

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament — Keep Europe moving — Sustainable mobility for our continent — Mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 Transport White Paper

COM(2006) 314 *final*

(2007/C 161/23)

On 22 June 2006, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned communication.

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 21 February 2007. The rapporteur was Mr Barbadillo López.

At its 434th plenary session, held on 14 and 15 March 2007 (meeting of 15 March), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 144 votes to three, with 24 abstentions.

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 Since the Transport White Paper was published in 2001 the general situation has developed in a very different way from what was expected. Economic growth has been lower, the oil price has risen sharply, enlargement has given the EU a continental dimension, new technological developments are transforming transport into a cutting-edge technological sector, there is a constant terrorist threat and the modal breakdown of the transport market has changed. All of these factors require a re-orientation of transport policy.

1.2 But the overall objectives of transport policy have remained unchanged: competitive, sustainable, safe, environment-friendly mobility of persons and goods offering higher-quality employment. These objectives are fully in line with the revised Lisbon Agenda for growth and employment but have not yet fully engaged with the longer term objectives of the revised strategy for sustainable development and the climate change challenge. In particular the revision does not yet set out a coherent longer term strategy for achieving the first objective for sustainable transport set out in the revised sustainable development strategy of 'decoupling economic growth and the demand for transport'.

1.2(a) While supporting all the measures which the Commission proposes for making the different transport methods more energy efficient and less carbon-intensive the Committee questions whether this will ultimately be sufficient to achieve all the reductions of carbon emissions needed from Europe by the middle of the century. They therefore urge the Commission to put in hand now studies of the kind of measures that may be needed to achieve a reduction in the overall level of demand for transport in the longer term. This should include consideration of appropriate pricing signals; and a recasting of urban spatial and planning policies to encourage more local provision and access to goods and services of all kinds, and less reliance on

ever longer distance of transportation of people and goods. It should also include consideration of how to open up a broader public debate on these issues, and an exploration of how responsible individuals and businesses can best contribute to long term sustainability through their own transport and travel decisions and behaviour.

1.3 The EU is highly diverse, with very different orographic, territorial and demographic characteristics, with both central countries with high levels of congestion and transit traffic and very extensive peripheral areas without this constant pressure on their infrastructure. The Committee highlights the need to bring a geographically differentiated approach to transport policy.

1.4 The EESC supports the aims of the revised White Paper, which aims to optimise all modes of transport, on their own and in combination, enhancing the specific potential of each, the aim being less polluting and more efficient transport systems which guarantee the sustainable mobility of persons and goods.

1.5 The EESC considers it necessary to improve interoperability between transport modes and increase the competitiveness of rail, maritime and inland waterway transport in order to boost their effectiveness and efficiency, and to increase their share of the transport market in order to underpin their long-term viability. It also considers that the public authorities can promote coordination between the different modes.

1.6 The Committee recommends that account be taken of public inter-city road passenger services, as a way of achieving the objectives set by the Commission, such as reducing congestion, pollution and fuel consumption and improving road safety, on the basis of this transport mode's high passenger-carrying capacity, with a significant increase in the role of public transport vis-à-vis private cars.

1.7 Air transport has undergone a major expansion in the last ten years, as a result of the opening up of the market, but the uneven application of the third package in the various Member States and existing restrictions in the internal market are leading to distortions of competition. The operation of the internal market therefore needs to be improved.

1.8 The absence of an internal maritime transport market is preventing the EU from optimising regulations on internal traffic and thus simplifying internal trade, with all of the attendant damaging repercussions for integrating this traffic into internal modal chains.

1.9 Transport is one of the EU's major employers, but the lack of staff is leading to more recruitment of third-country workers, which suggests that efforts are needed to improve the training, image and quality of transport-related vocations among young people, which is an area where the social partners can play a role.

1.10 The common transport policy should continue to have an impact on the technical, fiscal and social harmonisation of each transport mode on its own and of all of them in combination, in order to promote a framework that ensures a genuinely level playing field.

