



Opinion and proposals on the White Paper
"European transport policy for 2010: time to decide"

1 March 2002

1. Border regions and European transport policy

Where transport infrastructure is concerned, many border regions suffered for decades from the absence of large-scale links. Moreover, where major infrastructure has taken shape in border regions, in most cases it was built decades later than in comparable regions of the national 'interior' and did not always take account of the interests of border regions. Where there still is a lack of infrastructure, the physical prerequisites for a future-oriented, cross-border development are also absent.

In the growing exchange of goods over a large area between European countries, particular attention should be paid to the special transport problems associated with Europe's border and cross-border regions, which are often transit areas, and suitable solutions proposed in the interests of safeguarding transport links in a sustainable manner. Only in this way, firstly, will what have previously been national, or even in some cases European, marginal areas be transformed into more central areas, and secondly, will the areas on the EU's external borders be better linked with its interior.

2. Border areas and the guidelines of the White Paper

Where the guidelines set out in the White Paper are concerned, the AEBR holds the view that:

- The transport policy implemented up to 2010 will be especially important to all border areas in Europe;
- enlargement will generate a huge increase in transport flows in the border regions;
- traffic concepts urgently need to be optimised in such a way as to make them economically, socially and environmentally viable in the long term.

The AEBR regrets:

- the hesitant implementation of the transport policy objectives set out in the EC Treaty;
- the lack of an integrated strategy on shifting transport flows focusing on rail and water transport modes, combined with Europe-wide accompanying measures (e.g. in environmental, social, economic and agricultural policy);
- the relative lack of impact on traffic by EU measures.

Where the growth in traffic volumes is concerned, especially in border areas, the AEBR is calling for the following steps to be taken, bearing in mind specific spatial development and environmental policy goals and provisions:

- Improvements in road traffic;
- increased use of rail traffic;
- measures to cope with rising volumes of air traffic;
- modernisation and safeguarding of maritime and coastal shipping;
- common strategies for all transport operators (e.g. links between shipping, road transport and rail transport, intermodal operations, and improved technical preconditions for trans-European freight traffic).

3. On the Action Programme in the White Paper

The AEBR hereby calls upon the European Commission and the respective national and regional governments to implement the measures proposed in the Action Programme as soon as possible:

- To create a balanced flow of traffic between the transport operators, including in cross-border traffic, including:
 - o in *road traffic* by harmonising checks and penalties, promoting qualifications, ensuring suitable working conditions;
 - o in *rail traffic* by opening up the railway market in Europe, in particular by lifting the ban on cabotage, raising safety standards, boosting interoperability and promoting circular railways giving priority to freight transport;
 - o in *air traffic* by establishing a single European air space;
 - o in *maritime transport and on inland waterways* by setting up "motorways of the seas", tightening up safety regulations and lifting the bans on cabotage on inland waterways.

- To gear *transport policy to users*, especially for cross-border measures regarding:
 - o The safety of road transport;
 - o fair costs for transport users (the 'polluter pays' principle);
 - o consistent systems of taxation on road freight transport (e.g. motor vehicle tax, road tolls and fuel) as well as harmonisation of social provisions to avoid social dumping;
 - o improved rights and obligations for users of all transport modes.

- To cope with traffic *in the context of globalisation*, especially by:
 - o establishing links between the future EU Member States via high-quality trans-European infrastructure networks;
 - o planning the financing of infrastructure for the new EU Member States;
 - o ensuring EU involvement in the most important international organisations in the transport sector (e.g. shipping, railways);
 - o establishing a globally accessible EU satellite navigation system by 2008 at the latest.

4. Transport policy – Spatial development policy – Regional policy

To boost the position of border and cross-border regions in the European competition for production sites their regional infrastructure and economic policy should press for the coordination/harmonisation of infrastructure measures and the elimination of border-related barriers. In addition, these regional policies should be incorporated into the fundamental objectives of national and European policies (e.g. agricultural, structural, economic, spatial development, regional and social policy, and so forth).

On the other hand, a European transport policy demands closer cooperation with European spatial development policy and regional policy. Consequently, when the guidelines set out in the White Paper are implemented, stronger account should be taken of the proposals in the "European Spatial Development Perspective" (ESDP), CEMAT and EU regional policy, especially with a view to the trans-European networks (TENs).

