

TEN-T: a policy evaluation

En route to a better-integrated Trans-European Transport Network at the service of common transport policy

Position paper IPO / Provinces of The Netherlands

Summary and key points

The Dutch provinces are happy with the initiative by the European Commission to offer parties an opportunity to contribute ideas on the future of the trans-European Transport Network via the Green Paper "TEN-T: a policy evaluation".

The Dutch provinces have contributed to the national position on the TEN-T Green Paper, via their umbrella organisation IPO. The Dutch provinces support the response of central government but wish to focus on a number of specific points in their own reaction.

For the Dutch provinces, the preferred option is option 3: an extensive network and a core network, consisting of a geographically-defined priority network and a conceptual basis. On the one hand it is vital that European attention be concentrated to deploy the limited resources in a targeted manner, and to ensure effectiveness. On the other hand, the network must at all times be viewed as a whole, and good access from the regions to the priority network is of vital importance for the functioning of that priority network. Transnational projects thereby deserve special attention. An interplay will have to be established between the international corridors and the regional traffic and transport systems required to feed these corridors.

In a priority network, attention must be focused on the functioning of the entire corridor or transport axis. A corridor coordinator could play an important supporting role. Technological developments such as Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) offer opportunities and possibilities for directing and influencing the use of the infrastructure system, over and above the physical infrastructure approach itself.

Introduction

(1) The Dutch provinces, brought together in the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), welcome the publication of the Green Paper of the European Commission "TEN-T: a policy evaluation; En route to a better integrated Trans-European Transport Network in the service of the common transport policy".

The provinces are delighted that the Committee has opted to hold a discussion about the TEN-T on the basis of the Green Paper. As a result, the regions are able to deliver input on a policy theme that affects them directly.

(2) The Dutch provinces, via their umbrella organisation IPO, have delivered input for the national position on the Green Paper TEN-T. The provinces support the central government's response but wish to focus on a number of specific points in their own reaction. The contribution from the provinces to the Dutch national position ties in with the "Action Plan on Europe and local governments/ domestic administration" recently signed in the Netherlands. This action plan aims to strengthen the coordination of European policy in the Netherlands, and is meant to ensure that the consequences for Dutch local government can be analysed earlier in the process of European policy development.

(3) This response breaks down into two components: first, the vision of the provinces is provided on the position of TEN-T in the overall transport policy, together with its position in respect of other themes. Finally, a number of remaining questions posed by the Commission in respect of the evaluation of TEN-T are dealt with.

TEN-T cannot be viewed in isolation from the "The future of transport", Territorial cohesion and Climate change

(4) A well-developed TEN-T is of vital importance for "The future of transport".

TEN-T cannot be viewed in isolation from the future of European transport policy. Current transport policy of the European Commission, as laid down in a White Paper dating from 2001, covers the period through to 2010. Prior to any evaluation, the Committee wishes to launch a debate with a horizon through to 2020 and even 2050. The economic crisis is however leaving clear marks on the transport sector, at present. As a result, the sector is tending to above all focus on the short term. The network of Trans-European links forms the backbone of the European transport system and is thereby of crucial importance for future European transport policy. It is the basis of European economic development and the strengthening of the competitiveness of the EU, thus contributing fundamentally to the Lisbon targets.

(5) A well-developed TEN-T will contribute to (territorial) cohesion.

TEN-T may also not be viewed in isolation from the discussion on territorial cohesion, and must be consistent with this policy. In response to the Green Paper on territorial cohesion, the Dutch provinces suggested that the concept of territorial cohesion breaks down into two elements: 1) an area-specific approach for policy formation at EU level, and 2) a foundation stone for future cohesion policy.

The combined and integrated development of the TEN-T and the underlying regional transport and traffic systems will contribute to cohesion policy and the bringing ever closer together of European citizens.

(6) Climate change and TEN-T are also related.

TEN-T also affects climate change. A smoothly-functioning TEN-T system, together with well-connected and correctly-functioning regional traffic and transport systems, can contribute to climate-friendly mode of transport choices for European citizens and businesses, and can as such contribute to the Gothenburg targets. The issue is to find a balance between the economic interests and the importance of the environment and the climate, and to implement this in an integrated approach to future transport challenges.

TEN-T must be viewed as a whole and not via its individual component parts

(7) The Dutch provinces call for the development of option 3, whereby a geographically-defined priority core network is created. This will effectively lead to multimodal transport axes for passengers and goods between the key European economic and population centres. It is desirable that an entire

corridor or transport axis profits from an integrated and coordinated approach to improvements in terms of financing, technical planning and time.

