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**Transport, a driving force
for regional development**

Contents

Open Days 2005 — The call from Europe's regions and cities

The need for agreement on the 2007–13 financial perspectives was the principal concern running through the debates by participants at the 'Open Days — European Week of Regions and Cities', held in Brussels from 10 to 13 October, 2005.

Transport, a driving force for regional development

Transport infrastructure: combining growth and cohesion in Europe

Although vital to regional economic growth, transport infrastructure only contributes to social cohesion if certain conditions are met.

Sustainable transport, a priority of European policy

Support for environment-friendly modes of transport is one of the four pillars of the EU's sustainable development strategy. Decoupling transport growth from economic growth is, in the long run, a key aim of European policy.

From the ground: Danube countries

The ERDF in action: France, United Kingdom, Greece, Finland

From the ground: Interreg IIIB North-West Europe

Report: The Algarve at the crossroads

The modernisation of transport as southern Portugal enters a new stage of socioeconomic development.

Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Finland

From the ground: Spain

The Cohesion Fund and ISPA in action

Magdeburg, the capital of best practice

From 5 to 7 October the capital of Saxony-Anhalt hosted the third 'Competitive regions: shaping best practice' conference.

REGIO and networks

Online

Photos (pages): European Commission (1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 25), ARGE Donauländer (16), SEEDA (18), CCDDR (19, 20, 22), AEIDL (15, 20, 21, 23), AGILE (17), Angus Transport Forum (17), Gefyra S.A. (17), URBAN II Helsinki (17), Puerto de Barcelona (24), ZSR (25), National Motorway Co. (25), EIB/BEI (25).

Cover: Containers in transit at the Port of Belfast (United Kingdom).

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4



7



12



16



17

18



19



23



24



25

26



27

28

Transport at the crossroads of regional development

If there is one sector linked closely to regional development it is surely transport. Transport infrastructure is one of the most visible examples of what can be achieved by aid from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Social Fund. As one of the principal items of expenditure — around EUR 23 billion disbursed between 1994 and 1999 and almost EUR 35 billion allocated for the 2000–06 period — this aid has given a powerful boost to the economic launch or relaunch of many disadvantaged regions or regions undergoing restructuring.

Transport is one of the main driving forces of economic activity and cohesion, and thus a key element in the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. Without efficient transport networks there can be no competitiveness. Transport networks are vital for encouraging establishment of companies and development of centres of excellence and tourism. They are also a central factor in European territorial cohesion, constituting an essential link for communities and being a precondition for quality of life and employment in urban neighbourhoods and in rural areas, as well as in sparsely populated mountain, island or other remote regions. Transport needs are set to increase greatly in the context of an EU that will soon include 27 Member States, and of the new EU neighbourhood policy.

However, there is more to transport infrastructure than simply adding kilometres of road and rail. Transport systems are at the crossroads of ‘sustainable development’ in economic, social and environmental terms. They must be part of a global approach that takes into account the real impact of investment directed at creating and sustaining local activities and jobs, a balanced and polycentric development of the European area, and the reduction of damage to the natural and human environment.

In the face of the pollution and congestion linked to road traffic, there is a need to prioritise inter-modal transport by which different types of transport are combined along a single route, in particular through rail links. There is also a need to promote public transport more widely, to encourage energy savings and diversification, and to encourage the development of clean transport technologies. ‘Sustainable mobility’ is also a matter of R & D and innovation, for example.

These are challenges that must be faced at regional, local and European level, in the framework of the common transport policy and the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). In this respect, in April 2004, the European Parliament and Council identified 30 priority projects that represent an investment of EUR 225 billion by 2020. On 20 July 2005, the Commission defined the political and technical coordination procedures for achieving the TEN-T, including the appointment of six European coordinators and the creation of an executive agency. From a regional policy point of view, this will play a major role in developing quality transport during the 2007–13 period in accordance with the priority objectives proposed by the Commission, i.e. convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, and territorial cooperation. It will also have the means to match the importance of the task.

The editorial team

Open Days 2005 — The call from Europe's cities and regions: 'Give us a solid agreement for cohesion'

A speedy conclusion and a good agreement on the 2007–13 financial perspectives: these were the main concerns expressed by participants during the debates held at the 'Open Days — European Week of Regions and Cities', which took place in Brussels from 10 to 13 October on the initiative of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional Policy) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), with the cooperation of the European Parliament and 106 regions and cities from 26 countries.



Following the theme 'Working together on regional growth and jobs', the third Open Days left no doubt about the degree of commitment to this goal in the EU. About 2 500 delegates attended the event, choosing from amongst 70 workshops covering four themes: the three priority objectives (convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, territorial cooperation) proposed by the Commission for the 2007–13 programme period ⁽¹⁾, and management of the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

Most participants came from national, regional or local authorities and administrations. Others came from European institutions or associations, exchange and cooperation networks, development agencies, study centres and consultancy offices, universities, socio-professional organisations, etc. There were also about 100 representatives from regional media. About a third of the registered participants

came from the 10 new Member States. Between 600 and 1 000 delegates attended the three plenary sessions. In addition to the Brussels meeting, other events were held in EU cities and regions as a means of establishing closer contacts with citizens.

10 October. The opening session debates concentrated in particular on the results of the public consultation, which closed on 30 September, on the 'Community strategic guidelines for cohesion, 2007–13'. This was a Commission communication submitted in July that profiles future regional development programmes ⁽²⁾. The results of the consultation show there is wide support for the proposed guidelines. There is a balance amongst the more than 200 contributions received between the desire for diversification of priorities to meet regional needs, and for concentration of efforts on the most disadvantaged regions.

⁽¹⁾ See the Inforegio site at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713_en.htm

⁽²⁾ Communication from the Commission: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/050706osc_en.pdf
Results of the consultation (working document): http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/report.pdf



Commissioner Danuta Hübner speaking at the closing session of Open Days 2005, at the European Parliament.

The consultation also collected various comments on questions such as the territorial dimension of cohesion, the dynamic role of cities, sustainable regional development and the effectiveness of partnerships. These observations will be taken into account in the final version of the guidelines, after the Council has pronounced on the Commission's legislative proposals for cohesion policy reform ⁽³⁾.

Ways of achieving a strong and innovative cohesion policy ...

Mention of programmes inevitably leads to the question of budgets. A sound financial framework is essential to enable the regional development partners to implement, without delay, the next generation of programmes to be co-financed by the Structural and Cohesion Funds from 2007. In this way they will be able to contribute to relaunching growth and jobs, a process in which regions and cities have a key role to play as they are closest to the reality on the ground and are most in tune with the expectations of citizens.

Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner and CoR President Peter Straub both emphasised the urgent need for agreement by the Member States on the financial questions. They stressed that any additional delay, following the failure of the Council discussions in June, could affect growth and jobs in the regions. *'We must act now,'* stressed Mrs Hübner, as without a good financial agreement, *'it is becoming pointless to speak of solidarity, cohesion and competitiveness'*. Mr Gerardo Galeote-Quecedo, President of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development, reinforced the message: *'We need an agreement, not just any agreement, but an agreement that guarantees cohesion policy.'*

12 October. The second session was the Committee of the Regions' 61st plenary session and welcomed for the first time observers from Bulgaria and Romania. A debate launched by Mrs Hübner on the subject: 'Regions and cities, key players in regional policy and the Lisbon agenda', was the occasion for the CoR members to repeat their concerns on budgetary prospects. Recalling the position adopted by the European Parliament on 8 June in favour of a 'realistic and ambitious' agreement, European Parliament President Mr Josep Borrell sought to sum up the general feeling: 'The Union cannot allow itself to paralyse policies that are its very reason for being, and to fail to keep the promises of solidarity made to the new Member States The EU budget is a vital instrument in implementing its policies and ambitions. You, who represent the regional authorities and manage a large part of these funds, know this very well.'

Among the many items on the agenda at this session was a discussion on the 'Integrated guidelines for 2005–08', which were ratified by the Council in June and are destined to form the basis of the 'national reform programmes' adopted by the Member States to encourage growth and jobs as part of the Lisbon strategy. The CoR advocated 'totally decentralised' implementation of this strategy, calling, for example, for the position of the local and regional authorities to be taken into account when drawing up and adjusting these guidelines. More generally, the CoR requested that the said authorities should be consulted at an early stage in drawing up European legislation.

On the subject of State aid, the CoR stressed the need for a realistic approach to possible reductions in sparsely populated areas where services financed by the public sector are not backed up by competitive private services. Other discussions focused on the role of regional and local partners in training, the role of universities in implementing 'Lisbon', the 2005 review of the Gothenburg strategy for sustainable development and the need for action to combat climate change.

⁽³⁾ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/reg2007_en.pdf

...in all the Union's cities and regions

Finally, an opinion adopted unanimously by the CoR stressed that 'despite a strong increase in productivity over recent years, greater and more regular growth ... is essential if we are to reduce economic and social disparities.' A worrying increase in this was noted in certain Member States by the 'third interim report on cohesion' presented to the Commission in May 2005. For the CoR this makes it even more important to implement an 'active' cohesion policy covering the whole of the European territory, including prosperous regions, in order to strengthen growth and jobs. This in turn raises the issue of the legislative and financial framework for this policy.

Jaspers and Jeremie: two irons in the fire for cohesion

Two new initiatives, Jaspers and Jeremie, were presented jointly by Danuta Hübner, for the European Commission, and Philippe Maystadt, President of the European Investment Bank (EIB), to the ministers responsible for regional development in the Member States and candidate countries at an 11 October seminar, in Brussels. The initiatives were subsequently presented to the Member States, the regions and experts from international financial institutions (IFIs) at the 'Financing growth and cohesion in the enlarged EU' conference, held on 24 November in Brussels and organised by the Commission, Council Presidency, EIB and other IFIs.

Jaspers ('joint assistance to support projects in the European regions') is a joint technical assistance service provided by the Commission, the EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The idea is for experts in technical, economic and financial analysis to provide their services free of charge to Member States concerned by the future convergence objective, to assist them in designing and preparing 'large' ⁽¹⁾ infrastructure projects of high quality and so that they can benefit from ERDF and Cohesion Fund financing, and can be rapidly approved by the Commission.

Jeremie ('joint European resources for micro to medium enterprises') is a joint initiative proposed by the Commission and the EIB group (EIB and European Investment Fund — EIF) to facilitate access to financing for micro and medium-sized enterprises (including one-person enterprises), by enabling Member State authorities to cooperate with the EIF in order to improve capacity in the field of financial engineering. The aim is to encourage the development of this sector that, though important in terms of jobs and innovation, often faces difficulties in securing finance from traditional sources.

More information is available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/events/ifi/index.cfm

⁽¹⁾ As defined by the general Structural Funds regulation.