1.11 Service quality needs to be improved to make transport modes attractive to users. The Committee notes with satisfaction the attention paid in the mid-term review of the White Paper to the rights of passengers of all modes of transport, especially the rights of persons with reduced mobility, while taking account of the specific characteristics of each mode.

1.12 The protection of modes of transport should be a priority objective, and security measures should be extended to all modes of transport and their infrastructure, while avoiding unnecessary security checks and safeguarding the human rights and privacy of users.

1.13 Transport is a major consumer of fossil fuel energy, and reducing its dependence on these energy sources and reducing CO₂ emissions from transport should be priorities, to which end a specific R&D and innovation programme should be drawn up for transport, with appropriate funding, which is able to stimulate the use of alternative sources of energy, primarily in urban areas; in addition a policy should be implemented that distinguishes between modes, especially as regards taxation, and which encourages the adoption and use of new, environmentally-friendly technologies.

1.14 Infrastructure provides the physical network needed for the development of the internal transport market and optimising this requires that two objectives be met: reducing congestion and increasing accessibility by mobilising all sources of funding.

1.15 Transport infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, should support the development of public transport. Investment policy should be used to gradually limit the space available for private car transport.

2. Introduction and Commission proposal

2.1 The aim of the Commission's 1992 Transport White Paper, entitled *The future development of the common transport policy* ⁽¹⁾, was to create a single market for transport, facilitating mobility in general, by opening up the market. In ten years, except in the rail sector, the aims have broadly speaking being achieved.

2.2 In September 2001, the European Commission published a new White Paper, entitled *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide* ⁽²⁾, which proposed 60 measures for shifting the balance between modes of transport, eliminating bottlenecks, placing users at the heart of transport policy and managing the effects of globalisation.

2.3 In order to speed up decision-making and to evaluate the results achieved, the 2001 White Paper established a review mechanism requiring the Commission to present a timetable with specific aims, to make an overall assessment in 2005 of the implementation of the measures set out in the White Paper and, where necessary, to make changes. The result is the Commission communication under consideration in this opinion.

2.4 The approach adopted in the mid-term review of the White Paper is based, amongst other things, on the reorientation of transport demand towards more environment-friendly modes, in particular as regards long-distance transport, urban areas and congested transport corridors. At the same time all modes of transport are required to become more environment-friendly, safe and efficient from the energy point of view.

2.5 The Commission communication entitled *Keep Europe moving — Sustainable mobility for our continent* was drawn up on the basis of consultations held in the course of 2005. These consultations highlighted transport's central role in economic growth and the need to re-adjust policy measures.

2.6 The overall objectives of transport policy remain the same: a competitive, secure, safe, and environmentally friendly mobility for persons and goods, with better employment conditions. These objectives are fully in line with the revised Lisbon agenda for jobs and growth and with the revised Sustainable Development Strategy.

⁽¹⁾ COM(92) 494 of 2 December 1992: The future development of the common transport policy.

⁽²⁾ COM(2001) 370 of 12 September 2001: European transport policy for 2010: time to decide.

2.7 Innovation is one of the most important tools for achieving these objectives: introducing intelligent, communications-based transport systems and more advanced engine technology to achieve greater energy efficiency and promoting and using alternative fuels.

2.8 The key to the mid-term review of the White Paper, however, lies in co-modality, in other words, the efficient use of different modes on their own and in combination, which 'will result in the optimal and sustainable utilisation of resources'. This approach is the best guarantee of achieving a high level of mobility and of environmental protection at the same time.

3. General comments

3.1 The EESC maintains and reiterates the view set out in its opinion on the White Paper of 19 June 2002, that the current mid-term review should make it clear that, given developments in the transport sector and in the economic, political and social situation of the Union, there needs to be an effective and immediate adaptation of the common transport policy to take account of the changes that have occurred during the period under review and of foreseeable future developments.

3.2 It also endorses the policies aimed at improving technological potential to find innovative solutions that will contribute directly to the European competitiveness, safety, environmental and social agendas.