(8) In the current situation, thirty priority projects are earmarked for co-financing over a number of years. In addition, there is an extensive network for which only limited financial support is available. As a consequence, there is no coordinated approach for the corridor as a whole. The strength of the priority projects is that they deliver focus and set priorities. This eradicates fragmentation of attention and funding. The finances can be focused on a limited number of major projects. The disadvantage of the current approach is that work is still too much based on individual components (i.e.: projects) as opposed to viewing the programme from the point of view of the network as a whole. In addition, the TEN-T subsidy has never been the decisive factor in developing priority projects. As a consequence it misses its real objectives.

(9) A description is provided in the Green Paper whereby many of the priority projects undertaken in the framework of TEN-T face problems of financing, planning and completion. The costs for the extensive network, it turns out, are extremely high. In addition, the Member States are not always willing to wish to invest in the network at the same pace as the EU, or are unable to keep up with the project planning. In particular the implementation of transnational links face problems, because their transnational character results in additional complications in respect of the harmonisation of planning methods and procedures, financing flows and project coordination.

It is desirable that there be less focus on projects as part of a link, and instead more focus on viewing the entire corridor or connecting axis, as a whole. In such an approach, bottlenecks must be tackled via an integrated and coordinated method. This will prevent such problems as those currently facing the Betuwe Route. This freight railway line has since 2007 already formed a direct link between the port area in Rotterdam, and Genoa. However, beyond the Dutch-German border, no measures have yet been taken for also providing optimum support for this goods flow in Germany. Such measures are only intended beyond 2013, as a consequence limiting the effectiveness and profitability of the investments in the Netherlands. Another example is the Seine-Scheldt river link, which is intended to open up the hinterland of Northern France (Ile de France) and Paris, from the Dutch and Flemish seaports. This priority project can only be completed once the final links have been made, along the same lines as the problems facing the Betuwe route.

Interplay required between international corridors and regional systems

(10) Along a corridor, the level of quality of the entire link must be good. In order to be able to effectively implement the underlying network, it is vital that local governments also have a say in the creation of the TEN-T network. The underlying regions must also be able to link in to the TEN-T network. In this way, optimum use of the infrastructure can be achieved. Along the Amsterdam-Cologne-Frankfurt link, connections to some sections of the infrastructure are poor. By solving these bottlenecks, the Delta line can travel rapidly and reliably.

(11) By linking together economic core centres in Europe, social cohesion between the regions will be improved. By viewing the start and finish points of individual routes as hubs between various transport modalities, optimum use can be made of the infrastructure. If a priority network places its central focus on the corridor and the hubs, essential gaps in the link can be avoided. A corridor is also important for customers wishing to travel from A to B. Points A and B will however rarely be located on a priority link. Passengers will therefore also make use of the regional network to arrive at a starting location on the Trans European Network. Sound links between the European Network and the regional network are therefore vital. As a consequence, it is important that local governments be given a role in this system. Although the regions themselves bear responsibility for connections to the TEN-T, there are issues that the regions themselves cannot solve.

(12) The core network can be achieved at community level, if the Member States realise that in accordance with the analysis by the Committee, the TEN-T policy must and can be made more effective and more efficient. The core network must be determined on the basis of (future) traffic flows and the expected developments. The determination of a core network can be a sensitive issue in the Member States, because an image of division can arise, in terms of inclusion in or exclusion from the core network. Even a core network requires a concentrated approach to bottlenecks via an action programme. Not all elements can be simultaneously dealt with and financed. All in all, what is

therefore needed is a degree of flexibility in the core network. One quality of the core network must be that corridors can be added, while following successful solutions of bottlenecks, and once the network has been raised to the required quality level, corridors can also be scrapped from the core network action programme.

Further attention must still be focused on missing (transnational) links

(13) Missing links and poor connections in the underlying, extensive network, to the priority network, mean that the TEN-T network cannot be used to its fullest extent. The priority network can only function if it can be effectively fed from all European regions. The journey for any European citizen or transport operator starts and finishes at the front door. Against this background, permanent attention on the extended network remains vital. A match must be identified between the extended network and the priority network. We must prevent two separate entities emerging, that are unable to communicate sufficiently with one another.

(14) Bottlenecks occur specifically in the event of improvements to transnational connections in an extended network. The benefits and costs for such projects are not always allocated to the same Member State. Reaching agreement on planning procedures, phasing and financing often emerge as stumbling blocks for rapid project implementation. The responsibility for a project is indeed a sensitive issue, in many cases. A system with more attention for projects in which financing and costs and benefits are not evenly distributed is therefore called for. In the framework of current developments and their consequences for the financial position of individual countries, we must ensure that (future) transnational links are not made even more difficult to achieve than is already the case. The European Union should take on the task of specifically simplifying the procedural and financial complications of cross-border links.