Concerns about this were often expressed forcefully by many regional delegates and were particularly in evidence at the Open Days closing session. *'It is vital for Heads of State and Government to reach agreement on the financial perspectives in December, under the British presidency. The agreement must be based on the Commission's proposals, and be acceptable to the European Parliament. ... It must be based on the principles of solidarity and a step-by-step approach, for the old as well as the new Member States'*, stressed Mr Galeote-Quecedo.

Danuta Hübner pressed home the same point: *'As time passes, I can see more and more anguish and confusion in our cities and regions. ... Thanks to the input of many of you here, we have put on the table a modern policy targeting its resources on growth and jobs, contributing to the competitiveness of the Union and matching the expectations of our citizens,'* but, she added, without a speedy financial agreement *'many of our efforts will be wasted.'* For his part, Mr Albert Bore, Vice-President of the CoR, emphasised the need for *'a modern European cohesion policy based on the principle of solidarity, as that is the only way through which Europe's citizens can find work, ... for innovative ideas that are shared so that the Union can be competitive and survive in today's global society.'* Throughout the Union, *'local and regional authorities are against the re-nationalisation of cohesion policy,'* he added.

Twenty-five flags and one future

Mrs Hübner welcomed the results of the 11 October meeting of regional development ministers, at which the Member States lent their firm support to the Jaspers and Jeremie initiatives (see box). The Commissioner also stressed the need for moving in the direction of *'more partnership and decentralisation. These two elements are closely linked and they are already taken into account by the Commission in its approach to cohesion policy for the 2007–13 period.'* They are an essential response to the growing complexity of economic and social processes in a fast-changing world. Giving priority to innovation in the next generation of development programmes is another.

'The main message taken from this week,' concluded Commissioner Hübner, *'is that it is difficult to find another Community policy that would be of so much interest to our citizens. ... The enthusiasm and energy' expressed by the participants, show 'that Europe has a future, that it can communicate with its citizens, and that people place their hopes in the Union. It is our joint responsibility not to disappoint these hopes.'* One speaker succinctly summarised the message as follows: *'I hope that the 25 flags that are flying here will not fade because we fail to find a solution.'*

Other information is available at the CoR site:

<http://www.cor.eu.int/en/index.htm>

and European Parliament:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert/documents_presse_par_theme_page/910/default_en.htm

Transport infrastructure: combining growth and cohesion in Europe

By Yves Crozet ⁽¹⁾

Although vital to regional economic growth, transport infrastructure only contributes to social cohesion if certain conditions are met.



Bridge over the Bilbao–Santander motorway (Spain).

On its foundation in the late 1950s, the European Economic Community faced the issue of inequalities in living standards between its Member States. At that time there were significant differences in per capita GDP between Germany and Italy, for example. Yet, by comparison, the differences in per capita GDP between the various regions were even more marked: Baden-Württemberg or the Île-de-France were much wealthier than Pouilles or Sicily. At the time of each subsequent enlargement the EU has faced this same crucial issue. Amongst the new countries that have progressively joined the Union (Greece, Spain, Portugal, Poland, etc.), there were — and are — regions where the per capita GDP is over 15 times lower than that of the most prosperous regions.

As one of the EU's objectives is convergence between Member States in standards of living, it is not possible to accept this situation or to simply allow it to be corrected by migratory flows from disadvantaged zones to dynamic zones. Giving regions in difficulty the opportunity to experience significant economic growth, and if possible at a faster rate than other regions, consequently became one of the European Union's priorities. As a result, transport infrastructure was assigned a major role: that of reconciling economic growth with social cohesion.

Despite its importance, it is also necessary to stress that infrastructure development is not a 'cure all'. Though vital to regional economic growth, transport infrastructure only contributes to social cohesion if certain conditions are met.

Growth and convergence: the twofold mission of transport infrastructure

In a market economy, economic growth is not based on technical progress and productivity gains alone. When economic policy was in its infancy, renowned economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo showed that the international division of labour also plays a major role. Even in a world without technical progress, closer ties between production zones with different production costs is in itself a factor for collective benefit. The intuition of these pioneers was later confirmed by the work of contemporary economists, leading to the famous 'HOS' (Heckscher, Ohlin, Samuelson) theory. This considers the free movement of goods and services to be a pertinent substitute for the unequal wealth of territories in terms of production factors. Even if we are too inclined to forget it, we experience this every day. Every time we drink tea or coffee, every time we drive our car, we consume products (tropical products, petrol) that are all but absent from European production, but which the international division of labour places at our disposal.

Transport infrastructure plays a key role in this. It permits the movement of goods and the linking of the territories in question. German cars, Swedish furniture or Finnish telephones are sold throughout Europe, as are Spanish fruit and vegetables and Italian clothes. For producers, the development of efficient transport systems allows expansion of outlets, thereby permitting mass production and a reduction in unit costs. As the latter more than offsets transport costs, the consumer is the system's

⁽¹⁾ Professor of economic sciences, Université Lyon2, Director of the LET (Laboratoire d'Economie des Transports), UMR CNRS No 5593 (www.let.fr).

ultimate beneficiary. He now lives in a diverse economy dominated by the exchange of 'small differences' between the European countries. The German driver can buy a Spanish car and the French gourmet can enjoy Italian wines.

The first mission of transport infrastructure is thus to contribute to the underlying reduction of costs and the general economic growth that results. But its role does not end there. One must also take into account the concrete implications for the territories in question. Experience shows that the centres of production and consumption tend, for evident reasons of accessibility, to be attracted to the most efficient infrastructure. The growth of the railways in the 19th century and of the motorways or airports in the 20th century confirmed this: transport infrastructure has a significant impact on the development and relative wealth of territories. Regions that are well served fare better than isolated areas. This is why the launch and financing of transport infrastructure has long been a key mission of states. To consolidate national unity, they have traditionally either directly undertaken or closely monitored the building of canals, railways or motorways to ensure they serve the territory as effectively as possible.

The European Union was faced with the same need. As the MacDougall report ⁽²⁾ found in 1977, the outlying and less developed regions need a modern transport infrastructure to gain access to markets, for the purposes of supply and to find markets for locally produced goods. The financing of transport infrastructure thus became one of the key forms of intra-Community solidarity. Insofar as solidarity between persons has remained largely a matter for the Member States (social insurance, assistance for the most disadvantaged), inter-regional solidarity has been the lever used by Europe to favour social cohesion by means of converging standards of living. Thus, countries such as Greece, Spain ⁽³⁾ or Portugal have received large sums in European aid (EIB loans and subsidies) to improve their road and rail networks. The same is true today for the 10 new Member States and for the candidate countries, albeit on a lesser scale. Improvements in the interconnection of transport networks are the



New train depot in Drogheda (Ireland).



Aalborg (Denmark): regional airports stimulate economic development.

concrete expression of Community solidarity. The major European 'corridors' are an example of this, as is, more recently, the Van Miert ⁽⁴⁾ report proposing that Europe should co-finance more than 20 major infrastructure projects, essentially for cross-border and thus international purposes.

Cohesion versus polarisation

In the light of the above reasoning, the key social and economic role of transport systems justifies the relaunch of major infrastructure works. The projects described in the Van Miert report should be rapidly implemented and the necessary budgetary and financial decisions made. So why does it seem that Europe, and many Member States, are reluctant to act? What is this distracting whisper that transport infrastructure may not be the panacea, and that the expected effects in terms of growth and cohesion may not materialise? These are questions that must not be passed over in silence or dismissed outright. On the contrary, they warrant careful examination because it is by considering them that we can identify the conditions for success of the twofold mission of transport infrastructure.

Let us first look at the questions and the doubts of financiers, public and private, as they consider the prospect of investing in new transport infrastructure.

The first doubt is technical and economic: will the volume of traffic announced by the project designers be confirmed? Over recent years, there are many examples of over-optimistic forecasts: Eurotunnel, the M1 motorway in Hungary, the Rhine–Main–Danube waterway — all represent investments whose effects fell short of expectations. This has resulted in decision-makers growing wary of the risks (real construction costs, actual traffic, etc.) and tending to delay the final decision, as in the case of the new rail link between Italy and France.

The second doubt is environmental. Will developing infrastructure, especially airports and motorways, encourage

⁽²⁾ European Commission, *Report of the study group on the role of public finance in European integration* (MacDougall Report), Brussels, 1977.

⁽³⁾ European aid received by Spain in the years following its accession represented 1 % of its GDP for a period of about a decade.

⁽⁴⁾ European Commission, *Priority projects for the trans-European transport network up to 2020 — high-level group report*, Brussels, 2003. http://europa.eu.int/comm/ten/transport/revision/hlg_en.htm

an unsustainable mobility? When a railway line or motorway already runs through a sensitive area, residents are concerned at the prospect of any new project, even if it is only to widen an existing route.

The third doubt is social and local. Who really benefits from new transport infrastructure? Will the expected 'structuring effects' in fact prove to be destructuring? Will the new motorway that is supposed to open up an outlying region instead speed up the exodus of jobs and the transfer of a section of the population to more developed areas? The expected convergence in living standards will thus be essentially achieved through the mobility of the labour force, which is contrary to any logic of solidarity.

These are legitimate doubts. At a time when Europe's population is entering a phase of near stability, and when the principles of sustainable development are gaining credence, transport infrastructure must no longer be presented as the magic wand that will solve all our problems. It should be clear that some projects, even those strongly promoted by certain lobbies, must be abandoned or postponed. Doubt should be the rule in the face of generous traffic forecasts. But that does not mean that Europe no longer has any need to finance new transport infrastructure. Such infrastructure remains necessary, for economic and social reasons, but certain conditions must be taken into account when studying and planning it.

A distinction must be made between countries where standards of living are still far below the European average and the most developed zones. We must not, in the name of environmental protection, stop Poland or Greece from acquiring an efficient motorway network. We know that the mobility of people and goods is a powerful factor for economic growth. We must not forget this lesson. Whilst we must avoid over-investment and the funding of low traffic infrastructure, this does not mean we must ban investment, in the new and old Member States. The development of public-private partnerships (PPPs) is a good way of separating good infrastructure projects from bad. It is a method that makes it possible to effectively identify the risks and spread them



Intermodal rail-road platform in Prato (Italy).

to best effect between the partners. In particular, the public authorities must be very clear on the question of traffic risks: are they ready to assume responsibility for them or not?

Clarification is also necessary regarding the effects of economic growth and social cohesion. Rather than promising a general improvement, it is more logical to show what the effects of the polarisation resulting from the creation of a new infrastructure will be. The positive and negative impact of new traffic flows will not spread homogeneously over the area. Rather than speaking generally of the 'structuring effects' it is better to have recourse to simulation models of interaction between transport and localisation to highlight the winners and the losers. This procedure can lead to more or less explicit bargaining, a weighing of the relative pros and cons which, although not the most exciting form of democracy, is nevertheless a necessary stage.