3.3 The context is very different from the one imagined at the time the 2001 Transport White Paper was drawn up: lower than expected economic growth, geopolitical tensions, rising oil prices, the effects of EU enlargement, globalisation, new technological developments, the ongoing terrorist threat and changes in the balance between transport modes. The Commission communication aims at adapting EU transport policy to the context in which future growth and policies must be determined.

3.4 The rationale for the mid-term review of the 2001 White Paper is not only the new context described above but also the much-needed reorientation of EU transport policy that the White Paper sets out. The review of the White Paper, must focus just as intently on a transport policy designed to optimise all modes of transport, through processes that make them more competitive, sustainable, socially beneficial, environmentally-friendly and safe, with sustainability that is anchored in their close relationship with progress and economic growth, and on the necessary coordination between the different modes, which can be promoted by the public authorities.

3.5 The review also makes a very welcome proposal to bring transport into line with environmental priorities, under the concept of 'sustainable transport', and does this in a similar way for the different modes of transport. Unfortunately, however, the studies made by the Commission in section 3 of the

communication's Annex II, concerning transport and the environment, are not broken down by type of road transport, with separate figures for public and private transport use, which would provide a model showing the detrimental effects of, primarily, intensive and unbridled car use on congestion, safety, pollution and energy consumption, amongst other things.

3.6 Given the continuity of this transport policy, the EESC considers that a more realistic position should be advocated, and this would mean:

- a) speeding up the regulatory processes for introducing a maritime transport system and a rail transport system based on regulated competition, as a way of making these more effective and efficient;
- b) the effects of road transport, caused by traffic congestion and pollution, mainly from private vehicles, together with the relentless growth predicted by the Commission for the period 2000-2020, must be subject to specific measures that tackle these problems so as to allow for growth while reducing the harmful effects of road transport (new infrastructure, technology, etc.);
- c) public passenger transport is essential for obtaining the results envisaged by these policies;
- d) determining precisely the effects that commercial vehicles of less than 3.5 tonnes have on safety, the environment, working conditions and the economy.

3.7 There is, therefore, a need to boost the effectiveness and efficiency of maritime, inland waterway and rail transport, by promoting the competitiveness of these sectors, strengthening coordination and intermodality, with measures in place enabling it to continue to provide its services with the appropriate flexibility and pricing.

3.8 In the Committee's view the studies so far undertaken also fall short in that they do not directly address the fundamental goal adopted in the revised sustainable development strategy of decoupling economic growth and the demand for transport. Moreover they do not work through the implications of the climate change challenge and the level of CO₂ reductions that will be needed in the next 50 years. Given the rapid growth in mobility over the last 50 years, and the apparently continuing appetite for yet more growth of movement (both in Europe and still more in the developing world) the Committee has serious doubts as to whether it will be possible to achieve the carbon reductions needed from the transport sector to avoid climate catastrophe simply by promoting greater energy efficiency in the different transport modes and optimisation of the balance between them, desirable though all those objectives are. They believe that the Commission needs to put in hand as a matter of urgency studies of the kind of measures that may be needed soon to discourage the growth in demand for ever greater mobility. This should include appropriate pricing signals, and

appropriate urban spatial and planning policies to encourage more local provision of goods and services of all kinds to meet peoples' aspirations without requiring them to travel ever greater distances to satisfy them. It should also include consideration of how to open up a broader public debate on these issues, and an exploration of how responsible individuals and businesses can best contribute to long term sustainability through their own transport and travel decisions and behaviour.

3.9 Transport policy must demonstrate commitment to quality, safety, the environment and transport efficiency and guarantee users' a choice of transport modes. Transport must achieve economically and socially sustainable levels of coverage, not forgetting, where appropriate, public service obligations and the right to mobility, which is enshrined in the Treaties.

3.10 Population is distributed unequally within the EU. With an average of 116 inhabitants per km², population density varies from 374 inhabitants per km² in the Netherlands to between 15 and 21 in the Nordic Countries. The percentage of a country's total population living in urban areas also varies. The European average is 80 %, and ranges from Belgium's 97.2 % to 59.9 % in Greece. The problems of captive transport users in rural areas should be highlighted.

