

## CONTRIBUTION OF THE TRANS-PYRENEAN FOUNDATION, TRANS-PYRENEAN CENTRAL PASSAGE, TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK POLICY

This document responds to the public consultation of the European Commission on the criteria that will shape the future trans-European transport network, which is part of a broader review. This review will finish in the draft of a White Paper that will establish the common transport policy and other aspects of future TEN-T policies.

The new approaches of the Commission, with the aim of updating and modernising the TEN-T policy, were discussed in June 2010 in Zaragoza by means of the work of different workshops, under the Spanish Presidency of the EU.

These approaches, which insist on the need for modernisation, on strategic projects with high European added value, the removal of bottlenecks to enhance the internal market and on the development of intermodal nodes, together with the environmental challenges of the 21st century which the EU must overcome largely through new transport policies, are a sound basis for the analysis begun in Zaragoza.

The Trans-Pyrenean Foundation, by means of this contribution, would like to express its thoughts in the hope that they can be useful for the TEN-T policies and be included in future communications from the Commission.

Once again, we must thank the Commission for this initiative. The 21st century poses new challenges that the EU must face: a new international context with new powers that are no longer emerging, but have changed the leaderships up to now, the confirmation of climate change and the effects of the global economic recession; all together with the urgent need to strengthen the EU as a great power on the world's stage, make the TEN-T policy crucially important.

It was essential to start this period of new perspectives and new work methods, even when it seemed also important not to waste the work and resources that have been spent on the current 30 priority projects which must continue to be pursued.

## **1. - In the context of the Green Paper**

The considerations of the "Europe 2020" strategy are indispensable, there is no possible alternative to the application of concepts such as coherence with other policies, cohesion and the strengthening of rail transport, not only as a means of reducing the CO2 emissions produced by road transport, but as a tool for land use planning and making use of existing and underused rail infrastructure with the arrival of the new high speed passenger lines.

The current situation, for example, in southern Europe, is untenable. Levels of freight transport by rail are negligible, and the large rail lines are underused and short circuited by physical or technical barriers. The Pyrenees are a good example of this. This massif is one of the last physical barriers in the EU, where the concepts of coherence and cohesion mentioned were not taken into consideration, as another fundamental concept identified by the European Commission such as European Added Value.

We consider the concept of European Added Value to be particularly relevant, both for its political significance - the TEN-T build and strengthen the Union as a political entity -, and also for its practical consequences, in regard to an economic view and the environmental considerations and land use planning in its broadest terms.

When discussing land use planning within the European Union, we propose that "the European added value" means also rational transport infrastructures, in other words, a means of preventing greater saturation in areas that are already over saturated, in both demographic and urban terms, which are climate resistant and environmentally friendly. Rational infrastructures serve more with less, making the best use of the existing financial resources.

Therefore, for example, we strongly believe that the current priority axis nº 16 between Sines / Algeciras-Madrid-Paris makes possible the ports the Iberian Peninsula to be connected by a single infrastructure that crosses the central Pyrenees to reach Paris, putting this important concept into practice.

Connexion of intermodal nodes should not rely solely on local or national policies individually, but on a European perspective, as the Commission rightly observed. This is precisely where the TEN-T policy comes into its own.

The current 30 priority projects respond to this ideas, taking also into consideration the so-called "core network", which is a concept that in our opinion does not oppose maintaining the current priority projects.

We would like to mention that we find the work of experts group 1 to be especially interesting, particularly the observation they make that "priority project" does not mean priority in terms of time, but strategic priority, which is a subtle but definite and a necessary shift in the approach that we fully agree with.

## **2. - The comprehensive Network**

The comprehensive network should be a long-term instrument of European land use planning in terms of infrastructure.

In our opinion, the comprehensive network leads to general planning guidelines and criteria that must comply and agree not only with the views of the Member States but also with the relevant agents and regions - perhaps especially, because of inherent difficulties, the cross-border sections - and, and even with third countries that have special political, geographical or economic relations with the EU.

The design of the comprehensive network therefore involves an extremely complex frame from a political and temporal point of view.

The comprehensive network, given its long-term planning nature, should consider a wide range of different political, economic, environmental and social matters; therefore it seems logical that this comprehensive network should be designed by the Commission, within the parameters for decision making of the Lisbon treaty.

It is therefore a concept that sets the guidelines to be followed in the future, while offers an extraordinary planning tool. It is also true that as all important planning, it will not respond to the short and medium term needs, which can be limiting, since we are talking about transport infrastructure whose execution time frame is usually very high.