Today, the question of the effects of transport infrastructure on economic growth and social cohesion is therefore being posed in new terms. Although the fundamental mechanisms are the same (lower production costs, extension of outlet areas and polarisation), the heterogeneous nature of their implications deserves to be rendered more explicit.



Innovative hovercraft service in Kalmar (Sweden).

To invest in transport is to invest in regional development: a principle and a priority for the EIB

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the European Union's leading financial institution. In 2004 it loaned EUR 43.2 billion to further the EU's objectives. One of its main objectives is to support investment in transport.

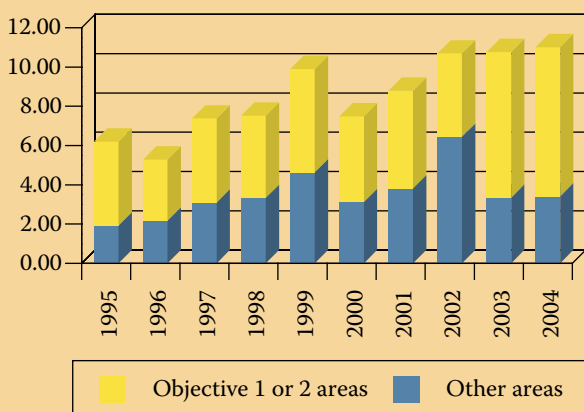
The EIB has thus become the leading source of bank loans for trans-European transport networks, lending over EUR 60 billion for investments in this field since 1993. The projects are nearly always major and highly complex, often sparking major social debates and posing environmental challenges. Implementation also often presents a high risk of delays, emphasising the requirement for effective project preparation and follow-up.

Over the past decade, the EIB has financed projects in all transport sectors: roads (road and motorway construction, improvement of the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese road networks in particular); rail (modernisation of conventional lines and construction of new high-speed lines in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom); sea (expansion or modernisation of port infrastructure, in particular in the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Sweden); air (improvements to airports, in Italy, Greece, Germany and Ireland, for example). The EIB is also very present in the new Member States, supporting the development of transport infrastructure as a basis for strengthening their economies.

The EIB also finances urban transport projects. Over the last five years it has allocated EUR 10.7 billion to projects of this kind, with an overwhelming 92 % going to public sector operations. By promoting a shift from private to public transport and seeking to reduce congestion, such projects not only aim to improve air quality and decrease noise nuisance, but also help to tackle climate change by enhancing energy efficiency and limiting CO₂ emissions. In short, they play a part in improving the quality of life.

The major investments in transport in the EU regions contribute to territorial cohesion and boost the competitiveness of the regions of the enlarged EU. By facilitating the movement of goods and persons between Member

Transport (1995–2004): breakdown of loans in the EU-25 on the basis of area category (billion EUR)



States, transport investments play a major role in stimulating the internal market and improving cohesion in Europe. A large proportion of the EIB's transport lending is targeted at regions lagging behind in development.

Fostering the EU's social and economic cohesion by contributing to the reduction of regional disparities is a priority mission of the EIB. The focus on regional development, present since the bank was founded in 1958, has been reaffirmed and reinforced following EU enlargement to include 25 members in 2004.

Total EIB lending for regional development in 2004 was in excess of EUR 28 billion, representing over 70 % of the bank's combined lending within the EU-25. Investments in the transport sector accounted for 40 % of this support. Well over half of transport lending to areas assisted by the Structural Funds went to the railway sector, including many projects for local rail services (trams, underground and suburban rail).

The bank's lending policy is to support sound projects. To qualify for financial support from the EIB, a project must be shown to be sustainable from both the environmental and economic standpoint, as well as demonstrating financial and economic viability. Part of the bank's appraisal process is to verify these factors as well as to examine the regulatory framework, sector planning and programming. The EIB plays an important role in providing advice to project promoters during the appraisal process, which is one aspect of the bank's added value, especially in the EU's most disadvantaged regions.

When EU institutions work hand in hand

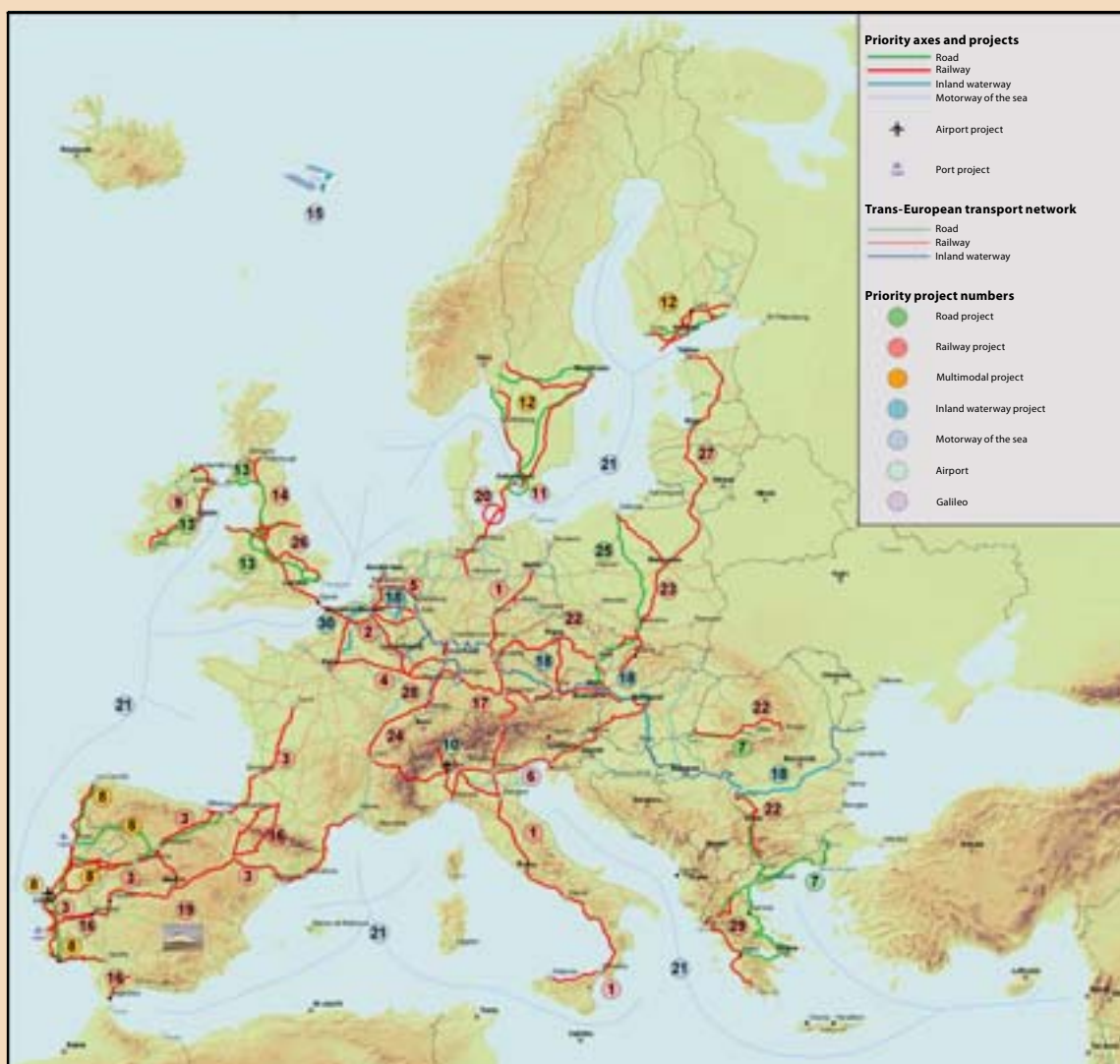
Over the years, the EIB's ties with the Commission have deepened, in particular in regional development. In 2000, the Bank and the Commission signed a framework cooperation agreement to formalise these ties and to set out how the EIB's loans and the Commission's resources can be mutually complementary.

The EIB assists in the preparation and execution of regional development programmes with a view to making better use of available resources. At the Commission's request, the bank gives expert opinion on projects submitted for EU grant aid. In 2004, it appraised 33 projects submitted for financing. This cooperation also includes the co-financing of projects, an activity that is becoming even more important in the new Member States by increasing the possibility for European grant aid.

The EIB and the European Commission have further strengthened their cooperation with the creation of a new assistance structure ('Jaspers' — joint assistance to support projects in the European regions) in order to assist Member States in the selection and preparation of major Cohesion Fund and ERDF projects. This is especially important for the transport sector where projects are often large, complex and with long gestation periods.



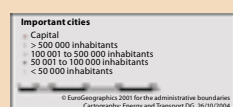
Trans-European transport network (TEN-T): Priority axes and projects



The priority axes and projects

1. Railway axis Berlin–Verona/Milan–Bologna–Naples–Messina–Palermo
2. High-speed railway axis Paris–Brussels/Brussels–Cologne–Amsterdam–London
3. High-speed railway axis of south-west Europe
4. High-speed railway axis east
5. Betuwe line
6. Railway axis Lyon–Trieste–Divaca/Koper–Divaca–Ljubljana–Budapest–Ukrainian border
7. Motorway axis Igoumenitsa/Patra–Athens–Sofia–Budapest
8. Multimodal axis Portugal/Spain–rest of Europe
9. Railway axis Cork–Dublin–Belfast–Stranraer (completed 2001)
10. Malpensa (completed 2001)
11. Oresund fixed link (completed 2000)
12. Nordic triangle railway/road axis
13. UK/Ireland/Benelux road axis
14. West coast main line
15. Galileo
16. Freight railway axis Sines/Algeciras–Madrid–Paris
17. Railway axis Paris–Strasbourg–Stuttgart–Vienna–Bratislava
18. Rhine/Meuse–Main–Danube inland waterway axis
19. High-speed rail interoperability on the Iberian peninsula
20. Fehmarn Belt railway axis
21. Motorways of the sea
 - Motorway of the Baltic Sea (linking the Baltic Sea Member States with Member States in central and western Europe, including the route through the North Sea/Baltic Sea Canal (Kiel Canal);
 - Motorway of the sea of western Europe (leading from Portugal and Spain via the Atlantic arc to the North Sea and the Irish Sea);
 - Motorway of the sea of south-east Europe (connecting the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean to include Cyprus);
 - Motorway of the sea of south-west Europe (western Mediterranean), connecting Spain, France, Italy and including Malta, and linking with the motorway of the sea of south east Europe.
22. Railway axis Athens–Sofia–Budapest–Vienna–Prague–Nuremberg/Dresden
23. Railway axis Gdansk–Warsaw–Brno/Bratislava–Vienna
24. Railway axis Lyon/Genoa–Basle–Duisburg–Rotterdam/Antwerp
25. Motorway axis Gdansk–Brno/Bratislava–Vienna
26. Railway/road axis Ireland/United Kingdom/continental Europe
27. 'Rail Baltica' axis Warsaw–Kaunas–Riga–Tallinn–Helsinki
28. 'Eurocaprail' on the Brussels/Brussels–Luxembourg–Strasbourg railway axis
29. Railway axis of the Ionian/Adriatic intermodal corridor
30. Inland waterway axis Seine–Scheldt

(Ref. Decision 884/2004/EC of 29 April 2004)



Sustainable transport, a priority of European policy

Support for transport systems that respect the environment is one of the four pillars of European sustainable development strategy. Decoupling transport growth from economic growth is, in the long run, a key aim of European policy.



