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EN

European Economic and Social Committee

TEN

Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society

Transport

Activities in the field of TRANSPORT

Did you know this?

- The European Economic and Social Committee is a consultative body set up by the Rome Treaties in 1957 and represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society at European level. It is made up of 344 members, split into three groups: the “Employers” group, the “Employees” group and the “Various Interests” group.
- The EESC has six specialist sections whose work is to draw up Committee opinions, advising the three major institutions – the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament.
- The TEN section is responsible for drawing up Committee opinions in the fields of transport, energy, the information society, infrastructure and services of general interest. Between October 2008 and September 2010, the section’s president is Mr János Tóth (Group III, “Various Interests”, Hungary).
- The Committee opinions play an essential role in policy- and decision-making at European Union level: they reflect wide-ranging expertise and the bringing together of the sometimes divergent interests of organised civil society.
- Each year, the TEN section draws up approximately 30 opinions, a quarter of which are own-initiative opinions or exploratory opinions.

I. Transport in the EU at a crossroads

As a key element of a modern society, transport is vital to the smooth operation of the European economy. Employing 10 million people, this sector accounts for approximately EUR 1100 billion per year, over 10% of the EU’s GDP. With the “White Paper on European transport policy for 2010” and its mid-term review as an important reference, the TEN section recognises in its transport-related work that the transport system needs to be optimised to meet the demands of EU competitiveness, enlargement, and sustainable development. The TEN section has repeatedly emphasised that European transport policy must tie in with the three pillars of the EU’s sustainable development strategy, particularly in the field of infrastructure. Investments must make a positive contribution to economic growth, social welfare and the quality of the environment.

II. Road transport

Road-based transport of goods and passengers is an essential element of the European single market. However, the too frequent use of this means of transporting goods and passengers is not without its drawbacks. The TEN section highlights these points in its important



opinion on the “Mid-term review of the transport White Paper”. As the Committee stated in its opinion, “the effects

of road transport, caused by traffic congestion and pollution, mainly from private vehicles, must be subject to specific measures that tackle these problems so as to allow for growth while reducing the harmful effects of road transport (i.e. investments in new infrastructure, technology, etc.)” (Opinion on the “Mid-term review/2001 Transport White Paper”, adopted in March 2007, rapporteur: Mr Barbadillo López, Group I, Spain).

In 2008 and 2009, the EESC adopted opinions on a broad range of measures related to road transport policy at European level, including opinions on urban mobility, the working time of self-employed drivers in road-transport, the social implications of transport and energy developments, trans-european networks, cross-border enforcement in the field of road safety, the access to the international road haulage market, and the 2nd Marco Polo programme.

The Section is currently addressing several key topics including the Greening of Transport Package, the deployment of intelligent transport systems (ITS), the rights of passengers in

bus and coach transport, and it has recently adopted an exploratory opinion on “Road transport in 2020: the organized civil society’s expectations” requested by the Czech Presidency of the EU.

III. Transport by sea and inland waterways

Sea shipping and inland waterway transport play a pivotal role in the reduction of congestion on certain road infrastructures. The TEN section has drafted several opinions on this subject. These emphasise the need to build a real motorway of the sea, within the framework of the trans-European network. This “motorway” would require better connections between ports, rail, and inland waterway networks, as well as improvements in the quality of port services. The section is currently working on the environmental aspects of both sectors, bearing in mind the need to safeguard their competitiveness (Exploratory opinion on the “Greening of Maritime and Inland Waterway Transport” requested by the Commission.)

IV. Rail transport

The TEN section opinions on the first, second and third railway packages back revitalising the rail industry in Europe, and point out the key conditions that need to be in place to achieve this:

- expanding infrastructure and removing bottlenecks;
 - ensuring interoperability between railway systems;
 - creating fair competition between transport modes;
 - guaranteeing social provisions and rail safety.
- It is also vital to promote better cooperation between railway companies and to improve service quality for passengers in international rail-passenger transport, especially at regional level.

V. Airborne transport

In its opinion on “Civil aviation security”, the Committee supports the Commission’s call to step up security measures and procedural harmonisation to end the distortions of competition inherent in having 27 national systems in place. The EESC emphasises that safety of crew, passengers and residents of areas affected by air corridors must override political considerations when it comes to banning airlines from using European air space (Own-initiative opinion on “Air safety”, adopted in July 2006, rapporteur: Mr McDonogh, Group I, Ireland).



With regard to airport design, the Committee states that adequate seating and waiting areas should be provided for passengers and that access to terminals should be as user friendly as possible, particularly for passengers with disabilities and special needs (Opinion on “Airport charges”, adopted in September 2007, rapporteur: Mr McDonogh, Group I, Ireland).

In February 2009, the EESC adopted an opinion of crucial relevance to the aviation sector on the *Single European Sky II (SES II)*. The EESC advocates prompt and extensive application and implementation of the SES Regulations, which will not only serve to strengthen the European common market, but also enhance European social cohesion and social mobility. However, the EESC objects to the liberalisation of certain related services, pointing out that the overarching objective of air traffic is to ensure air safety (rapporteur: Mr Krawczyk, Group I, Poland). The TEN section has also supported the Czech presidency by responding to its request to draw up an exploratory opinion on “Trans-Atlantic relations between the EU and North American countries in the air transport sector – a true regulatory convergence” in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the Air Transport Agreement between the European Union and the United States of America.