

Plenary Session I

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NETWORKS FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Extension of the major trans-European
transport axes to the neighbouring countries and
regions**



Report from the High Level Group chaired by Loyola de Palacio

November 2005

Pictures of the cover of the HLG report courtesy of:
British Rail, Egnatia Odos A.E, ESA and Port Autonome de Marseilles.



European Commission

Executive summary

A well functioning transport system connecting the European Union (EU) and the neighbouring countries is essential for sustainable economic growth and the wellbeing of all citizens in this part of the world. Better integration of national networks will foster regional cooperation and integration not only between the EU and its neighbours but also between the neighbouring countries themselves. Also, good transport connections in the EU as well as in the neighbouring countries are important for trade with Asia, sub-Saharan Africa or America. In short improving transport connections would be for the mutual benefit of both the European Union and its neighbouring partner countries.

With this development in mind, in April 2004 the EU adopted an ambitious plan¹ that focused investments on a limited number of major trans-European transport axes. In particular, the plan aimed at integrating the networks of the new EU Member states, thereby contributing to a stronger Single Market.

Following the ministerial seminar that took place in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in June 2004, the European Commission decided to establish a High Level Group (the Group) on the “*extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions*”. This was to extend the concept of European Neighbourhood Policy into the transport field and to find ways to better connect the European Union with the neighbouring countries and regions. Former Commission Vice President **Ms Loyola de Palacio** was appointed Chair of the Group, which comprised 26 neighbouring countries, the 25 EU States plus Bulgaria and Romania, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank (the Banks). The Group met on 10 occasions between October 2004 and November 2005.

Major transnational axes and projects

The Group identified the following **five major transnational axes** (see map below).

- Motorways of the Seas: linking the Baltic, Barents, Atlantic, Mediterranean, Black and the Caspian Sea areas as well as the littoral countries within the sea areas and with an extension through the Suez Canal towards the Red Sea.
- Northern axis: to connect the northern EU with Norway to the North and with Belarus and Russia and beyond to the East. A connection to the Barents region linking Norway through Sweden and Finland with Russia is also foreseen.
- Central axis: to link the centre of the EU to Ukraine and the Black Sea and through an inland waterway connection to the Caspian Sea. Connections towards Central Asia and the Caucasus are also foreseen, as well as a direct connection to the Trans-Siberian railway and a link from the Don/Volga inland waterway to the Baltic Sea.
- South Eastern axis: to link the EU through the Balkans and Turkey to the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea as well as to Egypt and the Red Sea. Access links to the Balkan countries as well as connections towards Russia, Iran and Iraq and the Persian Gulf are also foreseen.

¹ Decision 884/2004/EC on the Guidelines for trans-European transport networks

- South Western axis: to connect the south-western EU with Switzerland and Morocco and beyond, including the trans-Maghrebin link connecting Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. An extension of the trans-Maghrebin link to Egypt as well as a connection from Egypt to the South towards other African countries are also foreseen.

These axes extend and complement the major axes of the trans-European transport network by interconnecting them with the networks of the neighbouring countries. They are also those which contribute most to promoting international exchanges and traffic as well as enabling regional cooperation and integration. The Group also emphasised that open and secure borders between the EU and the neighbouring countries and between the neighbouring countries themselves are a prerequisite for trade and cooperation.

The Group put forward a number of projects (listed in annex 9.4) that were classified into two categories depending on their maturity: projects ready to start before 2010 and projects of longer term interest (beyond 2020). The total cost of these projects is estimated at **€45 billion**, of which €35 billion between today and 2020.

The Group stressed the need for **further studies and analyses**, particularly concerning the economic viability, technical specification, environmental impact and financing mechanisms, before the projects could be considered for implementation.