Modernised canal in Coevorden (The Netherlands).

A good and efficient transport infrastructure is essential to the proper functioning of society and the economy. It enables the free movement of goods, services and people and promotes inter- and intra-regional communication. It also provides the personal mobility essential for work, education and leisure activities. For these reasons, investment in transport infrastructure has been a long-standing priority of EU structural and cohesion policies.

Transport also has a major impact on health and the environment, particularly climate change, air pollution, noise, land use and the disruption of natural habitats. The sector is a major consumer of fossil fuels and other non-renewable resources and road traffic accidents continue to be a major cause of death. These problems not only constitute a significant economic loss, but also pose the inescapable question of sustainability. Trends in transport development show that 'business as usual' in transport policy and practice is no longer a viable option.

Transport growth will continue. For passenger transport, the determining factor is car use. Although the level of car ownership is likely to stabilise in most EU countries, this

will not be the case in the new Member States for some time to come. By 2010, the enlarged Union will have seen its car fleet increase substantially. For goods transport, the growth and characteristics of modern economies (such as 'just-in-time' systems) will increase freight. By 2010, heavy goods vehicle traffic alone is expected to increase by nearly 50 % against its 1998 level.

As growth rates will be highest for road transport and aviation, the imbalance in modes of transport will grow. This will lead to further growth in fuel consumption, noise pollution and land use for transport infrastructure.

This diagnostic is not specific to the European Union and holds true for virtually all developed economies. Even if increased measures are taken to counterbalance the negative effects of transport growth, it will not be possible to meet the demands for environmental sustainability and the increased needs for transport without a change in habits and a reorientation of policy. The principle of environmental sustainability needs therefore to be taken into account for all Community aid within the framework of cohesion policy.

The Gothenburg turning point

Whilst reaffirming the importance of sustainable development as a fundamental EU objective set by the treaties, the Gothenburg European Council in May 2001 added environmental sustainability as a new dimension to the Lisbon strategy for competitiveness and jobs. It also called for a sustainable transport policy that should tackle rising volumes of road traffic, congestion levels, noise and pollution by encouraging the use of environment-friendly modes of transport as well as prices that reflect the social and environmental costs. In this context, sustainable transport has become one of the four pillars of the Union's sustainable development strategy. Decoupling transport growth from economic growth is, in the long run, a key aim of EU transport policy.

Developing a sustainable transport system means not only new infrastructure investment but also investments that will make the use of existing infrastructure more efficient and environment-friendly. Sustainable transport thus requires the conjunction of many policies, including the adoption of regulatory instruments (such as increasingly confronting transport users with 'real' prices that include adverse external effects, in particular the impact of greenhouse gases). It therefore touches upon fields that are closely linked to regional policy (management of urban development, for example).

A regional policy concentrating on economic and social cohesion must therefore: take into account environmental sustainability when financing new infrastructure, especially when it could trigger a modal shift; assist operations that aim to improve existing transport infrastructure, such as 'intelligent transport systems' ⁽¹⁾, interoperability and intermodality; place the emphasis on sustainable urban transport; and develop infrastructure mainly where plans, measures or conditions exist to stimulate economic growth.



In Hasselt (Belgium), public transport has been free of charge since 1997.



The 'Green Train' of Sardinia (Italy) has given a new lease of life to an old section of track.

At the same time, setting up an environmentally sustainable transport system is a long process. The Commission's White Paper on transport ⁽²⁾, sets a 30-year timeframe. The first steps towards achieving its objectives must nevertheless be taken immediately. The Commission stresses the need to be more active in taking policy initiatives to limit the negative effects of transport growth trends. In particular, it proposes three sets of action: a) to encourage the shift from road transport to modes with a reduced environmental impact; b) to introduce infrastructure that has a downward effect on transport demand by creating a situation in which the price paid by the user reflects the full costs to society; c) to promote actions to improve the urban environment and land-use management.

The promotion of sustainable transport in the period 2000–06

The guidelines adopted by the Commission in accordance with the general provisions of the Structural Funds for the period 2000–06 ⁽³⁾, recommend that Member States incorporate transport projects co-financed by the European Union in coherent strategies aimed at developing sustainable transport systems.

One of the Commission's four priority recommendations in 1999 regarding transport for this programming period concerns sustainability. This involves both seeking to reduce the harmful effects of transport and promoting the use of more viable forms of transport. In particular, the regional development programmes should respect the commitment of the European Union to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which requires particular efforts in the road and air transport sectors. However, the responsibility for respecting these objectives resides exclusively with the Member States.

In 2003 these guidelines were revised to include the basic principles of the sustainable development strategy adopted by the Eu-

⁽¹⁾ The expression 'intelligent transport systems' (ITS) covers a wide range of techniques applied to transport to make networks safer, more efficient, more reliable and more ecological, without necessarily having to make material changes to existing infrastructure.

⁽²⁾ 'European transport policy for 2010: time to decide', COM(2001) 370.

⁽³⁾ Article 10 (3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

European Council in Gothenburg. The Commission proposed taking these revised guidelines into account as far as possible at the time of the mid-term programme reviews. However, implementation of these revised guidelines and of the proposed priority actions requires more time than is available under the current programming period if they are to have any relatively important impact on the objectives established in Gothenburg.

According to the available data, in the programmes of the Objective 1 regions, the road sector continues to absorb more than half of the total investments programmed for transport infrastructure. For the Objective 2 regions, this sector also remains the most important in financial terms, although it accounts for a relatively smaller proportion of the total (42 %). As to modes of transport that are considered to be less harmful for sustainable development, these absorb approximately 40 % of the resources programmed under Objective 1 and 57 % under Objective 2.

These figures show the predominance of investments in sectors other than road and airports in the Objective 2 regions. In the Objective 1 regions, on the other hand, these two sectors together represent 40 % of the total, a result that falls short of the desired balance.

Programmed investments to develop intelligent transport systems — a fundamental element for effective traffic management — are EUR 114 million.

The reason for the tendency to invest predominantly in road networks — which are directly responsible for greenhouse gas emissions — is the remoteness of the majority of the Objective 1 regions coupled with the arrival of the new Member States.

The accession of 10 new countries was not a determining factor in this scenario, but it has helped bring about the present situation. Although, in the past, these countries favoured rail over road transport, the trend was reversed as they switched to a market economy. The growth of private transport, which demands a greater traffic capacity in order to meet the new needs of the changing economic situation, has increased considerably the demand for road transport.



The Wolverhampton (United Kingdom) tramway is part of a wider urban renewal project.

In general, infrastructure programmes for the current programming period reflect a continuation of the trend for a modal split as observed over the past decade. Infrastructure investments have been mainly concentrated in the road sector.

Despite this predominance of road transport investment, which is certainly necessary to improve accessibility for the less developed regions, the 2000–06 programmes include many examples of good practice in the field of ecologically sustainable transport, especially for public transport.

This analysis applies to the current state of programming and it is possible that there will be some adjustments as the Gothenburg strategy is transposed into the programmes. In the cohesion countries ^(*), the scenario detailed above would be certainly different if the considerable investments made in the rail and port sectors with financial support from the Cohesion Fund were also taken into account.

However, independently of the results to be attained at the end of this period, Community funds have to refocus on the strategic aims set by EU policy if sustainability is to be imposed as an inherent element of Community added value. It is this approach that must guide us in defining future guidelines.

Post-2006 prospects

The proposals for reform of cohesion policy from 2007, in terms of the legislative as well as strategic guidelines, assume that ensuring that the necessary transport infrastructure is available to business is a condition for growth and employment. A modern infrastructure, based on environmentally sustainable criteria, is an important factor in the attractiveness of the regions.

To maximise the benefits deriving from transport investments, assistance from the Structural and Cohesion Funds should obey certain principles.

Firstly, objective criteria should be used to determine the level and nature of the potential infrastructure investment. For instance, the potential return should be measured in terms of the level of economic development, the nature of the economic activities, density of infrastructure or degree of congestion of the region in question. Similarly, when determining social effects, there should be a precise calculation of the project's environmental implications.

Secondly, the principle of environmental sustainability should be respected to the greatest possible extent, in accordance with the White Paper. Reducing the dominance of road transport in Europe by promoting other modes of transport and combined transport should be of key concern.

Thirdly, particular attention should be paid in the convergence regions to modernising their railway systems by

(*) 13 countries: Greece, Spain, Portugal and, since May 2004, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

carefully selecting the priority sections, thereby ensuring their interoperability within the framework of the European rail transport management system (ERTMS).

Fourthly, investment in transport infrastructure should be accompanied by proper traffic management, with particular attention to safety, in accordance with national and Community standards. National and regional strategies should take into account the need to achieve a balanced and ecological modal split that serves both economic and environmental needs. These strategies should also include intelligent transport systems, multi-modal platforms and, in particular, ERTMS and SESAE (single European system for air traffic management) technologies.



Trans-shipping timber at the Port of Monfalcone (Italy).

Intermodality and interoperability: two keys for sustainable transport

The White Paper on European transport policy set a course for achieving a new balance in modes of transport that places greater emphasis on the most environment-friendly solutions.



The EU's need for mobility is growing at a faster rate than infrastructure capacity. The result is increased traffic congestion on the principal road and rail routes, in towns and in the air, whilst links with outlying regions remain insufficient. A second adverse effect is that, unless major steps are taken rapidly, the expected increase in traffic will be concentrated on the roads to the detriment of other more environment-friendly modes of transport, such as railways or short sea routes.

So how to provide an effective response to the need for mobility whilst limiting the disadvantages arising from transport? In the face of this dilemma, the White Paper on European transport policy (2001) set a course for achieving a new balance in modes of transport up to 2020, with greater emphasis on the most environment-friendly solutions. This goal represents the most tangible contribution the Commission can make to sustainable development, respecting the Kyoto Protocol and the security of EU energy supplies. It involves a significant reduction in fossil fuel consumption that will translate into reduced CO₂ emissions, 28 % of which are generated by transport.

