

**Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Cohesion and transport'**

(2000/C 226/09)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Cohesion and transport (COM(1998) 806 final of 14 January 1999);

having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community and, in particular, Title XV (Trans-European networks) and Title XVII (Economic and social cohesion);

having regard to the first official draft of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) presented at the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for spatial planning held in Noordwijk on 9 and 10 June 1997;

having regard to the European Parliament and Council Decision No. 1692/96/EC of 23 July 1996<sup>(1)</sup> on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, and the Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision, currently under discussion, amending this decision<sup>(2)</sup>;

having regard to the Bureau decision of 2 June 1999 to draw up an opinion on this subject in accordance with the fifth paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community and to direct Commission 1 for Regional Policy, Structural Funds, Economic and Social Cohesion and Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Cooperation to prepare this opinion;

having regard to the contribution of the Commission for Trans-European Networks, Transport and Information Society (Commission 3) (rapporteur: Mr Tabakidis, mayor of Anargyron, GR/PSE),

having regard to the draft opinion (CdR 390/99 rev. 2) adopted by Commission 1 on 1 December 1999 (rapporteur: Mr Valcárcel Siso, president of the Autonomous Community of Murcia, ESP/PPE),

adopted the following opinion at its 33rd plenary session of 12 and 13 April 2000 (meeting of 12 April).

## 1. Introduction

1.1. 'Economic and social cohesion' is enshrined in Article B of the Treaty on European Union as a key instrument for achieving 'economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable' within the EU.

1.2. Furthermore, as is noted in the Communication on Cohesion and transport examined in the present opinion, it has long been acknowledged that there is a correlation between levels of economic and social development and availability of transport infrastructure and services.

1.3. However, the relationship between transport and overall development (and the basis for the latter, i.e. economic and social cohesion) is extremely complex both in theory and in practice. For this reason, any analysis or policy designed to

consolidate and develop the synergies between cohesion and transport needs to be approached with the utmost rigour and caution.

1.4. Against such a backdrop, the Communication on Cohesion and transport, submitted by the European Commission to the Council, European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, should be unequivocally welcomed and favourably assessed. This is the case not only because the communication demonstrates the EU's efforts to date in support of cohesion and transport, but also, and in particular, because it reveals a resolute will to make progress and overcome the limitations which currently remain. To provide very specific examples, the communication:

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 228, 9.9.1996, p. 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM(97) 681 final — OJ C 120, 18.4.1998, p. 14.

— notes how sectoral policies liberalising transport services could result in disadvantages for certain population groups or regions;

- highlights how some disadvantages should be prevented and corrected by a transport policy which;
- maintains certain services using public funding and
- reduces disparities between regions regarding accessibility.

1.5. On this basis, the Committee of the Regions wishes to address the following issues:

- the instruments available for assessing results in the field of cohesion and transport;
- the differentiation of modal and environmental policies in heartland and outlying EU regions;
- remote and island regions, and the role which the EU's ports are to play in dealing with these;
- the effects of the abandonment and closure of secondary transport networks on the process of depopulation of disadvantaged inland mountain regions of Europe;
- progress towards greater internalisation of costs by gradually introducing infrastructure pricing systems;
- the coordination of policies and instruments.

1.6. In tackling some of these specific points, and in the final summary of conclusions, the COR stresses views and proposals already put forward in its opinion on the Trans-European transport network<sup>(1)</sup>. In all respects, the COR reiterates the line of argument and the views put forward in this earlier opinion.

1.7. There are major geographical, economic, demographic, cultural and social differences within the European Union. Regions with a high concentration of population and intense economic activity usually enjoy a high standard of living while at the same time there are regions which are lagging behind in their development and experiencing ever more severe depopulation.

1.8. Island and remote regions also have their own specific features. These differences directly affect the rates of growth of each region and, ultimately, their ability to participate on an equal footing in the wider socio-economic construct which is the European Union.

1.9. One of the most significant objectives of Community policy is cohesion, i.e. the creation of conditions enabling the various regions of Europe to have an equal stake in development. This is referred to explicitly in the new Treaty (Treaty of Amsterdam), specifically in Article 2 thereof.

1.10. From as early as 1988, with the re-shaped Structural Funds, the Community put into practice its intention to promote social and economic cohesion politically and economically. Later, in 1993, when the Cohesion Fund was integrated into the Structural Funds, Community policy took on even more specific objectives, namely investment in the trans-European networks. At the same time, the European Investment Bank has been working towards the same political goal by providing loans for regional development works as a matter of priority.