That is why the comprehensive network should provide real and achievable objectives; in other words, the objectives of the strategic design should be measured, since otherwise we would run the risk of trying to plan the impossible, never complete the planning or plan something difficult to finance with the available resources.

Therefore the comprehensive network is a desirable concept but it is necessary to define it as much as possible, concerning the dimensions, the time frame, and economic, political and social aspects.

We propose that the comprehensive network limits its planning time frame and is defined in a sufficiently realistic manner to measure its costs and impacts, both economic and environmental and urban.

### **3. - The Core Network**

Given that the core network would consist of connections and nodes of maximum strategic and economic importance for the whole of the EU, we believe that this level of planning is optimal for realistic short and medium term planning that contains the essential criteria of cohesion, rationality, European added value, proper functioning of the internal market, elimination of bottlenecks and optimising the existing infrastructure.

This level of planning helps planning over time, concerning financial resources and specific actions that, in the short and medium term, will clearly improve the EU transport infrastructures.

The core network should connect, through rational actions, both sea and inland ports with the logistic areas of particular relevance; in other words, it should achieve more with less, optimising the existing infrastructure, through its interconnection, which is especially complicated in cross-border areas, where bottlenecks cause blockages in the current European network.

The core network concept fits perfectly with the criteria followed for elaborating the current list of priority projects. To a large extent the design and planning of current projects followed the criteria of connection of nodes, removal of bottlenecks, cross-border connections, European added value and minimising environmental and urban costs and effects.

Therefore, the so-called priority freight rail axis nº 16 Sines / Algeciras-Madrid-Zaragoza-Paris links the ports of the Iberian Peninsula on the Atlantic and Mediterranean sides, optimising the existing resources, connecting them with the main Spanish logistic areas, such as PLAZA in Zaragoza. Through a rational work under the Pyrenees, it makes operational an already existing rail network, which covers the whole of south-western Europe, serving more with less and eliminating the physical French-Spanish border, the Pyrenees. Axis 16 connects Portugal, Spain and France with the North and East of Europe and North Africa with all the potential that this represents for the EU and its international traffic.

#### **4. - How to invest**

As the Commission states, the core network is not necessarily a comprehensive programme of large-scale infrastructures. Furthermore, it involves rationalising costs, as indeed it should, it is always necessary to minimise the costs of any planning, otherwise it would waste the limited resources of the Union.

However this does not mean neglecting essential infrastructure, but prioritising spending based on a optimal detailed planning, in other words, taking into account all possible information and from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Rational planning of railway infrastructures and investment over time according to the available funds is our proposal. Guaranteeing cohesion, internal market, European competitiveness, combating climate change, reducing CO2 emissions, eliminating bottlenecks, removing physical cross-border barriers, reducing the demand for new roads and motorways, top quality safety and land use, what better investment could there be?

Additionally, the preliminary economic studies of each operation should assess and look at the economic and social value of all these parameters, not only the mere revenues and expenses. Reduced volumes of CO2 emissions have a measurable economic value, as does the activation of the internal market; the improvement in safety can also be assessed, and so on with each and every one of the concepts of a well-planned action.

Investment must also be a tool used to eradicate, through specific actions, the great anachronisms that still remain in the European Union, such as, for example, the fact that there is still no central rail passage through the Pyrenees between France and the Iberian Peninsula. It is an anachronism that the EU already plans to overcome through the implementation of priority axis N° 16 Sines / Algeciras-Madrid-Paris, which involves the construction of a rail tunnel under the Pyrenees.

Relating to investment in multimodality, we consider this essential for the future, although it should be carried out in "layered" planning: for multimodality to exist it must be based on a pre-existing continuous network, multimodality can not exist if there is no existing network providing a base on which to develop its full potential.

We need to eliminate the bottlenecks as soon as possible and then plan multimodality, this means investing in the basics first and then we can reach excellence.

## **5. - The nodal network and demand**

The future nodal network, and identifying the nodes it incorporates within Europe, is principally linked to state-of-the-art logistics and ports.

The main nodes must coincide with large capital cities, although it is not quite as simple as this; a large capital city in itself is not a principal node of transport if it does not have a capacity for highly technological multimodal logistics, it is "soft" in urban terms and has the potential for future expansion.

Therefore, the nodal network should include major capitals as well as those strategic logistics enclaves which, due to their location, serve one State or several as a relevant interconnection point.

A good example of this is the aforementioned Zaragoza and its PLAZA logistics platform with more than 13 million square metres, which can hold all the freight rail and maritime traffic of the whole Iberian Peninsula to then, through the Pyrenees, move up to the north and east of the Union, thereby interconnecting all the ports of the Peninsula, North Africa, Madrid, Zaragoza, Toulouse, Paris and the Nordic and Eastern countries.