Intermodality. In developing competitive alternatives to road transport, 'intermodality' has a central role to play. It is too late for isolated solutions. Measures are needed to achieve better integration of modes of transport that potentially offer large

capacities within an efficiently managed mobility chain in which all the services are complementary. This is essential for combating congestion and pollution and to establishing a better cost-efficiency ratio in the use of energy resources. These objectives imply in particular the promotion of railways ⁽¹⁾, short sea routes and waterway navigation. There are convincing reasons for this: over 1 km, 1 kg of petrol can move 50 tonnes by lorry, 90 tonnes by rail, and 127 tonnes by waterway.

Interoperability. For a policy of intermodality to be successful, it is firstly necessary to ensure the technical harmonisation and 'interoperability' of systems. In this context, the EU 'Marco Polo' programme aims to make interoperability a competitive and economically viable reality and not a mere slogan. The 13 best actions under the programme's first phase aim to transfer 13.6 billion tonnes/km of freight from over-congested roads to other modes of transport. One example is the transport of freight between the ports of Genoa and Barcelona in 13 hours using high-speed vessels, a service that would allow road hauliers to avoid — at a competitive cost — using some of Europe's most congested motorways.

In July 2004, the European Commission presented a second package of 'Marco Polo' measures for the 2007–13 period. With a budget of EUR 740 million, 'Marco Polo II' will include new actions such as 'motorways of the sea' and traffic reduction measures. The new package will also include the EU's immediate neighbours. The Commission estimates that every euro invested will generate at least six euros in environmental and social benefits.

Intermodality must be accompanied by technological developments designed to increase network capacities, facilitate mobility and improve the safety of all transport. This progress is essential to ensure the technical interoperability of transport systems, especially with regard to telematics, road tolls, air traffic management and the various rail networks. After years of research, we are now at the deployment stage. For the Commission, this is the occasion to launch three of its most important industrial projects ever: the 'Galileo' satellite navigation system, the European road traffic management system (ERTMS), and the SESAME industrial project, which will be the operational instrument supporting the legislation on the 'single European sky'.

⁽¹⁾ One speaks respectively about "road-rail traffic" and "short sea transport" for connections between the road and the rail, and the road and the sea links.

Danube countries

'Enabling the Danube to play its role in European integration'

Otto Schwetz, Chairman of 'Corridor VII — Danube', ARGE Donauländer, and Chairman of the Transport and Navigation Working Group



Following the pan-European transport conferences held in Crete in 1994 and in Helsinki in 1997, 10 'multimodal transport corridors' have been established in Europe. Corridor VII is based on the Danube waterway, Europe's second-longest river (2 500 km) and one of the continent's principal communication arteries. More than 300 tributaries flow into the Danube, which drains one twelfth of the European territory.

The importance of the Danube is based not only on the fact that this is a principal European inland waterway route, but also on the role of its inland ports, which extends beyond shipping. In addition to the seaport of Constanza, lying at the mouth of the Danube–Black Sea canal, there are 44 inland ports lying on the banks of the Danube. The linking of this major water axis with other rail/road corridors is of crucial importance in ensuring the intermodal interconnectivity of the total network, especially as most of the Danube ports have rail and road links that make them attractive for combined transport.

Combined transport techniques have progressed greatly in recent years and today the Danube is well placed to become an effective link in the various logistics routes that stretch from the Black Sea to central Europe and on to the Atlantic — by way of the Rhine–Main–Danube axis — and vice versa.

However, navigation on the Danube continues to face a number of obstacles and 'bottlenecks', which prevent it from developing its full potential and playing the role it deserves. The optimisation of transport on the Danube requires a number of measures: deepening and widening works at certain points; modernisation of its ports, shipyards and fleets; rationalisation of operations; harmonisation and simplification of certain institutional and legal matters.

But besides the navigational issues, there is another major challenge to be faced: the environmental degradation of the Danube and the Black Sea requires urgent action. Despite the national and international initia-

tives launched over the past decade, the actions implemented to date have proved insufficient to remedy the situation and resolve the health problems that result. The only way to tackle them is through a common effort for environmental rehabilitation at regional level and on a major scale. Cooperation between the inland navigation industry and the environmental services is essential for this. Without such action, inland waterway navigation will be unable to live up to its reputation as the most environment-friendly mode of transport.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the development of Corridor VII, signed by the transport ministers of 10 European countries in Rotterdam on 6 September 2001, highlights the need to strengthen the connections between the Danube, the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and the Black Sea. The document sets out a series of actions required to achieve this goal. At the same time, the meetings of the corridor chairs in Brussels clearly highlighted the need for greater cooperation. Hence the decision by Corridors IV, VII and X to launch the 'Corridors south-east' cooperation project.

The improvement of the Danube as a major European transport artery was also a central theme of the 'Danube cooperation process (DCP)' that was launched with a ministerial meeting in Vienna on 27 May 2002 and continued on 14 July 2004 in Bucharest. It was agreed that the Danube, as a cost-efficient and ecologically sustainable transport corridor, should be used to its full capacity for the best possible development of the Danube basin countries. For that purpose it would be necessary to:

- > improve navigability and thus permit uninterrupted passage by implementing the decisions of the Danube Commission concerning the depth of the fairway (with priority awarded to removing the existing 'bottlenecks' between Straubing and Vilshofen and between Vienna and the Austria–Slovakia border);
- > invest in Danube ports with a view to establishing multimodal centres for cargo distribution in accordance with the European Agreement on Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN agreement), adopted in Geneva in 1996 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);
- > set up a telematic river information service, since such a system would considerably enhance the safety of river users, for industry as well as leisure activities;
- > fund projects that help integrate inland navigation within the transport chain by means of intermodal nodes;
- > facilitate customs procedures according to the proposals of the Danube Commission;
- > harmonise the regulatory systems on the Danube and the Rhine.

To find out more: www.argedonau.at



The Port of Vienna (Austria).

FRANCE

Expansion of Port Est on Réunion



Total cost: EUR 72 740 000
EU contribution: EUR 29 096 000

'Lying in the Indian Ocean, Réunion is a most remote region. Most of its foreign trade is by sea, which alone accounts for 99 % of trade (3.5 million tonnes in 2003). As the island's only commercial port, Port Est handles more than 90 % of traffic. The island's strong demographic growth is resulting in a major increase in port traffic, which is expected to rise at the rate of between 50 000 and 100 000 tonnes a year until 2015. The port infrastructure must keep pace with this growth and also be able to cater for increasing vessel size. Expansion works involve expanding the swinging circle, widening the entry channel and laying out a new quay. These investments will allow Port Est to receive vessels of 80 000 tonnes and provide a better service by reducing waiting times. In the interests of sustainable development, the extracted materials will be stored and reused, in particular for the maintenance of port infrastructure.'

Serge Joseph, *Director of the Europe cell, Réunion Island*
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GREECE

Harilaos Trikoupi bridge



Total cost: EUR 770 000 000
EU contribution (ERDF): EUR 308 000 000
EIB loan: EUR 385 000 000

'Linking Rion and Antirion on the western straits of the Gulf of Corinth, the Harilaos Trikoupi bridge is a motorway viaduct 2.88 km long that provides a fixed link between the Peloponnese and continental Greece. Opened in August 2004, on the eve of the Athens Olympics, the bridge means that motorists no longer need to make a detour of around 40 minutes when crossing the strait. A total of 4.5 million vehicles crossed the bridge during the first year of operation and it is set to play a major role in local and regional development, realising the vision of Harilaos Trikoupi, the 19th-century prime minister of Greece who was the first to dream of such a bridge and after whom it is named.'

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UNITED KINGDOM

Rural transport on demand



Total cost: EUR 408 800
EU contribution: EUR 201 743

'Implemented in the County of Angus, in Scotland, the 'DARTS' (demand responsive Angus rural transport scheme) seeks to maximise the use of local public transport by providing integrated, customer-friendly, flexible and sustainable services. The scheme covers an area of 1 270 km² (58 % of the Angus area) and serves a population of 9 742 inhabitants (8.9 % of the population). It operates on the basis of a central booking office equipped with the latest communication technologies. The challenge is to implement 'bottom up' transport solutions that are adapted to the specific needs and conditions of rural transport. The project will also permit evaluation, at the technical and organisational level, of the transferability of demand-responsive transport solutions to other situations.'

Brian Masson, *project manager, Angus Transport Forum*
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FINLAND

The 'shopping bag'



Total cost: EUR 52 647
EU contribution: EUR 31 102

'In 1999, the need to boost the efficiency of home care for the elderly led to the start of the *Kauppakassi* (shopping bag) project as part of the Urban I community initiative in the eastern suburbs of Helsinki. The social services department and local partners, the 'Helykoti' association for services for the elderly, and two shopkeepers worked closely together for two years in developing an innovative shopping model. Under this system, the two shopkeepers prepare the orders in the morning before opening the shops, the Helykoti staff then arriving to pick up the produce ordered for home delivery using an electrically powered vehicle. An external evaluation confirmed that all the parties have benefited from the system. The 'shopping bag' reduces home care costs and makes life easier for the ageing female staff. At the same time, the shopkeepers receive a significant new clientele, the customers are pleased, transportation distances are reduced to a minimum and the silent, non-polluting mode of transport used is ideal for residential areas. The service has since been extended to other areas.'

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Interreg IIIB North-West Europe

'Integrating the high-speed network as a contribution to European planning policy'

Gösta Weber, coordinator of the Interreg IIIB 'HST4i' project, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)



The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is coordinating two transnational cooperation projects in the field of integrated transport and high-speed trains (HSTs). Thirty-two partners from five countries — United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany — are involved in this project, which is co-financed by the ERDF.

The 'HST4i' (high-speed train integration) project focuses on the implementation of best practice investment associated with the high speed rail network. With 18 partners from the five aforementioned countries and a budget of EUR 29 million, including 14 million from the ERDF, it is the largest Interreg IIIB North-West Europe project approved by the European Commission.

Closely linked to the HST4i, the 'HSTconnect' project aims to improve connections between the secondary regional transport network and the primary trans-European high-speed train (HST) network. The project has 14 international strategic and investment partners and a budget of EUR 19 million, including 8 million from the European Union.

Two examples of HST investment

The two HST projects are funding very diverse investments, ranging from multi-billion euro developments connected to the 2012 Olympic Games to improvements to cross-border links at the Lille Europe HST station.

In Stratford (London), the Borough of Newham is building a pedestrian link between the new international station, the local station and the old Stratford city centre. This will connect the new Stratford development area with the existing urban fabric, integrating the surrounding residential communities. Both railway stations will serve the 2012 Olympic Park.

In Belgium, the Intercommunale Leiedal is modernising the regional network serving communities along the River Leie, linking them to Lille Europe. Particular

attention is being paid to the environmental quality of transport hubs, train and bus stations.

