Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 815 (1984)[1]

Reply toe the 28th and 29th annual reports of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the 28th and 29th annual reports of ECMT (Docs. 5150and5151), the report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development in reply thereto (Doc. 5164) and the opinion presented by the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities (Doc. 5166) ;

2. Recalling the historical links between the Council of Europe and ECMT, whose member states are all, with the exception of Finland and Yugoslavia, members of the Council of Europe, and stressing again the importance of close cooperation between these two bodies, in particular in those fields where they can most usefully complement each other, such as regional planning, environmental protection, legal co-operation and the promotion of road safety ;

3. Noting that in 1981 and 1982 freight transport declined, particularly transport by rail, inland waterways and oil pipelines, whereas passenger transport, particularly private road transport, increased slightly over the same period and, where road safety is concerned, deploring the fact that the number of deaths resulting from road accidents increased in 1982 for the first time since 1976 :

4. Reaffirming that a comprehensive transport policy must :

a. contribute to improving the economic situation and to regional development ;

b. essentially serve the socio-economic interests of the entire population ;

c. allow all citizens to exercise their right to mobility ;

d. take account of the complementarity of the various modes of transport ;

e. form an integral part of an overall social, economic and financial policy, and take due account of matters concerning rational use of energy, industrial, social and employment policy, regional planning, environmental protection, safety and budgetary policy ;

f. promote the principle of the user's freedom to choose his own mode of transport, and satisfy the demand for transport at the lowest social cost, without taking account solely of short-term commercial profitability ;

g. aim to provide fast, comfortable and reasonably priced transport links between the main European conurbations, and to end the isolation of Europe's peripheral regions, frontier regions in particular ;

5. Welcoming the renewed interest in the railways shown by ECMT in 1981 and 1982, but regretting that certain governments of member states in their infrastructure investment policies do not take a sufficient interest in this mode of transport, already seriously hit by the economic crisis and the decline in international trade ;

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1. Assembly debate on 1 February 1984 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 5164, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, and Doc. 5166, opinion of the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 February 1984 (26th Sitting).

6. Considering that, in spite of praiseworthy efforts, ECMT has not given sufficient new impetus in 1981 and 1982, to a European transport policy, which is still unduly hesitant, even within the European Communities, as is witnessed by the proceedings for failure to act brought by the European Parliament against the Council of the European Communities on 22 January 1983, for "violating the EEC treaty ... by failing to institute a common policy in the transport sector" ;

7. Convinced that, if more tangible progress is to be made, ECMT must show greater determination in tackling the main obstacles to a genuine European transport policy, namely :

a. expensive competition between different modes of transport ;

b. continuation of distorted conditions of competition, due principally to the fact that the way in which infrastructure costs are assigned discriminates against the railways- whose administrative organisation and bureaucratic weaknesses should be tightened up- and of administrative inflexibility and adequate infrastructures, particularly at frontiers ;

c. lack of social harmonisation between the various modes, leading to disguised competition ;

d. lack of international co-ordination in rail research ;

e. the burden of external constraints: the environment, rational use of energy, improvement of working conditions, regional planning and budgetary difficulties ;

f. the lack of a real European network of high-speed trains ;

g. structural over-capacity in inland shipping and inadequate investment in inland waterways,

8. Invites ECMT :

8.1. to speed up its work to eliminate distorted conditions of competition between the various modes of transport, particularly in the following areas :

a. harmonisation of social conditions so as to improve the condition of workers in the transport sector, increase transport safety and bring about a better balance between and within modes of transport ;

b. the most accurate allocation possible of infrastructure costs, by means of accounting systems common to all transport systems, in such a way as to assess the real cost to the community of each mode, and the establishment of a common system of charging for infrastructures in the international road freight sector ;

c. harmonisation of taxes on fuels and the concerted introduction of lead-free petrol ;

d. contribution by users to paying the costs of environmental protection, particularly by application of the "polluter pays" principle ;

e. technical harmonisation of transport equipment, particularly standards for maximum speeds, dimensions and loading of road vehicles ;

8.2. to promote bolder policies and projects likely to contribute to stimulating economic activity, for example :

a. a European network of high-speed trains, the "backbone" of which might at first be constituted by an Amsterdam-Milan axis, which would make it possible- by means of appropriate interconnections put into service in a co-ordinated way - to link up the European conurbations and open up the peripheral regions and particularly frontier regions ; the construction of such a network could make a considerable contribution to employment and orders for the steel industry ;

b. improvement of rail infrastructures in port areas ;

c. the construction of the Channel tunnel, in the light of the proposals in Resolution 767 (1982) of the Assembly ;

8.3. to present more specific proposals with a view to the commercial promotion of the various modes of transport, particularly railways in the tourist sector and inland shipping ;

8.4. where urban transport is concerned, to undertake further analysis of ways of improving the complementarity of the various forms of public transport and implementing a single system of fares for the various forms of public transport in a single zone, of extending pedestrian areas so as to relieve pressure on town centres and encourage the construction in big cities of automatic urban transport systems ;

8.5. where inland waterways are concerned, to contribute to the development, and particularly the adjustment to international standards, of more canals and to encourage a commercial approach in inland shipping by harmonising legislation on rosters in Western Europe and the conclusion between shippers' and boatmen's organisations of tonnage contracts and time contracts ;

8.6. to bear in mind the proposals in Assembly Resolution 697 (1979) on the introduction of automatic coupling on the railways of Europe ;

8.7. where international road transport is concerned, to make every effort to increase multilateral quotas which, for this mode of transport, are the most advanced form of European integration ;

8.8. to continue and step up its activities in combined transport, road safety and the improvement of conditions of transport for disabled persons

8.9. to play a more political role and to ensure a strategic balance between its technical research and its comments to the governments of member states with regard to the political trends of transport at European level ;

8.10. to further develop an interdisciplinary approach on the part of regional planning and transport specialists, in particular by strengthening collaboration at all levels with the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) ;

9. Invites the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe and ECMT :

9.1. to exercise extreme caution in closing any further sections of their existing rail network, particularly in frontier and port regions, and to take account, in their transport policy, of the fact that the railways are the most economical mode of transport in energy terms, the most reliable in terms of punctuality and safety, and the least polluting ;

9.2. to re-establish in their investments in the transport sector a better balance between the various modes of transport and to cease giving excess preference to road communications ;

9.3. to improve co-ordination of their research on rail transport ;

9.4. to lend their support :

a. to the creation of a European high-speed rail network for long distances and

b. to the creation of modern, rapid rail transport in urban agglomerations for short distances, particularly in the light of the advantages afforded by speed of travel and by the creation of new jobs in regions with high unemployment, such as steel-producing ones ;

9.5. to re-examine, as a matter of urgency, the road safety measures now operating in each member country, with a view to bringing about common and better driving standards, including attitudes and standards of competence on the road and a greater awareness of road safety ;

9.6. to take action, if they have not yet done so, on the recommendations in Assembly Resolution 766 (1982) in reply to the 26th and 27th annual reports of ECMT, in particular with regard to the harmonisation of legislation on access to and use of public transport by physically disabled people, compulsory insurance for drivers, construction of cycle lanes and vehicle safety ;

9.7. to take full account, in their transport policies, of the importance of preventing harmful effects ;

9.8. to supply information regularly in their national parliaments so as to permit the holding of a periodic debate on the implementation of the various resolutions adopted in the framework of ECMT.