## 2. Transport and cohesion

2.1. The role of transport, in terms of both infrastructure and the provision of services, is clearly crucial to the development of any region.

2.2. The relationship between economic growth and development of the transport system is scientifically attested even though its exact form and variations have not been defined.

2.3. It is nevertheless clear that a more comprehensive transport system, both in terms of infrastructure and services, is crucial to the development of the various regions, in both the short and long term.

2.4. In the short term, the planning, construction, operation and maintenance of the transport system help to create jobs with direct implications for social integration and the economic prosperity of people living in the various regions. In the long term, the transport system has a direct influence on basic production parameters (the type of production, transport of raw materials, product distribution, storage arrangements etc.).

2.5. The overall stimulation of economic activity in both the manufacturing and service sectors (e.g. tourism) is one of the most important roles of transport.

2.6. Transport is particularly important in areas of farming and fisheries owing to the perishable nature of fresh agricultural and fishery produce which needs to be transported faster than most manufactured goods.

<sup>(1)</sup> Opinion based on the European Commission's 1998 report on the implementation of the guidelines and priorities for the future (COM(98) 614 final), (CdR 60/99 fin — OJ C 293, 13.10.1999, p. 9).

2.7. The important spatial dimension of transport is also evident. Each region has different needs as regards the transport system to be developed, in terms of both its technical characteristics and its economic dimension. In some regions the transport system has to be designed in such a way that it supports the production model (especially in industrial areas) whereas in other regions, the development of public transport is particularly crucial to promote the social integration of the population (especially in remote or disadvantaged areas) and to maintain the social and environmental balance (areas surrounding large urban centres, concentration of traffic in the EU core regions). The Structural Funds or the Cohesion Fund should be used to support investment in public passenger transport systems which are environment-friendly and encourage intermodality, in order to facilitate sustainable mobility in cities, with due regard also to the accessibility of and links with trans-European networks.

2.8. It is important to emphasise that any inadequacies in the transport system have a direct impact on the cost of living since an inadequate system can function as a kind of informal taxation which increases the cost of products reaching the consumer. These higher costs primarily affect the economically weakest classes in society, and hence cohesion. In addition, this informal taxation which is associated with an inadequate transport system also affects exports of goods produced in such regions.

2.9. In many cases, transport is associated with the concept of universal service and the public interest.

2.10. Typical examples of this are transporting the sick from remote areas to medical centres in urban areas, taking children and young people to school, being able to respond quickly to natural disasters in remote areas and fostering social integration through contacts between different local cultures.

2.11. Against this background, transport should not be judged on strictly economic criteria (economic viability), but considered in the context of a broader socio-economic and environmental analysis. In this respect, it is important to highlight that if lack of or inadequate basic services are not offset by an efficient transport network that diminishes the adverse effects of such deficiencies by providing access for the population of isolated or disadvantaged regions, this will serve to increase depopulation and reduce economic activity, thus hampering returns on transport investment. The result in these regions is a vicious circle in which the growing lack of supply generates a growing lack of demand and vice versa.

2.12. The multiple effects of transport illustrate the importance of taking local specifics into account in the planning and infrastructure of transport in Europe. This is equally true within Member States. It is therefore important to emphasise the ever greater need to respect and implement the subsidiarity principle in the transport sector too.

### 3. Instruments for assessing results

3.1. The direct relationship between Community transport policy and economic and social cohesion is clear from a joint analysis of Title XII (Trans-European networks) and Title XIV (Economic and social cohesion) of the EC Treaty. Both titles refer to the trans-European transport networks policy as an instrument expected to provide a direct contribution to strengthening economic and social cohesion. This task is defined as 'reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions or islands, including rural areas' (the reference to islands was inserted by the Treaty of Amsterdam).

3.2. Other more general approaches long advocated by the European Commission (White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, the challenges and ways forward into the 21st century; 1993) and which have been duly included in the Communication on cohesion and transport, are those which tie in the establishment of transport infrastructure with job-creation.

3.3. In this respect, it is the temporary creation of jobs during the construction phases which first springs to mind. However, it is more worthwhile to focus on the creation of permanent jobs (tied in with new conditions of accessibility and costs) because the perspective is more long-term and because this type of new employment establishes an immediate and permanent functional link between the competitiveness of the productive machinery and economic and social cohesion.