3.11 The EESC wishes to emphasise the need to adopt a geographically differentiated approach to transport policy, since the EU is a highly diverse territory with very different topographical, territorial and demographic etc., characteristics, in which core countries, containing areas with high levels of congestion and significant through-traffic, coexist with very large peripheral or rural areas that do not face the same constant pressure on their infrastructure. These two models require different and specific approaches, within the framework of the common transport policy.

3.12 There is also the problem of the peripheral countries, far from the large population and production centres, which have higher transport costs and consequently, higher costs for producing and marketing their products — one of the disadvantages of remoteness. The EESC therefore considers that improved accessibility must be a priority tool for increasing countries' or regions' competitive capacity and for strengthening territorial cohesion.

3.13 Both the Commission communication and the 2001 Transport White Paper are documents that need to be fleshed out, in that: a) they provide no clear economic/financial or budgetary analysis of the issues that the Commission considers should be addressed; b) transport policy does not give regulated competition the leading role that the Commission itself claims it should have and c) more detailed work needs to be done on breaking down environmental and other studies by modes and particular types of transport, in order to study the effects and possible solutions.

The EESC considers that consultation measures should be adopted, setting out initiatives that will, once the problems have

been studied, give the EU a cohesive and sustainable transport policy for the future.

3.14 The Commission communication states that most of the measures set out in the White Paper have been adopted or proposed, and that their impacts are described and evaluated in Annex 3, which is not included in the communication. The EESC requests that a detailed chronological list of the measures be adopted and their impact included, or that the address of the Internet page on which they are published be clearly provided.

4. Specific comments

4.1 In order to carry out a systematic analysis of the communication on the mid-term review of the 2001 Transport White Paper, some general aspects will now be set out on which the EESC considers it necessary to make constructive contributions, following the communication's own format.

4.2 Sustainable mobility in the internal market — connecting Europeans

4.2.1 The Commission states that 'the EU's internal market is the main instrument for achieving a vibrant transport industry which brings growth and jobs. As the aviation sector and other sectors such as telecommunications have shown, the process of liberalisation of the internal market stimulates innovation and investment to bring better service at a lower cost. The same success can be achieved throughout the transport sector'. In air transport the results have been more choice for users and lower fares.

4.2.2 Road transport: in order to analyse the issue of road transport objectively, it must be broken down by mode and by specific characteristic, since the largest share of intra-EU transport is carried by road, which accounts for 44 % of freight and around 85 % of passenger transport. Motor vehicles ⁽³⁾ in the EU 25 are distributed as follows: 212 million passenger cars, 30.702 million commercial vehicles, 25.025 million powered two-wheelers and 719 400 buses and coaches. This clearly shows where the main responsibility for the EU's major congestion and environmental problems lies.

4.2.2.1 The communication makes no reference to public intercity road passenger transport, thus seriously undermining the potential solution of getting car passengers to switch to this mode of transport, which would generate all kinds of benefits and savings relating to safety, the environment, land use, flexibility etc. The EESC considers that account should be taken of this mode of transport in order to achieve the stated aims. Consequently, legislation is needed to permit the development of regulated competition, so that regular intercity road passenger transport services can be established, which would have to comply with EU and Member State rules on advertising and competition.

⁽³⁾ Energy and transport in figures 2005. Directorate-General for Energy and Transport. European Commission.

4.2.2.2 The Commission looks at ways of reducing excessive differences in fuel tax levels for road transport instead of adopting a more general approach to the issue by introducing a common tax policy for all modes of transport, which does not penalise any mode of transport more than another, to ensure equal treatment.

4.2.3 Rail transport: Since 1970 the railways' market share has declined from 10 % to 6 % of passenger transport and 21 % to 8 % of goods transport. International goods trains cross the EU at an average speed of 18 kph. The main challenges facing the railways are competition with the other modes, the interoperability of the different systems and the fact that the railways specialise in transporting certain goods.