Identifying these logistic nodes is essential, and it is also very important to identify potential nodes, not only with regards to the current flows, but also those that would be created from scratch to provide adequate infrastructure.

All this is directly related to the identification and quantification of future demands, there must be a sufficient traffic and flow demand to justify an infrastructure. How do we calculate this? What is the best methodology?

Firstly, we logically suggest that the scales for calculating potential flows should not be local, or even regional or national; they should be global scales, taking into account what is happening and especially what is going to happen beyond the borders of the Union. We should consider the emergence of new powers, which routes they use and will use in the future, how mega-infrastructures such as the Panama or Suez Canal will affect the Union, as well as climate change or the potential of major ports such as Singapore, Tanger-Med, Mexican logistic areas, etc. In this regard, ports such as Sines or Algeciras can transform south-western Europe into the major European logistic centre and a main connection with the rest of the world.

Secondly, taking into account this scale, it is necessary for the European Union to be equipped with an observatory to monitor inter-community traffic and flows with a regulated methodology. It must be scientific and unique and use the most advanced technological systems that we have at our disposal, improving the old systems of local observatories that are outdated and do not provide scientifically confirmed traffic data.

Thirdly, we need to plan and identify solutions for saturated areas looking for more rational places with greater capacity. For example, the saturation of the east and west ends of the Pyrenees, with the environmental and safety problems that this implies should be redirected by a new central rail passage under the Pyrenees.

This can relieve the ends that are already close to collapsing due to the excessive volume they withstand in areas that are also densely populated where it is increasingly difficult to accommodate new infrastructure.

It is therefore necessary to review the methodology for calculating flows and demand, for the sake of rationality, opening the possibility of creating and redirecting routes for new flows that did not exist since there were never any possibilities, nor the infrastructure necessary for this.

## **6. - Compatibility of networks, passengers and freight**

Concerning rail transport, our proposal is to try to separate, as far as possible, long distance and heavy freight traffic from passenger traffic which, in the future, will be essentially high speed.

Passengers need speed and to cross large urban conurbations, which makes logical for passengers to travel by rail. Therefore the technical characteristics of the high-speed railways are radically different from freight railways in terms of turning radii, slopes, equipment, maintenance, etc. All these already known factors cause compatibility problems in general between passengers and goods.

Freight does not need speed, but continuity, and proximity to logistic areas and seaports, as well as technical interoperability between internal borders. Moreover these needs can create an opportunity to take advantage of the existing, underused networks which have been left unobstructed by the arrival of high speed lines. For example, the priority axis N° 16 Sines / Algeciras-Madrid-Zaragoza-Toulouse-Paris will mostly use a corridor that already exists, and will be operational with the construction of a tunnel under the central Pyrenees, like those already existing in the Alps .

A complete network is necessary, as indicated by the expert groups established by the European Commission, to cover passenger and freight demands; in other words, a network designed to meet the needs of each demand.



## **7. - Environmental impacts, a step forward**

The Commission, rightly again, points to the extension of the concept of the environmental impact of infrastructure. This is a crucial aspect that needs to be studied in more detail.

We suggest we should define and explore this methodology. Well-defined criteria that exceeds the current environmental impact concepts are needed incorporating those essential aspects of land use and the effects of climate change.

In particular, with regards to long distance heavy goods traffic, it is necessary to identify their routes concerning to those areas that are already saturated with infrastructure and people, as well as nearby areas or places likely to be affected by the effects of the present climate change.

It is not possible to introduce new freight rail infrastructure, for example, which runs along densely populated coasts that are saturated with infrastructure. That poses major difficulties that are not only technical, financial, political and legal, but also likely to affect the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Freight rail infrastructure should run along territories that are "safe" in every sense and especially with regards to the lowest environmental impacts, both direct and indirect, preferably crossing areas that are not saturated and do not present new barriers on top of the existing ones. This may be on the whole a European Kite mark for infrastructure, redirecting certain negative tendencies of States.

## **8. - Financing, allocation of priorities**

We could not agree more with the statements of the document concerning the fact that the allocation of priorities and financing must be linked, among other factors, to the elimination of bottlenecks and cross-border sections.

The allocation of priorities, we believe, should not only be linked to projects, but also to modes of transport. It is necessary to prioritise railway in those territories where a significant imbalance is observed. For example, on the Iberian Peninsula, and in Spain in particular, railway transport has been losing ground to the point where it is at an all time low of around 3%, which is an extremely serious problem that must be corrected.