3.4. Lastly, one positive aspect of Community measures in the transport field must surely be greater generation and better distribution of income. This is the final outcome of reducing disparities and generating employment which serves to successfully complete the economic circle in furtherance of economic and social cohesion.

3.5. However, the COR takes the view that tying in transport policy and economic and social cohesion will be no more than a generic principle or wishful thinking if there are no instruments to measure the specific impact of transport policy on economic and social cohesion. In short, and in very general terms, this means measuring the extent to which Community transport policy and each of its individual instruments contribute to achieving the following three key objectives:

- boosting the competitiveness of the European economy;
- establishing the conditions for sustainable mobility;
- and, of specific interest in this context, enhancing economic and social cohesion within the EU.

3.6. The lack of quantitative instruments (indicators and measuring variables, evaluation procedures, etc.) is evident both in specific measures and at the wider level of infrastructure networks and transport services. According to the Committee's information, the European Commission has in recent years been striving to improve matters, but even so:

- for a specific infrastructure, service, measure or project, it is difficult to
  - ascertain 'ex ante' the level of Community interest in line with the cohesion policies, and
  - evaluate 'ex post' the extent to which the objectives have been achieved; and
- for policies and overall infrastructure and service networks, it is difficult to
  - determine whether the effort is actually being channelled in the right direction, and how accurately (or with which overall or specific exceptions), and
  - identify instruments for strengthening or correcting the effects obtained.

3.7. Consequently, the COR wishes to propose that the 'horizontal' R&D measures promoted under Community transport policy include a careful consideration of the design and preparation of quantitative indicators and appropriate methods so that the contribution of Community transport policies to the following areas may be continually assessed:

- enhancing the competitiveness of the productive machinery;
- achieving sustainable mobility and modal distribution;
- improving at least two basic factors of economic and social cohesion, i.e. inter-regional accessibility and employment.

#### 4. Different policies for heartland, outlying, island and landlocked areas

4.1. On previous occasions, the Committee of the Regions has emphasised the need for Community transport policy to take account of the individual problems posed in the different types of region within the EU, in each case seeking specific solutions to specific problems:

- 'heartland areas', where the key problems are more related to competitiveness and capacity and where the impact of external factors (particularly environmental ones) is crucial;
- 'outlying areas', where problems relating to income and employment, accessibility, depopulation and economic and social cohesion, are unavoidable and where the impact of external factors may be relatively minor.

4.2. It is equally important to take into account the so-called Northern dimension. The more Northern countries differ from other EU regions in terms of their climate, situation, economic geography and geopolitics. The sparse population and sheer size of Northern regions lend them specific features which need to be addressed by Community transport policy. There are also specific transport problems in many mountainous, landlocked and severely depopulated areas in the Southern hinterland which should be given individual treatment.

4.3. The Communication on cohesion and transport states that the needs in outlying regions have been taken into account in designing the trans-European networks<sup>(1)</sup>. However, the COR voices its concern that although the needs of peripheral, landlocked and island regions have obviously been taken into account, they have not been treated specifically or differently to those of heartland regions. Such individual treatment, if applied from the outset, would have been of considerable value in helping to provide clear and quantifiable objectives in terms of accessibility and economic and social cohesion.

4.4. The COR feels that the self-same examples cited by the communication in support of its theory (networks of airports and ports) actually confirm the doubts expressed by the COR. It is all very well, from the point of view of accessibility that small airports in remote island regions (regional connecting points and accessibility points in the airport system) have been included in the trans-European networks. However, other selection criteria linked to traffic thresholds and an extremely loose definition of 'landlocked area' have meant that many small regional connecting points and accessibility points in the airport system have also been selected in heartland areas with excellent land connections and none of the problems of landlocked areas (in some cases, these points are less than 50 km apart).

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(98) 806 final — paragraph 26.

4.5. The concern voiced regarding the consideration of outlying areas in designing the trans-European networks is reinforced by the conclusions of some studies requested by the European Commission. The following conclusions come as no surprise and clearly reveal how the process works<sup>(1)</sup>:

- medium-sized cities in centrally located regions and located on the TEN nodes or corridors tend to obtain the major accessibility gains;
- also, but to a lesser extent, the main metropolitan areas are also major beneficiaries from TEN implementation;
- for outlying and remote regions to gain the maximum benefit from the TEN, complementary investment in secondary networks will be required.