4.2.3.1 The EESC considers that making rail transport more competitive is the only way to ensure that it achieves the desired level of efficiency and effectiveness, thus increasing demand for this mode of transport and restoring its long-term viability; this would require an in-depth review of all legislation on this matter and of its implementation in the various Member States.

4.2.3.2 Nevertheless, as it stated in its opinion on the 2001 Transport White Paper ⁽⁴⁾, the Committee shares the view that the principle of 'regulated competition' should apply to services of general economic interest, including public rail and road passenger transport, which under Article 16 of the EC Treaty are considered essential to promoting social and territorial cohesion.

4.2.4 Air transport: The framework of liberalisation created by Regulations (EEC) No 2407/92, 2408/92 and 2409/92, the internal market in aviation's 'third package', has helped to achieve the transformation of air transport services, making them more efficient and affordable. However, the third package's differing implementation in the different Member States and the remaining restrictions on intra-Community air services create distortions of competition (for example, different requirements for granting operating licences, discriminatory treatment on routes to third countries, discrimination against airlines on grounds of nationality, etc.). The operation of the internal market therefore needs to be reviewed, changes must be made to eliminate potential distortions and the 'single sky' regulatory framework must be completed, thus making air transport in the EU more efficient.

4.2.5 Maritime transport: More than 90 % of transport between Europe and the rest of the world passes through seaports, and 40 % of intra-European transport goes by sea. Maritime transport, especially short sea shipping, has experienced growth similar to that in road haulage and it has great development potential given the EU's long coastline following enlargement. The EESC considers that the Commission ought to monitor the movement of goods by sea and take the measures

necessary to adapt to this development ⁽⁵⁾.

4.2.5.1 The lack of an internal market for sea transport, due to the fact that journeys by sea between two Member States are considered to take place outside the Union under international law, is preventing the EU from optimising the regulation of internal traffic and simplifying internal trade, with negative repercussions for the integration of this into the internal modal chains.

4.2.5.2 The EESC considers the better integration of port services to be an essential basis on which to draw up and introduce a common maritime transport policy, which will help to develop the 'motorways of the sea' and to promote 'short-sea shipping', making maritime transport more efficient and competitive within the logistics chain, which will help to improve sustainable mobility.

4.3 Sustainable mobility for the citizen — reliable, safe and secure transport

4.3.1 Employment and working conditions: transport is one of the main employers in the EU, accounting for 5 % of all jobs, but employment levels are now stabilising. In some sectors, such as rail and road transport, a lack of skilled workers has appeared, which has contributed to an increase in third-country labour. The EESC shares the Commission's view on the need to step up efforts to improve training and quality of employment for those working in the sector, in order to make transport-related vocations more attractive to young people.

4.3.1.1 To achieve these aims, there must be training programmes, guided by the social partners, that reflect the specific characteristics and needs of each mode of transport (initial and ongoing training) which must have the necessary funding.

4.3.1.2 The social legislation covering road transport must preserve equal treatment for workers, whether they are employees or self-employed and, therefore, Directive 15/2002 of 11 March 2002, on the organisation of working time of persons performing mobile road transport activities must apply immediately to self-employed workers, without a transitional period, since the aim of this Directive is to ensure road safety, to avoid distortion of competition and to promote better working conditions.

For the reasons given above, commercial vehicles of less than 3.5 tonnes used for freight services should be included in the different regulations covering goods transport by road,

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 241, 7.10.2002.

⁽⁵⁾ See EESC own-initiative opinion: Europe's accessibility by sea in the future: developments and how to anticipate them, OJ C 151, 28.6.2005.

4.3.2 Passenger rights: strengthening users' rights is essential to ensuring that all modes of transport improve the quality of their service, (including frequency, punctuality, the comfort of all categories of user, safety, ticketing, prevention of over-booking, pricing policy and compensation etc.). The Committee urges that these changes be introduced as soon as possible, whilst taking into account each mode's specific characteristics, especially those of modes which have to share infrastructure.