Improving the management of the increasingly limited funds of the Union and the States by using a common fund is an attractive concept, always depending on it being developed correctly.

For example, it would be desirable to give special consideration to those activities that are particularly related to bottlenecks and increasing the European added value.

Medium and long term project financing is going to be one of the most serious obstacles for the implementation of vital projects for the EU. Greater private participation, a review of the criteria applied by the EIB, greater commitment by the States, can all help to achieve the required goals; but it is necessary to further the search for new forms of financing.

It may be necessary to explore the joint possibilities of funding and operating for certain infrastructures that are not only beneficial to the Union but also for third parties that currently have the possibility of allocating resources to them.

We suggest that these possibilities could be explored, since the financing of infrastructure could obtain additional resources from outside the Union, from third countries, authorities or private entities who are interested in moving their goods in the Union more efficiently.

We know that this idea may, at the moment, seem far-off as it is so new and difficult to achieve, but given the location of the whole of the EU, we must not forget that we are moving in an increasingly global context with all its consequences.

## **9. - The new legal and institutional framework of the TEN-T policies**

In our contribution to the Green Paper we already considered the possibility of increasing the authority of the Commission concerning the matter of trans-European networks as a mark of European identity and as a means to alleviate the lack of coordination of the States.

Being also aware of the practical difficulties that the idea poses, what is clear is the need to improve the current state of things, without forgetting of course the national and regional areas, especially the cross-border sections.

It therefore seems reasonable that the new institutional framework considers the social feasibility of the projects and puts forward formulas to allow the affected regions or areas to participate in the decision-making, especially if they are cross-border sections and are related to eliminating the bottlenecks, so often mentioned due to their importance in this contribution and in the communications of the Commission.

The new legal framework must also be complemented by a series of policies directly related to aspects concerning land use planning, environment and energy; in other words, measures to standardise the key criteria affecting trans-European infrastructure and that must be followed by the States.

## **10. - The TEN-T axis nº16, a paradigmatic example of the new TEN-T policies**

In the current consideration on the future of the TEN-T we can note with satisfaction that those criteria that led to the decision to include the axis nº 16 Sines / Algeciras-Madrid-Paris, as a priority trans-European axis, were not only correct, but were also ahead of their time regarding many of the issues that the Commission, the expert groups and all the experts now face.

Time, reflection and studies, show how necessary this project is from a European and environmental perspective, as well as for medium-term preparation for a future that is ever-closer, within the new context of the EU and in relation to the new world order of the XXI century.

The rationale for a project is based on serving more people with less. This principle governs the axis nº 16: the main Atlantic and Mediterranean ports of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, are connected via Madrid and the important state-of-the-art logistic centre in Zaragoza on a central axis which, passing under the Pyrenees and removing an age-old bottleneck, forms a freight corridor towards Paris through Toulouse, with the possibility of connecting not just with the north of Europe but also with the east.

And all this based on an existing infrastructure, except for a few sections including the major bottleneck of the Pyrenees that is removed by the construction of a low-level tunnel similar to those already existing in the Alps. In other words, with a relative cost, maximum benefit is achieved.

A model project from the viewpoint of land use planning and sustainability, as it does not congest areas that are already highly saturated, since it passes through demographically sparsely populated areas and maintains the Pyrenees intact as it is a low-level crossing that does not alter them.

## Conclusion

The ongoing reform should mean a big step forward with regards to correcting that part of the methodology of the TEN-T policies that does not quite function correctly. Furthermore, within the new context of the XXI century, a definitively global world and at a time when climate change and environmental policy need definite action because time is running out.

Moreover, the commitment to passenger and especially freight rail transport, should steer the policies of the Union and for this purpose, the elimination of bottlenecks and physical barriers that prevent internal and external trade are the only guarantee for European competitiveness in the new era.

Nevertheless, because of the need for these changes and the criteria to form the TEN-E policies, we must maintain those 30 priority projects in which, albeit slowly, resources and work have already been invested, laborious agreements have been reached between States, and local long-term planning based on them has even been considered.

The core network and new ways of funding must undergo urgent analysis, the latter being opened up to all possibilities in the way outlined in this contribution, because it is no useful activating the internal market, if it is not interconnected to the new global markets.

Correcting the mistakes of the past, without wiping the slate clean, extending, improving and introducing technology, the criteria for flow analysis in the design of the future networks, maintaining the 30 priority projects and converting the current economic feasibility so it is also environmentally feasible and combats climate change, these are the great tasks before us that are needed urgently.