## 5. The role of outlying ports

5.1. Ports and maritime transport networks, as pillars of multimodality, are of particular interest to outlying regions, most of which have extensive coastlines and some of which are extremely remote island regions. For such regions, medium-sized and small ports could play a crucial role in providing economical transport capable of very successfully filling the gaps in land transport (both the physically unavoidable and the historically-based gaps).

5.2. Although mentioned previously under policies suited to outlying regions (see point 3: Different policies for outlying and heartland areas), the case of ports within Community transport policy merits specific comment in light of the special treatment of ports in the process of defining the trans-European transport infrastructure networks.

5.3. At the outset, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers decided not to identify any specific ports and simply set the conditions for identifying 'port projects of common interest'. To justify this approach<sup>(2)</sup>, the Commission cited the special nature of port activity, which meant that free competition could be affected if some ports were included in the trans-European networks and other were not. Such reasoning was plausible, but could largely be applied to other infrastructures for which the proposal did actually set out the relevant plans.

5.4. During the process leading up to the adoption of European Parliament and Council Decision No. 1692/96/EC on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, the Parliament managed to secure the inclusion of a formal declaration committing the European Commission to submit a new proposal in 1997, so that maritime ports would be treated in the same way as airports (identification of specific ports on the basis of size and spatial criteria).

5.5. The European Commission honoured its commitment by submitting a Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision amending Decision No. 1692/96/EC<sup>(3)</sup>. The proposal includes maps identifying specific ports of Community interest, and ports and 'intermodal transshipment areas' are incorporated into the trans-European combined transport network. However, honouring the commitment should be regarded as a purely formal exercise given that the Commission chose to identify all minor ports.

5.6. From the point of view of outlying regions this conclusion cannot be looked on favourably, as the inclusion of a large number of small ports in heartland regions detracts from the special importance of ports for transport in outlying regions. Community resources are limited and if almost all ports have access to them the overall effectiveness of their implementation will be drastically reduced. The European Commission's approach may also run counter to current trends in maritime transport, encouraging increasing specialisation and function-based ranking of port systems.

5.7. The COR considers that the best approach would be to combine restrictive selection criteria relating to volume of traffic or activity with open but well-defined criteria based on the region's specific needs and accessibility. Such an approach, in theory applicable to any of the transport modes included in the trans-European networks, would help to best reconcile the objectives of competitiveness and of economic and social cohesion.

## 6. Infrastructure charges

6.1. In 1998 the European Commission submitted a White Paper on Fair payment for infrastructure use: a phased approach to a common transport infrastructure charging framework in the EU<sup>(4)</sup> advocating the general application of the 'marginal social cost' charging principle (including a definite internalisation of external costs). As is well known, and with considerable differences remaining between EU Member States, charges for the use of infrastructures are currently levied only for roads (toll-paying motorways and some large infrastructure works) and partially or not at all for rail, ports, airports and inland waterways.

6.2. The COR points out that building marginal costs into charges assumes some crucial factors in the structure of cost functions. This means that costs must rise with the volume of production, and need to be steady and attributable in all aspects, otherwise the concept of marginal costs is meaningless. Unfortunately, the capacity of almost all basic infrastructure and, in particular, the capacity of transport infrastructure cannot be altered gradually. Consequently, the COR considers that there are even shortcomings in the theory behind the pricing policies advocated by the Commission.

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(98) 806 final — paragraph 27.

<sup>(2)</sup> COM(94) 106 final — paragraph 76.

<sup>(3)</sup> COM(97) 681 final — OJ C 120, 18.4.1998, pg. 14.

<sup>(4)</sup> COM(98) 466 final.

6.3. Another theoretically debatable argument put forward in the European Commission's White Paper is the assumption that 'marginal social costs' will result in an optimum price ensuring the best allocation of resources. Such an assumption works in theory but ignores the fact that in order to obtain the optimum price the 'marginal cost' needs to match the 'average cost'. As a result of this oversight, which attempts to circumvent the problem of not being able to alter transport infrastructure capacity gradually, the White Paper becomes tangled up in the problem of the capacity-price ratio without finding a satisfactory solution.

6.4. If, however, the theoretical and practical problems posed by the possible inclusion of set-up capacity costs are resolved, infrastructure charges may provide an effective instrument for addressing capacity problems in large, congested infrastructures, problems of allocating resources within the transport economy, and wider economic competitiveness problems.

6.5. Much more debatable is whether infrastructure charges constitute an effective instrument for or have an acceptable impact on addressing generic shortcomings related to accessibility and cohesion objectives.