These two projects are making it possible to investigate and validate investments aimed at optimising the contribution of HST stations to internal cohesion as well as to the external strength and competitiveness of north-western Europe. They also promote a sound and complementary transport infrastructure for north-western Europe to support polycentric spatial development. The new stations must serve as major drivers for the regeneration of neglected urban areas while preserving a high quality environment interwoven with the surrounding urban fabric. A key objective is to improve station design and functionality for travellers as well as to fully integrate stations into the local community. The station and immediate station vicinity are seen as spatial, social and economic crossroads for urban areas.

Transnational activities as a key element in HST projects

To expand the knowledge base of the partners and inform the wider community, both the HST4i and HSTconnect projects include a varied programme of international activities in the form of studies, workshops and best practice visits, one of which — the HST design workshop — was held in Utrecht on 10 November on the subject of HST station design, access planning and layout of the immediate vicinity. The workshop conclusions have been published in the form of an HST design guide.

Another joint activity of the two projects is production of an HST impact study that aims to demonstrate the added value of the HST4i and HSTconnect projects in terms of their socioeconomic and environmental impacts.

A strategic approach

The HST projects are creating the right conditions to encourage economic growth and employment in and around stations. They are contributing to the search for sustainability by addressing questions of mobility and competition at local and regional levels. In strategic terms, the HST projects reveal the leverage effect the ERDF can have for transport projects of local or regional importance. They lend an added value to such investments by promoting better design, faster implementation, additional infrastructure and increased knowledge. Finally, they place these regional transport investments in a wider European context and demonstrate that both regional and local partners can be successfully involved in the implementation of European policy.

To find out more: <http://www.hst4i.net>



Transport for southern Portugal as it enters a new stage in socioeconomic development

The Algarve at the crossroads

Despite the major imbalance that remains between the interior and the coast, the Algarve, which was Portugal's poorest region 50 years ago, is now its third-wealthiest in terms of per capita GDP. As such, it will cease to qualify as an Objective 1 region after 2006. The European Union has contributed greatly to this progress, in particular through massive funding of improvements to the transport infrastructure, whether road, rail, air or maritime. Yet despite this very important and very visible effort on the infrastructure front, some concerns remain. The Algarve is still an outlying region that is very dependent on tourism and will therefore have to be careful to make the right choices if it is to sustain its growth and remain competitive.



Motorway interchange: the Algarve now benefits from a rapid link to Lisbon and Spain.

It is a dark night and just a few street lamps cast a pale light on the white facades of the houses of Sanlúcar de Guadiana, on the opposite bank, on the Spanish side. 'Can you see these motorboats? They are all moored for the night now. At this time, it is only the duty doctor who can still manage to cross the river,' remarks Carlos Cruz, public relations manager for the Region of Algarve. We are on the Portuguese bank of the Guadiana, in Alcoutim (pop. 700), directly across from Sanlúcar, in Spain. The river is just 200 metres wide at this point, but no bridge has ever connected these two villages. The nearest fixed link for vehicle crossings to Spain is 50 km to the north, just outside Paymogo, or 50 km to the south, at the Guadiana international bridge, completed in 1992. Despite the fall of the two dictators on the Iberian peninsula and the entry of both countries to the European Union, the Guadiana at Alcoutim remains a

difficult border to cross. 'It is probably the inhabited place in Europe where the distance between two bridges — 100 km — is the greatest! Interreg is looking at the possibility of building a bridge between Alcoutim and Sanlúcar, but no timetable has yet been set,' regrets Carlos Brito, Alcoutim's long-standing local MP and councillor who also runs the local monthly *Jornal do Baixo Guadiana*. 'As a way of drawing attention to the need for the two banks to have a land link, our cross-border association Alcoutim-Sanlúcar organised a fête during which we formed our own 'bridge' by placing end to end all the boats from the two villages.'

The proposed bridge — with an estimated construction cost of EUR 15 million — would not be a luxury, especially in the light of a recent increase in contacts between the inhabitants of these two villages, with the



A cruise ship stops off at Alcoutim.

Portuguese buying houses on the Spanish side and more and more Spaniards using the services available across the river in Portugal. In macroeconomic terms, the small agglomeration would also like to become an outlet for Andevalo, a nearby Spanish region that is even more isolated and for which the Government of Andalusia is currently implementing a major development plan. *'We would also start trading again, in livestock in particular. There was a lively livestock trade between Spain and Portugal at this site in the 1930s,'* explains Carlos Brito.

Road and river

Despite the absence of a bridge, Alcoutim has experienced a genuine economic revolution over the past year, a kind of small-scale model of what the Algarve as a whole has experienced over the last 30 years.

Protected by virtue of its isolation, the wild and natural environment of the Guadiana is now a major asset. Since the spring of 2005, two cruise companies, one Portuguese and the other Belgo-French, call in at Alcoutim. Departing from Portimão in the former case and from Seville in the latter, they bring several hundred visitors a week to the area and are proving a real boon for local commerce.

Also, and most importantly of all, there is the road. Completed in July 2005, the works to convert the existing IC ('itinerary complementary') 27 into a national highway of excellent quality make Alcoutim a safe 25-minute drive from Vila Real de Santo Antonio, 'capital' of the lower Guadiana on the coast. The journey time is one quarter of what it had previously been. Alcoutim now finds itself located on the major north-south road link that runs parallel to the Guadiana and that leads to Beja, in Alentejo. The modernisation of the IC27 brings the promise of regeneration for the whole of the Algarve interior, the Serra de Caldeirão.

'It is very important to encourage accessibility, but an area must also possess an internal economic dynamic. Fortunately that is the case here,' stresses Carlos Brito. With the road and the river cruises, Alcoutim will be able to expand and diversify its tourist activities, opting for high-class tourism, such as hunting. Attention will also focus on making the most of local produce: the small cheese producers, for example, will be able to expand their mar-

kets, and the municipality of Alcoutim, which now has a realistic prospect of attracting investors, is preparing to create an enterprise zone. Finally, the population is already beginning to stabilise as a result of the road, the rural exodus being offset by the recent arrival of newcomers from the towns of Villa Real or even Faro.

The modernisation of the IC27 is an excellent example of the synergies that operate between the three Algarve transport programmes: the 'Accessibility and transport' national operational programme (EUR 3.312 billion, with EUR 280 million for the Algarve), the PROAlgarve regional programme (EUR 108 million for transport) and Interreg IIIA Spain-Portugal for cross-border projects. In the case of the IC27, for example, the Monte Francisco-Odeleite section (EUR 17.5 million) received funding from the 'Accessibility and transport' operational programme while the Odeleite-Alcoutim section (EUR 14.4 million) is an Interreg IIIA project for which the ERDF meets around 50 % of the costs.

More generally, over the past 10 to 15 years, European aid — the ERDF and Cohesion Fund in particular — has enabled a considerable improvement in the major regional and inter-regional road systems, the IC27 being the second north-south route linking the Algarve with the rest of Portugal. Roughly speaking, modernisation of the regional road network is centred on two axes, the one perpendicular to the other: the lengthening to the Algarve of the A2 motorway, which runs north-south across the country, and the construction, in an east-west direction along the very urbanised coastal strip, of the 'Via do Infante', a four-lane highway that now links Lagos with the Spanish border.

Rail links

The railways have not been neglected either. Co-financed by the Cohesion Fund (over EUR 320 million out of a total of some EUR 400 million), the 'Modernisation of the Algarve link' is part of trans-Europe transport network (TEN-T) priority project No 8, the 'Portugal-Spain-central Europe multimodal axis', completed in 2004. The works were carried out in four phases corresponding to four sections totalling 339 km and also including station renovation. Renovation of the track foundation, route correction at certain points, the erection or modification of bridges (including



Faro station, terminus of a modernised line.



Covered market in Olhão: the upgrading of fishing ports includes the restoration of old buildings where new activities are starting up.

the famous 25 April bridge in Lisbon), the removal of level crossings, line electrification and the modernisation of signalling and telecommunication systems now permit a journey time between Faro and Lisbon of just three hours rather than the previous four and a half hours. Jorge Rodriguez, regional signalling manager with the REFER, the Portuguese railways, explains the benefits of this in-depth modernisation: *In addition to the time savings, there is also greater safety, reliability and punctuality. Our variance from the timetable is now three minutes compared with the 15 or 20 minutes previously. Comfort has also increased greatly as the new quieter carriages have come into service, not to mention the ecological benefits of electrification.* The result is a 30 % increase in passenger traffic, 'but also a new, more dynamic image for the railways,' adds Jorge. *You see more and more people working on the train with their laptop computers.'*

The second tourist revolution

Campos Correia, President of the Algarve Regional Development Coordination Committee (RDCC), sums up the regional strategy: *'Our objective is to make the Algarve one of Portugal's and Europe's most competitive regions within the next 10 to 15 years. Improved transport systems are very much a part of our territorial action plan that has a number of aims. Firstly, to link the Algarve to the 'backbone of Portugal', which is effectively achieved with completion of the A2 motorway (to Setúbal, Lisbon, Porto) and modernisation of the Lisbon–Faro rail link. Then we must effectively link our region to Spain, which we are doing thanks to the 'Via do Infante', and ultimately provide a rail link between the Algarve and Andalusia. Finally, we must also develop local transport, such as surface metros within the regional conurbations of Lagos–Portimão–Lagoa and Loulé–Faro–Olhão, each of which has a population of between 100 000 and 200 000.'*

Yet despite this very important and very visible effort in terms of infrastructure — and the undoubted pride in the progress made — concerns remain. *'We are at the crossroads and we must be sure to make the right choices,'* warns Antonio Mendes, director of Faro airport.

Built in 1965 and benefiting from European aid on several occasions to permit modernisation and expansion, today Faro is Portugal's number two airport in terms of passenger traffic (4.7 million in 2004). As Antonio explains, *'it is essentially an 'incoming' airport, an entry point for foreign tourists and people with a second home in the region.'* The property boom in the Algarve over recent years has made these second-home owners as numerous as the tourists. The airport's clientele, in terms of airlines as well as passengers, is therefore changing. Since 1999 there has been a marked decline in charter flights and an increase in the budget airlines. Users are also tending to avoid the tour operators and to



A traditional butcher's in Monchique: the improved road network is opening up better markets for local produce.

make their own travel arrangements at the cheapest possible price. *'Apart from this change that we are seeing just about everywhere in Europe, we are having to face a much more serious difficulty: our tourism is nowhere near as competitive as it used to be. We are too expensive for the poor and not sophisticated enough for the rich,'* Antonio Mendes admits without hesitation.

