Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 166 (1959)[1]

Reply to the Fifth Annual Report of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly thanks the European Conference of Ministers of Transport for transmitting its Fifth Annual Report and notes with great satisfaction the careful consideration which has been given, as in previous Reports, to the suggestions of the Consultative Assembly on European transport matters. The Assembly would like also to place on record its particular appreciation of the efforts of successive Chairmen of the Conference in attending regularly the Assembly's debates on the Conference's Reports, in discussing more detailed matters with the Assembly's Economic Committee, and, generally, promoting fruitful cooperation between the two organisations.

2. The Assembly is pleased to note the progress made in developing co-operation between the E.C.M.T. and other international organisations concerned with transport, particularly with a view to co-ordinating work being done in the various bodies and eliminating duplication of effort. It notes with satisfaction the development of functional relations between the Conference and O.E.E.C., the decision of the member countries of the European Economic Community to set up a "Restricted Group" within the framework of the E.C.M.T., and the liaison established between the Transport Directorate of the European Commission and the Secretariat of the E.C.M.T. With regard to civil aviation, the Assembly hopes that, apart from the collaboration which is being developed with the Air Research Bureau, full relations will be established with the European Civil Aviation Conference, the inter-governmental body in which all questions of civil aviation are dealt with.

3. The Assembly recalls the suggestions it has made in reply to previous Reports regarding the collection of statistics. It urges the Conference to give maximum priority to the solution of this problem and would like to be informed of the results of the examination of ways of improving these statistics mentioned in para. 13 of the Report.

4. In particular, the Assembly draws the attention of the Conference to the need for preparing forecasts of transport development over the next decade, for which reliable statistics are indispensable, though still unobtainable.

5. The Assembly welcomes the Ministers' intention of giving special attention to problems relating to transport workers and intends through action in national Parliaments to press those Member States which have not yet ratified the European Convention on the Social Security of International Transport Workers to do so.

6. The Assembly is resolved through efforts in national Parliaments to press Member Governments to sign and ratify as quickly as possible the various other conventions and agreements on transport matters concluded under the auspices of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport - and draws the attention of the Belgian and Austrian Parliaments, in particular, to the desirability of their ratifying the Eurofima International Convention.

7. The Assembly welcomes the information in the Report of assistance given by the Conference to the Channel Tunnel Study Group and on co-operation established with the O.E.E.C. for the study of certain problems of tourism, and looks forward to further information on these two subjects.

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1. see Doc. 957, Fifth Annual Report of E.C.M.T., and Doc. 967, Report of the Economic Committee This Resolution was adopted by the Assembly at its 6th Sitting on 23rd April 1959

8. The Assembly, while regretting that - as stated in para. 24 of the Report - there has not yet been any real co-ordination in the field of investment in general, notes with satisfaction that the problems of financing investments are to be investigated by the E.C.M.T. The Assembly would be grateful for full information on the results of this investigation.

Railways

9. The Assembly is pleased to note the progress made in electrification and dieselisation of railways and trusts that the railways will continue to have available the necessary funds to carry on with investment programmes. It draws the attention of the Governments concerned to the fact that there are as yet no electrification projects for the Belgian and German sections of the Cologne-Paris line.

10. The Assembly realises the importance of the Council of Ministers' recommendation that railway accounting should be normalised, though it is aware that the effects of the present recession on railways have made it difficult to eliminate deficits. Nevertheless the Assembly urges each Member Government of the Conference to examine carefully what it can do to normalise railway accounting and would be grateful for full information on the position of individual countries in the next Annual Report.

11. The Assembly is gratified that the Netherlands Government was able to submit a Note on the position of its own railway administration and would be interested to learn in the next Annual Report what comments individual Member Governments may have on this Note in relation to their own position.

12. The Assembly would like on this occasion to recommend that railways in Europe continue to cease operations wherever these are made uneconomic through insufficient demand, and wherever this can be done without harming vital regional interests. Simultaneously, however, railways should make more effort to improve longdistance goods traffic services and services between the principal industrial centres and be given opportunities to take part in road transport as a commercial activity which is a necessary complement to their transport service system.

13. The Assembly suggests that joint studies be undertaken of the different types of combined rail/road goods transport, so that international goods traffic may profit as far as possible from the most efficient standardised methods.

14. The Assembly notes with special interest the report of the Eurofima Company on its second year of activity. The Assembly urges the Conference to find ways and means of ensuring that rolling stock and spare parts acquired by national railway administrations by hire-purchase from Eurofima should be exempt from customs duties ; or, alternatively, that at least the rolling stock which is ordered through Eurofima and incorporated in the "Europ" wagon pool should be exempt from duty so long as it remains in the pool.

15. The Assembly resolves, through action in national Parliaments, to urge Member Governments which are members of Eurofima to see what can be done to combine more of their own railways' orders for equipment with those of Eurofima, so that the latter's operations can be increasingly beneficial to European railways as a whole.

Roads

16. The Assembly recalls the suggestions it has made already on the drafting of a European Highway Code. It would be glad to learn whether progress has been made in unifying the rules of the road and draws the particular attention of the Conference to the report of Interpol on road accidents in Europe, in which it is made clear that greater uniformity in road traffic regulations could help to reduce road accidents.

17. The Assembly notes with satisfaction the progress made by the Conference in setting up Restricted Groups for the development of further international road connections, particularly at Alpine crossings. The Assembly stresses the need, nevertheless, for still greater efforts in this direction. It draws the particular attention of the Austrian, Italian and Yugoslav Governments to work needed on the Eastern side of the Alps.

18. The Assembly, further, suggests that advantage might be taken of the fact that the development of international motorway networks directly affects the growing number of European tourists, to bring the work of the Restricted Groups and the Conference to the attention of the travelling European public by appropriate publicity on newly-opened road connections, where these have been undertaken on the initiative of the Conference. This could be done already where work has started on the very important new route ("the crow's flight route") between Germany and Denmark

19. The Assembly regrets the fact that no progress has been made on the standardisation of weight, dimension, and payload rules for road vehicles and that, apparently, no attempt has been made to hold valid European road tests to provide supplementary data in addition to those which will become available from tests in the United States in 1960. Through action in national Parliaments the Assembly is determined to do all in its power to encourage Governments to take appropriate action in this field, which is so vital a factor in road traffic safety.

Waterways

20. The Assembly regrets that such slow progress is being made in the development of waterways for the use of vessels in the 1350 ton category, and draws attention to the particular importance of ensuring that all principal waterways in Europe can be used by similar vessels of an economic type.

21. The Assembly recommends that the Conference should undertake detailed studies of likely developments in waterway transportation. In particular, the Assembly believes that, wherever there is surplus tonnage on inland waterways, efforts should be made to eliminate the surplus, not by wit h-holding new orders for vessels but by scrapping those which are aged or obsolete.