6.6. The Communication on cohesion and transport, referring to the White Paper<sup>(1)</sup> itself, maintains that '... there is no reason to believe that, as a general rule, peripheral and less developed regions would be adversely affected by the application of a marginal cost charging scheme'. However, in a footnote still referring to the White Paper, the communication then:

- recognises that such charges should be differentiated so that regions with less congestion and pollution would be less affected and;
- calls for flexible and gradual implementation of price reforms in those instances where there would be concern that higher transport user charges would impede the economic development of peripheral or less developed areas.

6.7. The fact that the communication voices so many concerns, even opening the door to a possible subsidy or compensation scheme for this purpose, demonstrates that there are solid grounds for the COR's caution. In short, the possible impact of general charges for the use of infrastructures on economic and social cohesion has not yet been adequately studied. Furthermore, when appropriate, the impact should be assessed in terms of transport costs and taxation.

6.8. The COR considers that pricing could pose the problem that economically developed regions would be better placed to recoup costs through a future increase in economic activity

and the resulting wealth. Less economically developed regions, on the other hand, would be less able to recover costs in that the potential benefits derived from pricing will be limited by the relatively weak capacity of their economic systems.

6.9. In conclusion, the COR considers that the issue of charging for the use of infrastructure must be addressed with rigour and caution.

## 7. Coordination of policies and instruments

7.1. The Committee of the Regions takes the view that the coordination of policies and instruments available in the transport field poses a very wide range of complex problems. The EU institutions have been examining these problems but every effort must be made to facilitate solutions.

7.2. First of all, there is the theoretical and practical coordination between liberalisation policies (seeking widespread implementation of market practices in the sector) and policies more directly linked to economic and social cohesion objectives, including, in particular, public utilities and trans-European networks policies.

7.3. Several paragraphs of the communication address this problem, with comments which are warmly welcomed by the COR both for their specific content and for the underlying concern they reveal.

7.4. The COR welcomes the communication's comments and proposals on transport policies and the activity of the European Commission. These should be further underscored by the idea that competitiveness and cohesion are two equally significant objectives to be jointly and equitably achieved.

7.5. A second problematic aspect of coordination relates to financial policies and instruments for spatial planning and for transport infrastructure and services.

7.6. The correlation between land occupation and use and the structure of transport networks is even more self-evident than the correlation between economic and social development levels and availability of transport infrastructure and services (paragraph 1.2). The communication shows that most of the Community resources invested in transport infrastructure do not come from specific transport funds (the budget line for trans-European networks and the Cohesion Fund for trans-European networks), but rather from other Structural Funds with the direct objectives of regional development and spatial planning (ERDF, Regis, Interreg, etc.).

7.7. In future, and as is rightly stated in various parts of the communication, the problem of accessibility should be resolved by taking joint account of the main trans-European networks, the networks enabling access and distribution to and from these, and local networks.

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(98) 806 final — paragraph 37.

7.8. In this regard, the COR feels that it might now be appropriate to establish a complementary sectoral instrument similar to the current Community Support Frameworks (CSF). Such an instrument would provide an overall view of all transport networks and services and give an overall structure to the corresponding Community policies and instruments.

7.9. The third and final aspect of coordination relates to the financing arrangements. Here the COR is particularly keen that formulas be sought to involve private funding in the development of infrastructure and public-private schemes.

7.10. The COR assumes that the use of private resources to fund infrastructure will be an inevitable fact-of-life in the future. The COR also feels that the private sector's involvement in infrastructure funding poses many more difficulties in less developed outlying, island and landlocked regions, where the volumes of traffic and transport mean that the financial return on investment provides little (or less) incentive.

7.11. In this respect, the COR calls upon all the EU institutions and players concerned to employ the maximum creativity and effort in designing and fine-tuning joint schemes. Such schemes should either involve the public and private sector at once or combine entirely private intermediate funding (construction and running) with a final payment which is totally or partially public (shadow tolls, etc.).

## 8. Transport and cohesion in the run-up to the accession

8.1. The Commission communication makes specific reference to Community policy towards the applicant countries. This policy is based on the same criteria and proportions as those so far applied within the Community. Particular importance is attached to the fact that the new Member States will have to be in a socio-economically cohesive relationship with the present Member States. Transport will play a major economic, environmental and social role in the enlarged Europe.

