Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1252 (2001)[1]

Transport technologies and European integration

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly considers that the transport sector is of particular importance for European co-operation and integration. A good coverage and penetration into all regions of modern transport and communications systems will benefit local and regional development and will in particular favour the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in a decentralised Europe. This will stimulate growth and will create new jobs throughout the continent.

2. The Assembly recalls the main principles laid down in the Declaration Towards a European Wide Transport Policy; a Common Set of Principles, adopted by the 3rd Pan-European Transport Conference, held between 23 and 25 June 1997 in Helsinki (Finland), as well as the work of the 14th International Symposium on Theory and Practice in Transport Economics, organised by the European Conference of Ministers of Transport in Innsbruck (Austria) between 21 and 23 October 1997 and the work of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning, held in Hannover (Germany) on 7 and 8 September 2000. It also recalls the conclusions of the Seminar on Transport Technology and Integration of Europe, organised jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation on 7 and 8 October 1998 in Antalya (Turkey). Finally, the Assembly recalls its Resolution 1186 (1999) on European transport policies, forming part of its mandate as the parliamentary forum of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport.

3. Transport is a field in which important steps for integration at European level are still to be taken. A common pan-European transport policy is not yet a reality and the transport market is developing more or less spontaneously, causing strong competition between different means of transport and transport enterprises.

4. The European Union is currently advancing with the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Networks, scheduled to be completed by 2010. Plans have been developed for high-speed trains, road building, development of inland waterways, as well as for upgrading conventional railways, airport infrastructures and seaports. The Assembly recognises the importance of this process and underlines the vital need for its development as part of a congruent continental policy aimed to facilitate pan-European integration.

5. Due to specific economic and technical characteristics, each means of transport has a different potential for adjusting its activity to the main requirements of customers, such as flexibility, reliability, speed, punctuality, safety, access to information and monitoring of consignment movement, all being covered by the "just-in-time" approach. In this context, road transport (freight and passenger) has enormous advantages. Moreover, road transport carries no burden of infrastructure financing and development.

6. While in western Europe road congestion and pressure on the environment are steadily increasing, in central and east European countries – and in particular in Russia – the role of road transport is underdeveloped. The solution to be adopted by central and east European countries, however, should not be to copy the western-type of transport development which led to today's problems, but to develop – together with western countries – an intermodal approach.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 23 May 2001 (see Doc. 9011, report of the Committee on Science and Technology,rapporteur: Mr Yürür; and Doc. 9095, opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mrs Calner).

7. The Assembly draws particular attention to the severe transport problems in South-eastern Europe, made worse by the destruction caused during the Kosovo conflict. This includes international traffic on the Danube which is still at a virtual standstill.

8. Aware that one of the main challenges for a common European transport policy consists in turning the traditional transport sector into a modern distribution system, which, in turn, would serve the integration process, the Assembly calls on the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as on the European Union and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport:

8.1. to conduct technology assessments with a view to formulating new integrated European transport policies, integrating physical and virtual mobility as well as intermodal transport systems;

8.2. to study scientific and technological options for improved or new transport infrastructures and for the optimal use of transport systems;

8.3. to stimulate strongly research and development in the field of transport, for the benefit of a modern and competitive European transport industry;

8.4. to give particular attention to environmental impact and safety in transport technology choices and to promote “clean” transport technologies, with direct benefits also for those employed in the transport industry;

8.5. to ensure that no part of Europe will be left outside the overall transport approach chosen, in order to permit all countries and regions to contribute to, and benefit from, harmonious overall growth and development.

8.6. to promote the intermodal (door-to-door) delivery approach, as the only efficient alternative to unimodal road haulage in western Europe. This would lead to a better utilisation of the capacities of the other modes and contribute to the decrease of the traffic congestion, accident rates and air and noise pollution caused by road transport;

8.7. to develop, in central and east European states, the container system, which can to some extent offer an alternative to the comprehensive development of the road network;

8.8. to develop combined road-rail traffic (which, besides the containers themselves, includes swap-bodies, lorries and trailers on flat cars (“piggyback”), double-stack container-block trains, etc.). Using its entire potential may contribute to the solving of urgent problems, as for example on the transalpine routes;

8.9. to develop combined maritime transport, which includes container ships and terminals, as well as “ro-ro” (roll-on-roll-off) vessels. The solving of the problem presented by the increase of the overcapacity of terminals and of inter-port competition is directly linked to the development of megaports, which function as hubs in co-ordination with secondary centres through spokes or feeder services;

8.10. to ensure that the technological development of the road transport system allows for a reduction in fuel consumption and of negative environmental impacts, and enhanced safety and riding comfort. For the short- and medium-term, modifications of engines, use of alternative fuels – natural gas in particular – and appropriate structural changes to the vehicles themselves should be encouraged. As a long-term possibility, the fuel cells principle should be considered, where energy chemically contained in the fuel is directly converted to the electricity used to propel the car. Safety and riding comfort can be enhanced, for example, by establishing automatic electro-mechanical regulations for headlight angles so as to reduce the incidence of blinding motorists in oncoming cars;

8.11. to use the entire potential of the railways to improve their performance, by introducing, for example, double-decker cars to augment capacity on selected routes with a view to ensuring flexibility of the traffic on the conventional tracks and supporting the introduction of tilting trains, which enable higher speeds on curved tracks;

8.12. to amend in the long term the high speed trains programme now being carried out by evaluating its pan-European potential and the different available technologies and also by including Transrapid (Maglev) trains projects (currently the most advanced version of magnetic levitation technology, which appears to have a number of advantages in alternative modes of transport);

8.13. to speed up the development of modern airship projects, able to contribute to solving the main problems to which the air traffic in Europe is now confronted: enormous growth of traffic, shortage of air space, insufficient facilities at international airports, non separation of regional and long-haul traffic, very high proportion of tourists in the traffic flow (65%), and increase in pollutant emission (13% of transport pollution is caused by air traffic);

8.14. to fight the main problem of communications development in the transport field, which is that the quite sophisticated technology is mostly limited to modal-based systems, with a view to creating an intermodal freight logistics system interoperable at European level, by covering the following issues: standardisation requirements, choice of means of transmission and the establishment of a financing system on an intermodal basis;

8.15. to incorporate new information and communication technologies (ICT) in transport systems in such a way that they contribute to an integration of the different means of transport of a region. The information supplied on the use of different transport means together with data on favourable possibilities of changing from one transport mode to another are expected to enhance transport efficiency and lower costs;

8.16. to ensure that new ICT-based transport systems include effective instruments for the control of traffic flow;

8.17. to pay special attention to the prospective development of the transport system of the Commonwealth of Independent States, for which integration chances will become a reality only if the extremely backward elements of the transport system are given high priority status: road transport, road network (especially the local roads), rail transport, rail network, intermodal (container) traffic system (including the development of rail/road interchange facilities), air transport (especially cargo) and the development of international airports;

8.18. to work towards a situation of fair competition among transport modes by amending relevant taxation and encouraging the total internalisation of all transport-related costs.