4.3.2.1 The Committee welcomes the particular attention that the review of the White Paper pays to access to transport for persons with reduced mobility and to the quality of such transport. It wishes to state, however, that conditions of access concern not only modes of transport but also infrastructure, whether for air, sea, inland waterway, rail or road transport and also the particular problems arising from trans-shipment.

4.3.3 Safety: the introduction of a comprehensive set of regulations has resulted in improved safety in all modes of transport, especially in air and maritime transport. These measures include the introduction of a blacklist of unsafe airlines and the creation of European agencies for all modes of transport, including the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the European Air Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Railway Agency (ERA). The only exception is road transport. In order to achieve the stated aim of halving the number of accidents, a common road safety policy is therefore needed, establishing a common system of standardising offences and sanctions, and introducing the 'European penalty points driving licence', which would enable any offence, in any EU Member State, to result in penalty points.

4.3.3.1 It should not be overlooked, however, that technical progress, new vehicle design, vehicle-infrastructure cooperation (known as *eSafety*) and better infrastructure, by eliminating black spots, are all factors that will contribute to improving road safety.

4.3.3.2 The EESC wishes to state that road accident statistics should be broken down by mode, especially those which come into contact with private cars, because it is these which have the highest accident rate.

4.3.4 Security: air transport security was tightened following the events of 11 September 2001. The Committee considers that, in the wake of the Madrid and London attacks and the ongoing terrorist threat, protecting all transport resources and infrastructure must be a priority for the Union. Security regulations must therefore be extended to all modes of transport, and to intermodal chains. When introducing security inspections and rules, however, care must be taken to avoid unnecessary and costly checks and to safeguard users' human rights and privacy.

4.3.5 Urban transport: the Commission plans to publish a Green Paper on urban transport. This must focus on the promotion of public transport and contain a list of best practices. Furthermore, as the Committee stated in its Opinion on the

2001 Transport White Paper, there is a need for investment and transport plans to improve the quality of public transport in the large congested conurbations, along the lines of the CIVITAS initiative, the TranSURban project ⁽⁶⁾ and the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment ⁽⁷⁾, which should receive more financing from Community funds, whilst fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity, because urban transport is an area for which local and regional authorities should logically be responsible. These measures will prove inadequate, however, without an urban transport policy that makes it possible and easier to involve private enterprise in the provision of public urban passenger transport services, which will help free up and optimise the use of public resources.

4.4 Transport and Energy

4.4.1 Transport is one of the main consumers of energy and accounts for approximately 70 % of the EU's total oil consumption, with road transport using the most (60 %), owing largely to the stock of privately-owned vehicles, which equates to over 465 saloon cars per 1 000 inhabitants. Air transport accounts for approximately 9 % of oil consumption and the rail sector uses approximately 1 %. Fair competition between different modes of transport requires equal taxation of oil consumption. Consequently, removal of the non-taxable status of aviation fuel must be considered.

4.4.2 Reducing dependency on fossil fuels and reducing CO₂ emissions must therefore be priorities. To achieve these aims, — the Commission estimates that transport has an energy savings potential of 26 % by 2020, ⁽⁸⁾ — a properly funded R&D and innovation programme must be drawn up, which can promote the use of alternative energies ⁽⁹⁾, especially in the area of urban surface transport.

4.4.3 A differentiated transport policy is needed to promote the exploitation of new technological advances that help to reduce CO₂ emissions and oil dependency, focusing on taxation and promotion of the acquisition and use of new technologies that can reduce pollution and increase energy savings. A specific fuel for public transport must also be introduced, with a lower rate of taxation exclusively for this type of less-polluting vehicle (Euro IV and in future Euro V), as exists for other modes of transport. The approach to environmental issues must not be based on punitive taxation. Quite the opposite is required, in other words, to prioritise transport that makes use of new technologies designed to reduce pollution and save energy.

⁽⁶⁾ TranSURban (Transit Systems Development for Urban Regeneration) — project supported by the EU under Interreg III (inter-regional cooperation programme).

⁽⁷⁾ See the Commission Communication on the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment — COM(2005) 718 of 11 January 2006.