8.2. From the beginning of 2000, a new Community fund (ISPA) will provide resources primarily to finance transport infrastructure in the applicant countries, with particular emphasis on extending the trans-European networks to these countries. The aim of this policy is to ensure that the new Member States have a level of services with a high socio-economic value.

## 9. Summary of conclusions

9.1. The Committee of the Regions broadly welcomes the concern and willingness demonstrated by the European Commission's Communication on Cohesion and transport, with a view to boosting the contributions of these policies

to developing the most vulnerable regions and enhancing opportunities for the least favoured groups.

9.2. From this point of view, the Committee considers that ensuring the different EU regions have an equal stake in economic and social prosperity constitutes the cornerstone of Community policy. In this respect, transport is an important means of implementing regional policy and should be regarded as such.

9.3. The Committee reiterates the line of argument and the views put forward in its opinion of 3 June 1999 on the trans-European transport network<sup>(1)</sup>, containing a detailed examination of subjects which are only briefly or indirectly considered in the present opinion.

9.4. The Committee takes the view that Community transport policy, in particular trans-European network policy, should help to create a new 'inter-regional accessibility map' for the EU. This map should reduce disparities between regions and lay down minimum accessibility thresholds for travel to and from all parts of the EU.

9.5. The Committee believes that rigorously measuring the impact of Community transport policy on the competitiveness of EU industry and EU economic and social cohesion, is vital for evaluating this policy and for devising and applying supportive or corrective measures; the problem of increasing environmental pollution in the core regions should be included here.

9.6. The Committee urges the institutions, and the European Commission in particular, to ensure that the immediate planning of Community transport policy includes provision for fleshing out the requisite indicators and methods, with a view to continual assessment of Community transport policy's contribution to competitiveness and economic and social cohesion (accessibility and employment).

9.7. The Committee considers that the problems to be addressed by Community transport policy vary somewhat throughout the different parts of the EU, as there are:

- 'heartland areas', where the key problems relate to competitiveness, capacity and pollution problems and where the impact of external factors is crucial;
- 'outlying, island and landlocked areas', where problems relating to income and employment, accessibility, depopulation and economic and social cohesion, are unavoidable and where the impact of external factors may be relatively minor.

<sup>(1)</sup> 1998 report on the implementation of the guidelines and priorities for the future, COM(98) 614 final, (CdR 60/99 fin — OJ C 293, 13.10.1999, p. 9).

9.8. The Committee believes that acknowledging the specific nature of the problems faced by individual regions and the need to find appropriate solutions demonstrates how vital it is to implement the subsidiarity principle more effectively at local and regional level.

9.9. The Committee takes the view that such circumstances should be taken into account by Community transport policy so that the most appropriate solutions are implemented in each region.

9.10. The Committee stresses that under no circumstances should the quest for the most appropriate solution in each region be allowed to undermine equal opportunities for the least favoured EU populations and regions.

9.11. The Committee asks the European Commission, in its transport policy reports, assessments and action, to be ever mindful of the need for a differentiated approach tailored to match the characteristics of each region.

9.12. The Committee calls upon the institutions most directly involved — i.e. the European Parliament, Council of Ministers and European Commission — in the forthcoming review of the Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network:

- to adopt a more committed stance on
  - the overall planning of infrastructure and transport services,
  - the need to specialise and rank unimodal networks,

- the need to make best use of Community resources in keeping with criteria and objectives striking a balance between environmental repercussions, competitiveness and cohesion;
- to introduce demanding selection criteria in relation to capacity and volume of traffic and transport;
- to introduce more open but well-defined criteria regarding accessibility and spatial planning.

9.13. The Committee urges the European Commission to press ahead with the analysis and propose specific solutions and measures for the theoretical and practical problems which may result from infrastructure pricing policies based on 'marginal social costs', particularly with regard to:

- the repercussions on modal distribution and transport costs in heartland and outlying areas;
- the creation of capacity and accessibility in less developed regions;
- the tax-related repercussions and their presumably different impact on 'strong' and 'weak' regions.

9.14. The Committee asks all parties concerned at European, national and regional and local level to ensure the coordination of policies and financial instruments for regional development and spatial and transport planning. A useful basis for this could be a global overview of all transport networks and services.

9.15. The Committee urges all European institutions and socio-economic players to give thought to appropriate specific formulas for involving private capital in the financing of infrastructure in outlying and less developed regions.

Brussels, 12 April 2000.

*The President  
of the Committee of the Regions*  
Jos CHABERT