projects relating to traffic infrastructure can be realised only with **equal participation** of the border and cross-border regions concerned,
- The **implementation of major transport routes** passing a cross-border area is also a **challenge for the cross-border regions**. This has to:
 - Develop a multimodal, cross-border transport infrastructure including traffic centres
 - Develop cross-border production and marketing activities in the transport sector
 - Improve the regional interconnection of transport operators and related supply services
 - Expand or create cross-border communication networks
- Building cross-border infrastructures will enable people to earn a living and remain there.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Current TEN-T policy – border areas at a disadvantage

- **26 of 30 priority projects** of the TEN-T policy affect border and cross-border areas.
- Practically in all projects finished up to now **the investments on the border were made at the very end.**
- Practically in all projects currently being planned or under construction the **cross-border sections will be finished at last.**
- **Major international infrastructure projects** are merely **built first in the centres / agglomerations** – if they have got their transport corridors, these centres are not any more interested what is going on elsewhere.

6.2 Closing cross-border missing links in the future first

- **As a consequence** international / cross-border infrastructure projects have to be **constructed first across the border:**
 - That will cause **pressure on national governments** to close the gaps between the border and the centres
 - That will **maintain the political support of centres / agglomerations** for the total of the infrastructural measure
- Border / cross-border infrastructure could also be pre-financed by private (e.g. Chambers of Commerce representing highly interested enterprises) or regional money from both sides of the border.

6.3 What can be done by the EU in practice?

- To give **priority to border crossing infrastructural measures**
- To implement **political decisions** in the transport sector in favour of border regions
- **Liabile financial concepts** in favour of cross-border infrastructure (not only INTERREG)
- The **coordination** of EU-subsidies and financial instruments as a prerequisite to achieve the political modal shift, which transport policy is striking for
- Urgent requests for **traffic concepts within border / cross-border regions.** They have to be optimised in such a way as to make them economically, socially and environmentally viable in the long term (due to the huge increase in transport flows affecting especially border regions)
- **Solve the problem of different transport systems** which are not geared to the requirements of the cross-border internal market
- Support through **intermodal transport** (Marco Polo Program)
- Linking together border regions trough **networks** (roads, railways, airports, navigable water ways, highways on the seas)
- **Better rail, road and waterway links** between the main ports and the transport networks in the hinterland
- Plans for an **intelligent management of traffic** on major roads crossing the border

- New technical regulation on the harmonisation of **minimum safety standards** (e.g. in tunnels),
- A guarantee for the **interoperability** of toll systems in European road networks
- In road traffic to press for **harmonised checks** and **penalties** as well as **qualifications** and social provisions in order to ensure suitable working conditions
- On the **external** borders common facilities with common controls (possible if the staff is trained with modern electronic equipment) in order to accelerate the border transit
- **Involvement of the EU in the most important international organisations in the transport sector** (especially shipping and railways!)

6.4 Political recommendations for the future

- The Green Book should underline the connection between spatial planning and territorial cohesion more clearly.
- On finances and in the political discussion, the EU Commission should focus primarily on large international measures with cross-border impact, because on national level these measures have to stay back behind national projects.
- The TEN-T policy should encourage Member States to focus on cross-border projects and thus avoid the risk of un-harmonised implementation of cross/border projects.
- It has to be assured that the local / regional / national transport planning is considering TEN-T priorities on the one hand; and, on the other hand, that they are taken into account in TEN-T (in time involvement of local / regional authorities to develop the TEN-T network and its priorities, because the transport corridors are running through their areas).
- A „European Added Value“ has to be assessed in the TEN-T core network components, such as European/cross-border effects.
- Attention has to be paid that, parallel to planning and implementation of large transnational projects, the necessary infrastructural links (secondary networks) are established in the respective member states so that these large-scale networks are able to work.
- The current TEN-T policy should adequately address the Central European area, in particular with regards to the changes due to EU enlargement.
- Measures to improve the efficiency and quality of transport have to be taken more into account in TEN-T networks, especially to overcome technical obstacles in cross-border transport.
- It is essential to distinguish clearly between freight and passenger traffic in TEN-T transport sectors.
- In the long-term, a separation of freight transport corridors and high-speed lines for passenger traffic (especially in cross-border corridors) is essential.
- EU coordinators for the development of key transnational infrastructure project deployment have to play a more important role.