

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Decision on the promotion of sustainable and safe mobility'

(97/C 133/05)

On 14 February 1997, the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Section for Transport and Communications, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 12 February 1997. The rapporteur was Mr Konz.

At its 343rd plenary session (meeting of 26 February 1997) the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 94 votes to one with two abstentions.

1. Introduction

1.1. As it already proposed in Communication SEC (94) 1106 submitted to the Council and Parliament on 6 July 1994, the Commission would like to lay down once and for all a legal basis for budget heading B2-704, since spending under this heading has regularly exceeded the ECU 5 million ceiling since 1993.

1.1.1. The purpose of this budget heading is to provide the Commission with funds for co-financing the Community strategy for guaranteeing the safe and sustainable mobility of people and goods, as set out in the Commission's Communication on the future development of the common transport policy (COM(92) 494 final).

1.1.2. The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and — last but not least — the Council have commented favourably on the main features of this blueprint.

1.2. At the same time the Commission would like budget heading B2-702 (transport safety) to be reviewed, since the procedures for granting subsidies under this heading are very similar to those applicable to B2-704.

1.3. The bulk of the expenditure under these two headings is for specific measures 'implemented as a preliminary step to a statutory Commission initiative or necessitated by the Commission's obligation to exercise its role as guardian of the Treaty'.

1.3.1. In the application of Community legislation in the field of transport the Commission is often called upon, inter alia, to exercise a special supervisory role in a particular area. These specific measures, taken in isolation, cannot be regarded as significant actions and to this extent do not require or call for a special legal basis. The same is true of pilot projects.

1.4. Nonetheless, the Commission's proposal for a Council decision is aimed at significant actions which the Commission would like to implement 'with a view to establishing and developing the common transport policy and promoting transport safety'.

1.4.1. The proposal accordingly concerns only a part of the funds deployed by the budgetary authority each year under the two budgetary headings.

1.4.2. The measures listed by the Commission mainly concern 'clearly identifiable but highly diverse operations conducted by third parties' (more often than not public and/or private international organizations) with the declared object of making a major contribution to the achievement of the Community's objectives in the field of transport or publicizing these objectives more widely.

1.4.3. As a rule the funding of these activities takes the form of subsidies previously agreed on which do not exceed 50 % of the project's total costs.

1.4.4. Other actions may be conducted directly and exclusively by the Commission.

2. General considerations

2.1. The Economic and Social Committee agrees with the Commission that it is necessary to establish a legal basis for the Community budget for the development of the CTP and especially for the establishment and development of a common sustainable transport policy (budget heading B2-704) and for transport safety (heading B2-702).

2.2. So far the funds available under these two headings have been used for measures in need of support without the Council having approved a legal basis for this.

The Economic and Social Committee thinks that the proposed Council decision should prompt the Commission to make more intensive and purposeful use of the funds made available by the Parliament so that the

problems associated with the transport of goods and people are solved as quickly as possible⁽¹⁾.

2.3. The Economic and Social Committee thinks that it is vital for the Commission to be provided with the

⁽¹⁾ Cf in particular the ESC opinions on:

- the Green Paper — Towards fair and efficient pricing in transport (OJ No C 56, 24. 2. 1997, p. 31);
- the Green Paper on the impact of transport on the environment (OJ No C 313, 30. 11. 1992, p. 18);
- the application of telematics systems to intermodal transport in a pan-European context (OJ No C 66, 3. 3. 1997, p. 27);
- the Green Paper on the citizens' network (OJ No C 212, 27. 7. 1996, p. 77);
- the trans-European transport network (OJ No C 397, 31. 12. 1996, p. 23);
- the interoperability of the European high-speed train network (OJ No C 397, 31. 12. 1994, p. 23).

Brussels, 26 February 1997.

requisite funds and the legal basis for implementing the measures listed in Articles 2 and 3 of the proposal.

It is also in the general interest for the Commission to be able to collect authoritative evidence by commissioning studies and analyses from independent experts.

2.4. The Economic and Social Committee welcomes the binding provision contained in Article 4 stipulating that each final payment is to be preceded by a detailed check on the services provided, taking into account the contractual obligations entered into by the beneficiary and the principles of basic economics and sound financial management.

3. Concluding comment

The Economic and Social Committee eagerly awaits the first Commission report due out in 2001 on the use made of the appropriations and the evaluation of their contribution towards the achievement of the objectives pursued by the Community (cf. Article 6 of the proposal).

*The President
of the Economic and Social Committee*

Tom JENKINS