The recent developments at Faro airport in fact apply to the Algarve as a whole. Everybody here agrees that tourism is and will remain for a long time to come the motor for the regional economy, but only on condition that it evolves to regain its competitiveness and establish its durability. And this despite the competition of international tourism, despite a coast that has been paved over too much for today's taste and despite the forest fires that have disfigured some areas renowned for their natural beauty, such as the Serra de Monchique.

The Algarve is in search of a 'second tourist revolution'. *'We must move up a notch, diversify our tourism with products with a high added value — as we have done with golf, which is a success — and make the tourism and leisure cluster a lever for other economic sectors based on knowledge and innovation,'* advises RDCC President Campos Correia, who cites, as an example, sailing and even top-level sports tourism, as offered by a world class development in Villa Real de Santo António.

Staying the course

As so often in Portugal, salvation could come from the sea. The 'Instituto Portuario e dos Transportes Marítimos' is the public body that manages the ports and maritime transport as well as inland navigable waterways — in the Algarve this is essentially the Arade and Guadiana rivers — for the whole of southern Portugal. Two main sectors of activity are involved: fishing and tourism. If they are to develop, the port zones must be modernised, adapted or even given a new vocation. The Institute's Managing Director, David Assoreira, explains: *'After 30 years of relative stagnation, we are noting a general deterioration of the port infrastructure, especially as we must now open up our ports to the public and allow residents, tourists, children and walkers to enjoy them. We therefore need to improve both the ports themselves and the port environment.'*

Olhão, the Algarve's leading fishing port, is undergoing major works to improve the approaches (laying out of green and lei-

sure areas, signposted walks, etc.) and adapt infrastructure (dredging, replacement of the breakwater with other more effective forms of protection, new quays, landing stages, mooring areas and various equipment for fishermen and users of the pleasure port, restoration of the old covered market, etc.) for a total amount of nearly EUR 6 million, half of it financed by the ERDF. The fishing port of Logoa is also being revitalised, in this case with the emphasis on ship repair. With the boom in sailing, this is an activity that could grow considerably over the coming years. *'The Algarve shipyards have an important comparative advantage,'* explains David Assoreira. *'They combine quality and speed, and have the advantage of a climate that allows work to continue in the open air throughout the year.'*

Benefiting from promotional campaigns in North America for a number of years now, at the Miami Fair in particular, the port of Portimão has seen a boom in the cruise market. In 2002, 17 cruise ships stopped off at the port, rising to 28 in 2003, 36 in 2004 and 54 in 2005. By way of example, on 16 August 2005 a total of 5 000 passengers disembarked in the town! Portimão has much to offer with its picturesque port set amid a magnificent landscape that is very popular with yachtsmen, plus no fewer than 16 golf courses. It also conjures up images of the major Portuguese expeditions that set sail from nearby Sagres and it is sometimes possible for visitors to spend a few days at a luxury hotel before continuing their cruise. A US cruise company in fact owns a major hotel complex in the area.

Co-financed by the European Union, the dredging of the port and building of a new quay (165 m so as to provide room for three vessels at any one time) are essential if large cruise liners are to dock. The too frequent disembarkation at sea is not always practical, and 160 passengers in wheelchairs recently had to disembark from the liner *Legend of the Seas* in this way.

The Port Institute also has high hopes for the Algarve's two principal rivers: the Guadiana of course, but also the Arade that is navigable as far as Silves. 'Salvaging the river's memory' will thus permit increased tourist interest in this former Arab capital of the Algarve. However, it is also necessary to promote nautical activities among young people and David Assoreira regrets the lack of training opportunities for maritime personnel in the region, with the exception of fishermen. *'This is indicative of an unfortunate situation: Portugal should and could further develop its maritime activities. That would be both a return to its roots and help strengthen its economic future.'*

Thus, at a time when it has all but overcome one of its major handicaps — the insufficiency and obsolescence of its transport infrastructure — the Algarve has new, more complex and more difficult challenges to face: EU enlargement, globalisation and the resulting continuous effort to boost competitiveness. Not that this is in any way daunting for the President of the Regional Development Coordination Committee. *'Growth and convergence require a long-term effort,'* stresses Campos Correia. *'One must persevere, always bear in mind one's long-term goals and engage in continuous self-assessment. Development has its highs and lows. What is important is to pursue one's path and to stick to the course you have set.'*

To find out more: www.ccdr-alg.pt



The Port of Olhão.

Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Finland

'From Warsaw to Helsinki: "Rail Baltica", an imaginative, strategic and sustainable project'

Pavel Telicka, coordinator, trans-European transport network



On 20 July 2005 I was appointed by European Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot to be one of the six trans-European transport network (TEN-T) 'coordinators'. The Commission's objective in making these appointments, which have since been approved by the Council and European Parliament, was to give new political impetus to a number of priority rail projects. The job of the coordinators is to facilitate implementation of these projects, especially those with a cross-border dimension

I am personally responsible for 'Rail Baltica'. This is an imaginative, strategic and sustainable rail transport project involving the four new EU Member States on the Baltic Sea — Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — together with Finland. With its north-south axis running from Helsinki to Tallinn and on to Warsaw, Rail Baltica will link the Baltic States and Poland directly to the heart of the European Union, strengthening the single market and improving the integration of the countries through which it passes. The short 70 km border that divides Lithuania and Poland is the only land link between the Baltic States and the rest of the EU. The creation of effective and sustainable transport links across this border is therefore of great importance not only for the countries concerned but for the EU as a whole.

As a preliminary step, the Regional Policy DG is carrying out a feasibility study that should be completed by the end of 2006. This aims to determine the potential economic viability of the rail link while also taking a number of related aspects into account, most notably the project's environmental impact. Following initial discussions with the political authorities I am hopeful that an improved rail link from Tallinn to Warsaw can be economically viable, but we must await the study findings.

The Rail Baltica link will attract businesses along the corridor that is already served by the 'Via Baltica' road link. In terms of spatial development, it will complete the Interreg action in the Baltic Sea area. It will also be able to link Poland and the Baltic States with the 'Nordic triangle' currently being discussed by the Scandinavian countries, as well as linking Russia and the heavily populated St. Petersburg region.

The current traffic flow in the area remains largely east-west due to the large quantities of Russian products, principally raw materials, which are bound for the EU by way of the Baltic ports. The region's strategic importance could increase greatly, however, if China — as it is currently contemplating — chooses to save time by dispatching its products by rail across Siberia to the Baltic ports rather than by boat through the Suez Ca-

nal. The Rail Baltica link could then represent a north-south link for this traffic.

The project will also provide a sustainable alternative to road transport for freight and ultimately passengers travelling in this direction. A number of Baltic State governments already view the Rail Baltica link as a tool for development and already there seems to be competition developing between the Baltic cities as to which route the line should take. I see this as a healthy sign.

Yet for the project to be a success considerable political unity is needed amongst the five participating countries as to the potential it provides. Genuine determination is needed to get this project up and running. I see it as one of my key tasks to facilitate this unity of purpose and vision. I will therefore remain actively engaged with all the stakeholders. This includes potential customers and users, the social partners, the regional and local authorities, rail system manufacturers and the rail operators themselves.

As to finance, the costs of Rail Baltica — or rather 'TEN-T priority project 27', to give the full official title — can be borne by the Cohesion Fund for up to 80 % of the total in certain circumstances. While it ultimately depends on the amount of the 2007-13 financial perspectives ⁽¹⁾, some influential political figures, in particular many MEPs, are in favour of full financing of priority transport projects.

I have travelled the Helsinki to Warsaw route myself, sometimes with journalists, to see with my own eyes the present state of infrastructure and to measure the delays and bottlenecks. I intend to be very active in helping to ensure that this major European regional axis is in place as quickly as possible.



Helsinki station (Finland).

⁽¹⁾ The 2007-13 financial perspectives were not yet known at the time this article was written (November 2005).

Spain

'Expanding the Port of Barcelona involved diverting the Llobregat and respecting the environment'

Josep Oriol, General Manager, Port of Barcelona

Started in 2000 and completed in 2004, diverting the path of the River Llobregat was a key moment in Barcelona's history of transport. Some ambitious projects for the 'port and free zone' put forward in the early decades of the 20th century, which envisaged building major port infrastructure south of Mount Montjuïc, already saw the River Llobregat as the physical limit of the future port. The Spanish Civil War and period of international isolation that followed subsequently slowed Spanish economic growth considerably and that of the Port of Barcelona along with it. The 1959 'stabilisation plan' marked the resurgence of the Spanish economy and its reopening to the outside world. Barcelona went on to regain its role as an inter-oceanic port and the need to expand was once again felt.

Diverting the River Llobregat was a precondition for port expansion. It was first envisaged in the 1960s and certain projects at the time — such as the one drawn up by the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation — proposed works that would have had a very significant ecological impact, with a rerouting of the river to flow into the sea nine kilometres south of the present outlet.

It was in 1994 that the authorities first came up with what has since become known as the 'Delta plan'. Under this plan, the canalisation and rerouting by two kilometres of the Llobregat is the central feature of a range of works that not only expands the port but also develops the airport, provides new road and rail links, a water purification station and a vast protected natural area.

After rerouting the river, work on expanding the Port of Barcelona was finally able to start in December 2001. With a budget of EUR 1 billion, including EUR 277 million from the Cohesion Fund, the expansion involves increasing the port surface area by 1 265 hectares (2.3 times its present size) and the construction of 30 km of quays.

The current works are the basis on which the port will be able to develop, both quantitatively (new quays, new cranes, new access routes) and qualitatively (new sea routes, more European links, im-

proved customer service). The number of containers is expected to increase from two to six million, making an annual volume of 90 million tonnes.

This vast project also involves providing the improved access that the larger port will require. The space freed by the former riverbed provides an excellent corridor for future land links. A four-lane motorway, reserved solely for heavy goods vehicles, will be built along this route and link up directly to the Spanish and European motorway network. Also, four new railway lines will leave from the new cargo stations planned for the new quays.

Maximum attention is being paid to the environment in extending the Port of Barcelona, with a set of measures designed to reduce the possible negative impact of the works. In addition to strictly respecting the port regulations and environmental legislation, the port development includes a number of provisions designed to improve the state of the Llobregat delta as a whole. For example, a 10-hectare area of wetlands has been preserved at the site of the former riverbed in order to protect the fauna that lives there. Another operation currently under way — the import of millions of tonnes of sand to lay out a 2 km long beach south of the new river mouth — is a further example of the desire of the port authorities to create sustainable infrastructure that respects the environment.



The new quays can take very large ocean liners.

BULGARIA

Renovation of Sofia airport



Total cost: EUR 148 756 000
EU contribution: EUR 50 000 000

'Sofia airport is the principal entry point for businessmen and tourists into Bulgaria. Yet its present facilities provide a poor level of service for passengers and operators alike. This ISPA project involves the construction of a new passenger terminal and related infrastructure: access roads, taxiways, parking areas, etc. It forms part of a wider project that includes the extension and realignment of the runway to cater for larger aircraft and to reduce noise disturbance for the residents of Sofia.'