⁽⁸⁾ Commission Communication entitled Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential — COM(2006) 545.

⁽⁹⁾ See EESC own-initiative opinion on The development and promotion of alternative fuels for road transport in the EU OJ C 195, 18.8.2006, p. 75.

4.5 Optimising infrastructure

4.5.1 The trans-European Transport Networks (TENs) provide the physical infrastructure for the internal market, but their levels of development vary across the EU and congestion is not a problem everywhere.

4.5.2 The Committee supports the idea of co-modal logistics chains as a more efficient solution to congested road corridors, which optimise the use of transport infrastructure within and across the different modes, including transalpine tunnels, rail corridors and intermodal transport nodes.

4.5.3 The problems arising from the remoteness of peripheral or ultra-peripheral regions and countries must be reiterated. To ensure that these areas located far from the centre of the EU can benefit fully from the internal market, the Trans-European Transport Networks must be completed within the agreed deadlines. This will require increasing the funding that the EU has earmarked for developing the most congested already-existing networks, especially cross-border links. The Commission gives the examples of bottlenecks in the Pyrenees, Spain-France links and the Alps. In short, improving accessibility leads to improved competitiveness as well as greater expectations for regional development.

4.5.4 Together with the above budget increases, the European Union must make a firm commitment to promoting the mixed-financing system of infrastructure provision, which offers stability and legal guarantees for the involvement of private capital in building and operating transport infrastructure.

4.6 Intelligent mobility

4.6.1 As described above, intelligent transport systems help to ensure a more efficient and rational use of infrastructure and therefore to reduce accidents and congestion and to protect the environment.

4.6.2 The European satellite navigation system, Galileo, which will be operational as of 2010, will provide future applications for all modes of transport, such as the Intelligent Car ⁽¹⁰⁾, promoting the new technologies in vehicles, the SESAR programme, which will help to improve air traffic management

in the single European sky, and the ERTMS system, which will enhance interoperability between national rail networks.

4.6.3 The EESC fully supports the co-modality approach, as transport's response to the phenomenon of globalisation and the opening-up of world markets. Building on this approach will require adapting infrastructure, so that interconnections are boosted to permit transport continuity and to avoid delays and breaks in the logistics chain. Promoting co-modality will help to strengthen all modes of transport, especially ones that may be currently underused.

4.7 The global dimension

4.7.1 The EESC reiterates what it has already stated in its opinion on the 2001 White Paper ⁽¹¹⁾, to the effect that international transport policy is an integral part of trade policy and even, in some respects, of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It thus believes that in this area the Commission should have powers similar to those conferred on it by the Treaties for the negotiation of international trade agreements, in that, acting on the mandate of the Council, it should represent, where possible, the Union on questions of transport in all international organisations competent on transport policy issues and should have the power to negotiate transport agreements with third countries on behalf of the Member States.

4.7.2 At the same time, the Committee considers it crucial to work on simplifying customs procedures so that, without impairing service quality ⁽¹²⁾, the costs of providing the service are not increased, as well as to guarantee the principles applying to internal EU frontiers, e.g. under agreements such as Schengen or any subsequent agreements.

Brussels, 15 March 2007.

The president
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS

⁽¹⁰⁾ Communication on the Intelligent Car Initiative — Raising Awareness of ICT for Smarter, Safer and Cleaner Vehicles — COM(2006) 59.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 241, 7.10.2002.

⁽¹²⁾ See EESC opinion on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2013), OJ C 324, 31.12.2006, p. 78.

APPENDIX

to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

The following text of the revised draft opinion was rejected in favour of an amendment adopted by the assembly but obtained at least one-quarter of the votes cast:

Point 4.6.4

'Where goods transport logistics are concerned, the EESC proposes that restrictions on traffic at specific times set by national authorities be replaced with restrictions that the Union can coordinate, which would require the adoption of Community rules in this area. This measure would need to be coordinated with the declaration of a minimum trans-European road network free of such restrictions, on which road traffic could move without interruptions.'

Outcome of the vote:

82 for amending the point, 72 against and 9 abstentions.