In accordance with the ESDP, the AEBR would like to see:

- the fostering of cooperation in the transport sector at regional, cross-border and transnational level within the EU and on the external borders of the EU;
- the strengthening of North-South and East-West links throughout Europe;
- viable financing concepts for implementing political decisions in the transport sector;
- the coordination of European subsidies and financial instruments as a prerequisite for achieving the modal shift which transport policy is striving for;
- the observance of consistent transport principles, particularly in vulnerable zones (e.g. alpine regions, congested areas and mud flats).

5. Trans-European networks and border areas

The AEBR welcomes the concept of the trans-European network and the updating of the guidelines to take account of rural (border) regions and calls for their revision to include Central and Eastern Europe as soon as possible.

The AEBR supports:

- greater support for major infrastructure projects, the "concept for the declaration of a European interest" to stimulate investment in infrastructure and "trans-European corridors", with priority given to passenger and freight traffic;
- the use of revenue from tariffs levied on transport operators to build and further develop new infrastructures, in particular for railways and waterways;
- the planned new technical regulations on the harmonisation of minimum safety standards in tunnels and guaranteeing the interoperability of toll systems on Europe's road network.

The AEBR is calling for the following measures to eliminate the bottlenecks in the trans-European transport network, especially in border areas:

- o a rapid political decision on the 60 measures listed in the White Paper;
- o the promotion of traffic corridors giving priority to freight transport;
- o improvement of the high-speed network for passenger transport;
- o plans for the management of traffic on major roads;
- o extension of the "Essen List" for transport projects whilst at the same time broadening their joint funding basis;
- o international transport links through border and cross-border regions, linking the latter to the respective national traffic networks and centres. Only the specific regional connection and utilisation of major infrastructures will eliminate border-related 'bottlenecks', make border regions into bridges between national states and simultaneously contribute to the internal development of cross-border areas;
- o consideration of regional interests and (human, economic, environmental) demands when building or expanding major transport infrastructures, so that border and cross-border regions should not merely become transit areas and therefore vulnerable;
- o preparation by cross-border regions in good time for the realisation of major transport routes passing through their border areas with a view to taking maximum advantage of the associated opportunities and alleviating any disadvantages.

6. Improving accessibility, especially that of border areas

Just like the AEBR Charter, the White paper rightly highlights the fact that in border areas the present 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.

The construction or expansion of major infrastructures and also amongst other things the linking together of regions through networks (roads, railways, airports, navigable waterways, ferry links and harbours) is often the border regions' first source of the necessary preconditions for cross-border co-operation, examples including:

- the completion of the tunnel under the Alps;
- the improvement of "passage" through the Pyrenees (third corridor, modern railway network);
- the extension of the Eastern European high-speed train and the combined transport network;
- the bridge and/or tunnel crossing the Fehmarn Belt;
- the Straubing-Vilshofen projects aimed at improving navigability on the Danube in conjunction with the extension of existing bridges and the construction of new bridges in the Central and Eastern European countries through which the Danube flows;
- the satellite radionavigation projects (GALILEO);
- the achievement of interoperability for the Iberian high-speed rail network;
- better rail, road and waterway links between the main ports and the transport networks in the hinterland.

The following measures in particular (either publicly or privately financed), could help to improve the connections available to areas on both sides of national borders and open them up more:

- Gearing the expansion of infrastructure in border areas to common cross-border structural spatial planning ideas, the requirements of regional policy and corresponding national and European considerations (TENs), rather than merely to technical criteria (such as traffic volumes and flows);
- joint cross-border coordination of all transport infrastructure projects (rail, road and water) on the basis of cross-border environmental impact assessments;
- closing existing, cross-border gaps (missing links) in the transport infrastructure between regional, national and trans-European traffic axes and networks;
- construction or extension of major joint border crossings on the EU's external borders (shorter waiting times, immediate solution of any problems);
- development of a multimodal, cross-border transport infrastructure, including traffic centres;
- development of cross-border production and marketing activities in the transport sector;
- regional interconnection of transport operators and feeder services;
- expansion of cross-border passenger transport networks;
- elimination of border-related barriers to the use and tariff systems of transport operators;
- expansion or creation of cross-border communications networks at regional and local level.