Technological developments offer opportunities

(15) Intelligent Transport systems (ITS) offer opportunities and possibilities for managing and influencing the use of the infrastructure systems, over and above the physical infrastructure approach. They offer both network managers and network users up-to-date information, on the basis of which they can take decisions. This enables network managers to manage traffic in a more targeted manner, to ensure that the entire network is better utilised. Amongst users, it can lead to a broader assessment of the possibilities, and hence a better spread of traffic over time and the different modalities. As a whole, therefore, it is a key to multimodality and network utilisation. Here, too, up-to-date transnational information is often lacking. Cooperation between governments across borders is therefore of vital importance. The German Federal State North Rhine-Westphalia and its neighbouring Dutch provinces have, at their own initiative, launched a cooperative venture for improving information exchange. Broader financial and other support for improving this international information exchange could lead to the further streamlining of the information flows.

(16) Technical developments also mean that the borders between infrastructure and vehicles are becoming less clear. It is vital that more support be offered to network managers in undertaking their tasks. Local governments must therefore be given a role in the implementation of this innovation, to prevent sub-sections of routes emerging, in which these technologies are either unavailable or unusable. Technical improvements must make their presence felt along the entire corridor, not only in an individual sector where the innovative technique has already been implemented. The European Commission could play a solid coordinating role in this respect, facilitating pilot schemes wherever possible.

(17) Thanks to smart logistic solutions, a contribution can be made to Transport prevention, in other words reducing the number of transport movements. One example is a system of foldable containers so that less ships need to sail carrying empty containers.

Instruments and Financing

(18) TEN-T is currently financed from various different funds. One important aspect is that the budget cycle of the EU covers only seven years. However, for many infrastructure projects, financing that extends over more than a single budget cycle is required. By establishing a fund to promote a

cohesive network, it is also possible to meet the demand for alterations to the underlying system. The design for any such fund must be such that direct contact is possible between the region and the Commission.

(19) The various Member States have acquired a wealth of experience with the different forms of financing. The Netherlands has experience with public private cooperation constructions. Assistance could be provided by making this experience available to the Member States. Excellent possibilities for this approach are benchmarking and/or best practice methods.

A role has also been set aside for the European Union to smooth the way if the costs and benefits of infrastructure projects are unevenly shared between the Member States.

(20) For a large number of priority projects, a coordinator has been appointed to monitor progress and wherever necessary to intervene. This has proved a successful method. It has been suggested that a corridor coordinator be appointed for the core network. Corridors must then be allocated in such a way that smaller projects are combined into a single large project, subject to a coordinated approach.

This proposal is welcomed by the Dutch provinces. The desired link-up between road, water, rail and air is entirely possible in the Netherlands, and offers the possibility of implementing improvements along a corridor, via minor projects.

(21) In the event of EU co-financing and timetabling of projects, in the future, it may be necessary to impose clearer conditions (including sanctions) for the Member States in order to ensure progress of projects, etc.; in other words, combining pioneer rights with compulsory implementation. In the underlying argumentation for EU co-financing, the added value for Europe must be made clear. In a more standardised cost and benefit analysis, all effects (including external effects) can be charted out in a uniform manner, and the added value for Europe determined.

Evaluation of TEN-T

(22) Alongside the developments in the TEN-T network, there are also autonomous developments that will have a major influence on the use of the European infrastructure and transport systems. Changes in demographics will for example result in major changes to the use of the TEN-T links. For elaborating the concept for the priority core network, this should also be taken into account. Consideration should not only be given to the consequences for the next ten years, but also the expected consequences for the next 50 years. A number of regions will be faced with (considerable) ageing and population shrinkage, while there will also be regions where population density is still increasing. As a result, other and new mobility flows may be initiated.

A second point for attention is the territorial development of the EU. The TEN-T was originated prior to a period characterised by considerable territorial expansion of the area of the EU. The current TEN-T and the priority projects as a consequence do not fully reflect the future challenges. Possible new territorial expansions of the EU will also lead to changes in the orientation of the European core areas and the citizens of Europe.

The Hague, Brussels
April 2009

IPO

The Interprovinciaal Overleg (IPO, Association of the provinces of The Netherlands) is the umbrella organisation of the 12 Dutch provinces. It has an official outpost in Brussels; the House of the Dutch Provinces (HNP). The House of the Dutch provinces promotes both the individual and common interests of the provinces at the European institutions.

Association of the Provinces of The Netherlands (IPO)

PO Box 16107

NL-2500 BC The Hague

Tel: +31 (0)70 8881212

www.ipo.nl

Contact:

Mathijs Verhagen

European Affairs

mverhagen@ipo.nl