Nelly Yordanova, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Bulgaria
nyordanova@mtc.government.bg

SLOVAKIA

Modernisation of the Bratislava Rača–Trnava railway line



Total cost: EUR 51 422 000
EU contribution: EUR 38 566 500

'The Bratislava Rača–Trnava line is a part of the fifth European corridor that runs through Slovakia from Bratislava to Čierna nad Tisou on the Ukrainian border, by way of Žilina and Košice. In Žilina, it crosses the sixth corridor that runs to Warsaw and then on to Gdansk on the Baltic. The main objective of this line modernisation is to ensure good access to the trans-European transport network and ensure high quality rail links between the countries in question. The works, carried out between March 2002 and December 2005, were financed by ISPA and included in particular the construction of a pre-stressed concrete prelocation 750 metres in length, the removal of level crossings and renovation of all stations between Bratislava Rača and Trnava. The safer and quieter line will allow trains to travel at speeds of up to 160 km/h.'

Miroslav Matúšek, Railways of the Slovakian Republic (ŽSR)
Matusek.Miroslav@zsr.sk

HUNGARY

Extending the Budapest ring road



Total cost: EUR 334 893 000
EU contribution: EUR 284 659 050

'The Cohesion Fund is co-financing the construction of a motorway around the Hungarian capital. Completion of the 26.5 km eastern section will link up the M1, M3, M5 and M7 motorways as well as a number of national roads running into Budapest. By relieving congestion in the capital, the project will mark the end of a daily nightmare for motorists. In addition to providing a smoother flow of transit traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, the new ring road will reduce pollution in the city and encourage new businesses to move into the area. The infrastructure respects the strictest environmental and safety standards. The works are due for completion in November 2007.'

Tompos Attila, EU coordinator, National Motorway Co.
tompos.attila@nart.hu

SPAIN

Expansion of the port of Gijon



Total cost: EUR 563 900 000
EU contribution (Cohesion Fund): EUR 247 500 000
EIB loan: EUR 250 000 000

'The EU is making a major contribution to modernising Spanish port infrastructure. A partner of the Structural Funds, the European Investment Bank (EIB) complements loan financing with technical assistance, especially for needs evaluation. One recent example is the very promising investment made in Gijon. Financed by the Cohesion Fund coupled with an EIB loan, the expansion of the main port in Asturias aims to increase the handling and storage capacities for sea freight passing through Gijon. The project mainly involves strengthening the breakwaters and expanding the storage and berthing areas to cater for larger ships.'

Andrew Allen, European Investment Bank
ALLEN@eib.org

Third 'Competitive regions: shaping best practice' conference

Magdeburg, the capital of best practice



Magdeburg, the capital of Saxony-Anhalt, one of the new German *Länder*, hosted the third 'Competitive regions: shaping best practice' conference, attended by the managing authorities of Objective 1 and 2 programmes in eight Member States (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom), as well as representatives of other countries and of the Commission, namely Danuta Hübner. The debates highlighted the key role of the Structural Funds in launching and implementing innovative projects of a nature to bring growth and jobs.

Fifteen years after the reunification of Germany, Magdeburg (pop. 227 000), which this year celebrates its 1 200th anniversary, is a city undergoing radical change. It forms one of the points of the 'industrial triangle' in central Germany's Saxony-Anhalt, a region where innovation is a tradition. As such, it was the ideal location in which to welcome some 150 participants who took up the invitation from the Saxony-Anhalt Ministry of Finance, the managing authority for the region's Objective 1 programme, and the European Commission, which jointly organised the event.

Building on the success of the two previous initiatives of this kind, in Sheffield (United Kingdom) in 2003 and in Rovaniemi (Lapland, Finland) in 2004, the aim was once again to promote the exchange of experiences and best practice among managing authorities and implementing bodies responsible for Objective 1 and 2 Structural Fund programmes, in the context of the revised Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs.

Two plenary sessions and three workshops provided the opportunity to learn the lessons from 19 projects selected in the eight aforementioned Member States, and relating to three major themes: 'Innovation', 'Research and development' and 'Information society'.

Partnership, the key to success

Of varying size and nature, these projects each have their own story to tell, a starting point and development. Each in its own way provides a response to today's challenges: globalisation and the loss of

competitive advantages, the need for innovative developments and new approaches to R & D, access to knowledge and sustainable development. Each is an expression of the efforts of local actors to set up a public-private partnership to promote an idea and a vision, contributing goodwill, energy and patience — in short 'investing in hearts and minds' with the desire to succeed even when the risk appears high.

The Structural Funds, a springboard for innovation

The debates highlighted the special role the Structural Funds can play in this process by making up for any financial deficiencies and promoting a multidisciplinary approach. This kind of seminar is a valuable opportunity for delegates from the new Member States in particular to familiarise themselves, on the basis of examples of best practice, with launching and managing projects co-financed by the Structural Funds. For all those present it was an opportunity to establish contacts and to network.

In parallel with the debates and workshops, four field trips gave participants the chance to visit a series of projects co-financed by the Structural Funds in Saxony-Anhalt. All participants appreciated the quality of this well organised event, which ended with a voyage of discovery through the region's landscape and history.

The following website contains summaries of the 18 seminar workshops and about 30 other projects: <http://www.best-practice-magdeburg.de/projects.html>

REGIO and networks

In search of territorial potential

The aim of ESPON (European Spatial Policy Observation Network), funded by the Interreg initiative, is to present the results of the latest studies on the structures, dynamics and impact of European spatial planning policy. Its 2005 report aims to contribute to the revised Lisbon strategy, improve regional competitiveness and support the territorial cohesion and cooperation objective by showing the diversity of means available for exploring and drawing on Europe's territorial potential.

<http://www.espon.lu/online/documentation/programme/publications/>

Online portrait of the regions

Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, has launched a new website — 'Portrait of the regions' — that presents a range of comparable information on Europe's diverse regions. Visitors can navigate through the site by using the clickable maps or entering the name of a region. This site builds on the series of publications of the same name, financed by the Regional Policy DG and published between 1993 and 2001.

http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/pls/portal/url/page/SHARED/PER_GENSTA

Eurostat has also published a new edition of the statistical yearbook of the EU regions, covering the 254 regions of the 25 Member States plus the 14 regions of Bulgaria and Romania.

http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-AF-05-001

OECD statistics

Available in English and French, *The OECD Factbook 2005* is the first edition of a new statistical annual from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). More than 100 indicators cover a wide range of fields: economics, agriculture, education, energy, environment, foreign aid, health and quality of life, industry, information and communications, population, labour force, trade and investment, taxation, public expenditure, research and development. Data is provided for all OECD member countries (with the total for the complete zone) and, for many fields, also for selected non-member countries. The links ('Statlinks') provided in the graphs and tables enable the reader to transfer the data directly to other applications.

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org>

Eurocities: a tour of employment initiatives launched by Europe's cities

The Eurocities network has published the results of its study on local employment initiatives covering the 2000–04 period. Based on data collected in 17 European cities, Eurocities presents innovative measures aimed at encouraging the integration of unemployed persons in the labour market. The results highlight the crucial role played by the cities in increasing the efficiency of centralised policy and in developing new ways of combating unemployment. In particular, the cities are developing a coordinated approach to problems of employment and social difficulties (poverty and exclusion). They also help create new services such as neighbourhood help for elderly people.

<http://www.eurocities.org/>

REGIO agenda

Dates	Event	Place
7 and 8 March 2006	eurOreg — economic forum of European regions http://www.euroreg.fr	Paris (F)
2–5 May 2006	Urban Futures 2.0 — conference on urban partnership and urban governance http://www2.stockholm.se/english/frameset/main/urban_futures2.0.pdf	Stockholm (S)
18 and 19 May 2006	eEurope4all — cutting-edge technology http://www.e-europe4all.net/index.htm	Newry (UK)
1 and 2 June 2006	Island identities in the face of tourism identites-insulaires@iut-laroche.univ-nantes.fr	La Roche-sur-Yon (F)
6–8 June 2006	World Investment Conference — making Europe more attractive and competitive http://www.world-investment-conference.com/default.asp	La Baule (F)
22 June 2006	Evaluation of the Structural Funds	Warsaw (PL)

Latest publications

Community strategic guidelines 2007–13



Available in the 20 official languages of the EU.

Regions matter



Structural Funds actions in the 25 Member States and Bulgaria and Romania.

Multilingual CD-ROM.

Third progress report on cohesion



Available in 21 languages.

<http://www.uitp.com/home/index.cfm>

One of the oldest international associations — founded back in 1885 — The International Association of Public Transport (UITP), with 2 700 members in over 80 countries, is the global reference for all public transport actors: operators, authorities, industrialists, etc. Its activities cover all modes of public transport as well as related safety and environmental issues. The UITP is also an important initiator in its field, in particular through the UITP European Union Committee which, in July 2005, published the position paper 'Public transport, the Lisbon strategy and sustainable development'. The multilingual website (EN and sections in FR, DE and ES) presents many other publications, including case studies.



http://www.aivp.org/ville_26.html

Representing more than 100 port cities on five continents, the International Association of Port Cities (IACP) is a network of decision-makers and experts founded in 1988 that provides the only international structure for exchanges on issues of urban and port development. It focuses in particular on helping set up city/port projects, including the search for partners and funds. Its website (in EN, FR and ES) gives access to a wealth of information, project factsheets and some 200 Internet links.



<http://www.eu-tapestry.org/>

Tapestry (Travel awareness publicity and education supporting a sustainable transport strategy in Europe) was set up to evaluate the effectiveness of campaigns for sustainable transport, in three fields: alternatives to road (intermodality); public transport; safety, health and the environment. The project results, which can be consulted on this site, include 16 case studies culminating in a set of 'best practices' and recommendations for those involved in transport policy at European level.



www.womenalpnet.org

The 'Women alp net' is a network set up by Interreg IIIB (transnational cooperation) on the assumption that women have a role to play in creating a more balanced and sustainable alpine space. The final objective is to offer women quality services that encourage them to become involved in local economic development. A series of tools (studies, network of services, pilot actions, etc.) are available in the languages of the countries concerned: Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia.



2007–13: preparing the new generation of programmes with the Inforegio site

The Member States and the regions are preparing the upcoming 2007–13 programming period. The Inforegio website presents extensive information and important documents of interest to all the actors involved in this endeavour. The aim is to facilitate exchanges between these stakeholders and to inform the general public about progress. Do not hesitate to address your questions and contributions to the Regional Policy DG.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/forum_en.htm

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

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