

Position Paper

30 April 2009

AEA Response to the Green Paper "TEN-T: A policy review – Towards a better integrated trans-European transport network at the service of the common transport policy"

INTRODUCTION

The Trans European Networks (TENs) quite properly recognise the importance of borderless infrastructure for an integrated Europe. The fundamental four freedoms which define the Common Market all contain the word 'movement' – of people, goods, capital and services – which places Transport at the core of a properly functioning EU.

The February 2009 Green Paper 'Towards a better integrated trans-European transport network at the service of the common transport policy' initiates the second review of the TEN-T programme, set up initially in 1996. AEA believes that this is a timely opportunity to consider the way TEN-T operates, finances and conceptualises projects. Achieving a safe, secure, seamless and efficient transport system in Europe is important to boost internal market efficiency, as well as to enhance the EU's competitive advantages at an international level.

Clearly apparent in the lists of current and previous TEN-T projects has been the preponderance of rail and road development programmes. In any accompanying texts, aviation – if it is mentioned at all – is relegated to almost incidental status.

This is remarkable; aviation is the only mode which links all parts of the EU with each other, the periphery with the centre, and the whole with the rest of the world. In an area of 4 million km², it is aviation, more so than rail or road, which makes the greater contribution to social cohesion and integration.

NETWORK PLANNING

A phrase repeated throughout the Green Paper is ‘Community Added Value’. AEA fully supports this as an essential objective of the TEN-T programme. Projects which deliver more than the sum of the parts are clearly deserving of common funding. For this reason, objectives, and subsequently priorities, need to be defined at the Community level, rather than by Member States.

In the TEN-T process to date, the bulk of funds has been allocated to a single mode of transport – rail – which historically comprised geographically disparate networks, conspicuously lacking in standardisation. However, despite impressive advances in train speed, cross-border passenger rail links do not succeed in penetrating significant distances into neighbouring territories; railways that cross Europe from North to South can perhaps be justified under a freight perspective, but certainly not from a passenger point of view.

European rail and road projects, by definition, have an impact almost entirely confined within the EU’s boundaries. AEA believes that the objectives of the TEN-T programme, as regards European jobs and competitiveness, clearly require it to incorporate an external dimension. For a long-term sustainable transport policy to be successful, it also needs to take into account the international competitiveness of Europe vis-à-vis other continents and regions as well.

Specifics – Air Traffic Management

The European Community acknowledges the critical importance of ATM for the transport network, and therefore for the mobility of its citizens, so through the Single European Sky Regulation the Community states it’s intention to address the existing shortcomings of the European ATM system.

To date, ATM projects funded by TEN-T have focused on feasibility studies. However the key components of the Single European Sky – the implementation of the SESAR programme and the Functional Airspace Blocks – are not considered TEN-T priorities.

The Single European Sky is a quintessential candidate to be regarded as a truly European project, enhancing mobility and increasing efficiency while maintaining extremely high levels of safety and – of particular relevance to the latest TEN-T guidelines – delivering clear environmental benefits. Whilst benefitting all users of

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European airspace, EU and non-EU, it will serve to remove or reduce competitive disadvantages suffered by EU airlines.

However, the current scope of the TEN-T projects, as defined in the guidelines, would not easily adapt to a complex network infrastructure such as ATM, comprising fixed and mobile elements, owned variously by public, public/private and private concerns which – in the case of the airlines – may be competing strongly with each other.

The report by Eva Lichtenberger on TEN-T recently adopted by the European Parliament expressed a positive stance regarding the need to ensure available community funding for airports and ATM/ANS when revising the TEN-T budgetary framework.

Modernisation of the European ATM technology through the SESAR programme, the technological arm of SES, is vital to ensure a modern, high performing, interoperable, sustainable European ATM, in support of a more efficient network.

While a downturn in traffic is being experienced, in the long-term traffic will recover therefore the necessity to replace the existing ATM system and to address the associated investment challenges will remain. SESAR needs public funding support for implementation rather than current funding for R&D only.

The SESAR project is capital-intensive and will therefore not materialize without public sector support in particular in relation to modification to existing aircraft, and the need to co-ordinate and synchronise investments at a European level, distributed both geographically and between the ground and air and rely for their effectiveness on a ‘critical mass’ minimum level of implementation. The TEN-T guidelines should take into account such specificities, including finding new and appropriate financing and funding solutions for aircraft retrofit with new SESAR compliant avionics.

There is a need for the Commission to create a new EU organization/fund which can distribute funds to the airlines without distorting competition (e.g. to provide direct financial incentives for aircraft retrofit). The AEA also holds the view that EU public funds should only be used for EU airlines taking account that non-EU airlines are lobbying their respective governments for funds as well (US airlines asking public sector support for Nextgen)

Specifics – Co-Modality

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Enhanced mobility – of goods or persons – is not just a question of moving more freely, but of minimising non-productive parts of the journey when people or goods are transferring within and between networks.

‘Ports’, whether airports or seaports, rely on intermodal connections since journeys do not, normally originate and terminate there (the same, of course, is true of railways although the scale is different).

Most airports of a significant size are well-connected with highway networks although local congestion may mitigate against mass-travel modes of road access. Personal travel, by private car or taxi, is usually the preferred option, and this can have major impacts on non-airport traffic around airports, as well as major environmental consequences. It is estimated that 50% of a major airport’s carbon footprint is due to surface access.

Rail links at airports fall into different categories : tramway or metro connections to a range of city and suburban locations; rail connections interfacing with a national network at a city terminus; mainline, fast connections with a range of distant population centres; dedicated rail access for freight.

Almost all major and many secondary airports have at least one of these links; very few have one of the latter two. Yet it is here that the substantive benefits of combining modes, each with their specific capabilities, is realised.

An effective exchange between air and rail depends on much more than simply tracks, stations and depots at airports. Timetables and frequencies must be coordinated, baggage handling must be adapted, and product distribution harmonised. The further development in terms of security requirements and technology development at European airport might also become a factor hindering the seamless travel of passengers and freight throughout Europe.

TEN-T funds could contribute to support airports and airlines to purchase innovative technologies guaranteeing a harmonised high level of security throughout EU Member States with the objective of facilitating the implementation of one-stop security – already largely realised within aviation – within Europe.

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NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION

The perception is that problems of discontinuity have so far been a factor in limiting the number of TEN-T projects to have reached completion. AEA believes that a priority network approach would better address this shortcoming. For the ATM industry is essential that the TEN-T guidelines provide the same flexibility to respond to societies mobility requirements as has been established in the transport policy, through use of a Performance Framework to define implementation objectives.

Such an approach would also encourage the establishment of multi-modal projects, allowing complementary systems to be connected by taking into account the already existing network. In other words, it would help provide for the last kilometre.

The interface between the vehicle and its transport infrastructure needs to be further clarified; in particular, financing Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), which undoubtedly serve the infrastructure, but may require substantial pre-investment at the level of individual vehicles.

Concretely, developing SESAR is certainly useful for the infrastructure, but if it forces vehicles to adapt their onboard equipment without clear short- to mid-term Return on Investment analysis of their benefits, the whole project might be penalised or jeopardised.

A thorough (impact) assessment of ITS financial consequences at all levels need to be conducted so that equitable funding may be planned.