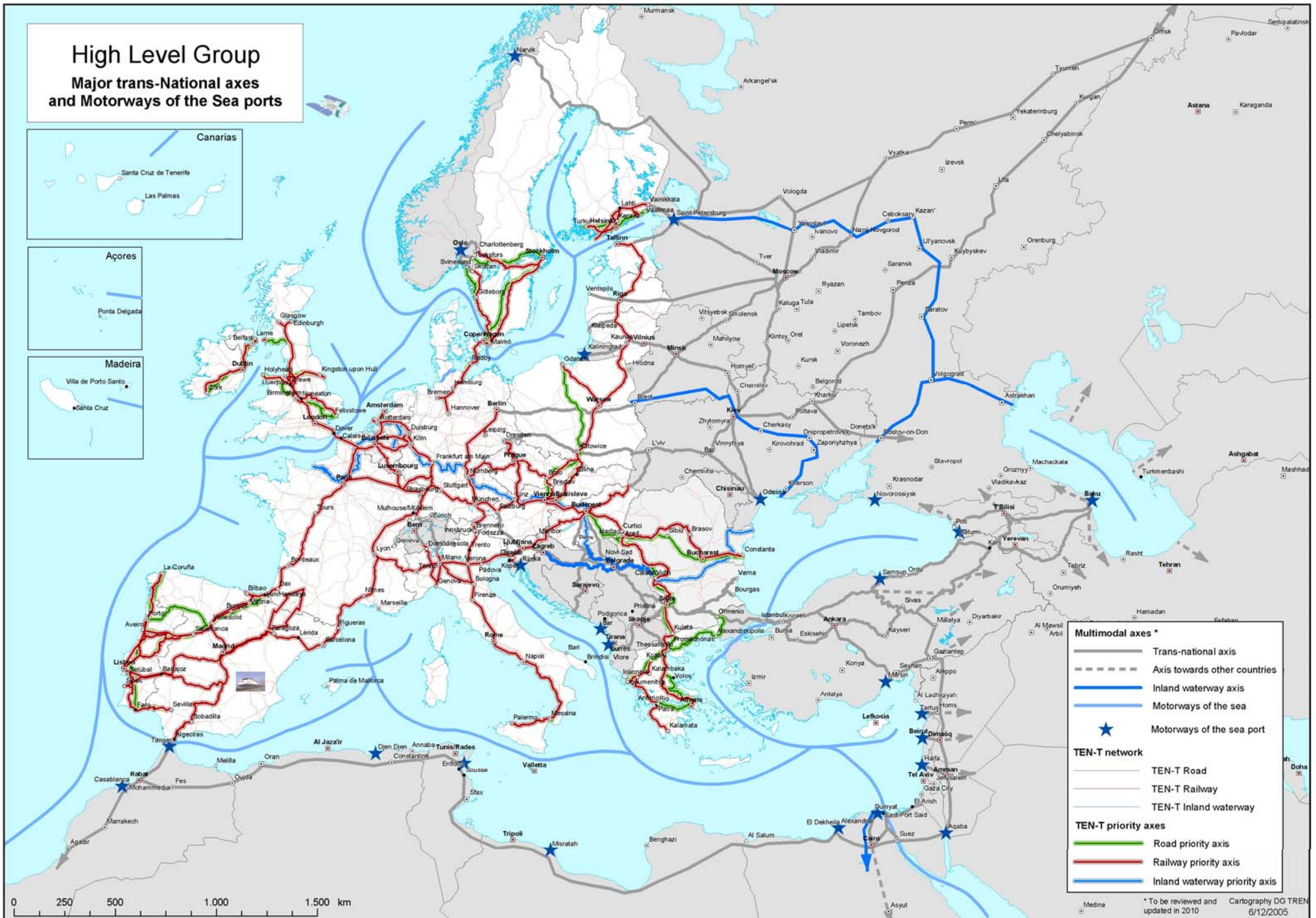
Financing and public-private partnerships

The Group emphasised the importance of **adequate budget allocations** for the transport sector and acknowledged that private capital can in some cases usefully complement public financing through public-private partnerships (PPPs). It underlined the primary role of **transparent and clear public procurement legislation** in attracting private sector financing and urged its members to prepare appropriate legislation in the light of international best practice.

The Group proposed that international organisations such as the Banks and the European Commission would organise a series of **regional workshops** to exchange best practice and to discuss project financing, fiscal space, user charging and the role that PPPs could have in accelerating the implementation of the proposed measures. These could follow the format of the seminar, jointly organised by the European Commission and Russia, that took place in Moscow on 28 October 2005 to discuss transport financing and PPPs, international experience and legislative issues.

High Level Group

Major trans-National axes and Motorways of the Sea ports



- Multimodal axes ***
- Trans-national axis
 - - - Axis towards other countries
 - Inland waterway axis
 - Motorways of the sea
 - ★ Motorways of the sea port
- TEN-T network**
- TEN-T Road
 - TEN-T Railway
 - TEN-T Inland waterway
- TEN-T priority axes**
- Road priority axis
 - Railway priority axis
 - Inland waterway priority axis

* To be reviewed and updated in 2010
Cartography DG-TREN 6/12/2005

Horizontal measures

With a view to the removal of non-physical barriers and to facilitate communication between authorities in different countries, the Group recommended the following measures to speed up **border control procedures**:

- International Conventions should be implemented in full with the aim of harmonising the form and content of the relevant trade and transport documents. These documents should be mutually recognised in the language of the country concerned and in English, or in a mutually agreed language.
- **Customs modernisation should be pursued**, using as a reference, the rules and recommendations of the international conventions and standards. These concern e.g. corresponding opening hours and shared facilities of frontier posts, medico-sanitary and veterinary inspections as well as use of automated systems and risk management techniques.
- To reduce unnecessary delays in ports, simplified custom procedures and electronic data transfer through one-stop administrative procedure should be implemented. Also the five IMO FAL documents² already in use in the EU should be adopted by the neighbouring countries with the aim of replacing all existing documents by 2008 at the latest.

Regarding **satellite radio navigation systems**, the Group welcomed the on-going bilateral and regional cooperation activities and invited the European Commission and the relevant members of the Group to launch such negotiations as soon as possible.

The Group proposed to introduce, apply and control **security measures** resulting from international agreements and standards as well as to carry out security audits in common with the neighbouring countries, when relevant.

For **maritime transport and the Motorways of the Seas** the Group made the following recommendations:

- The international rules and conventions (IMO) should be ratified and implemented in full and without delay, including e.g. the MARPOL convention³ related to single hull tankers and the convention on antifouling systems (AFS).
- The practices and procedures of the Paris, Mediterranean and Black Sea Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) should be harmonised at the highest level of performance. The Group welcomed the intention of the European Commission to approach the three MoUs in view of launching a dialogue for further cooperation.
- For the 3 MoUs to mutually recognise ships blacklisted by the other MoUs.
- To implement the concept of Motorways of the Seas, cargo flows should be concentrated to create sufficient critical mass, the quality of port infrastructure and

² Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

³ International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973

services should be improved and the frequency of shipping services operating on the Motorways of the Sea should be at least once a week.

As regards **rail transport and interoperability**, there is urgency to act in this area and the on-going efforts of the two legal systems (COTIF⁴ and OSJD⁵) to develop a unified consignment note are welcomed. Measures to render the transport laws more coherent and convergent should be undertaken as soon as possible. The Group also recommends gradual implementation of traffic management systems, ensuring interoperability with ERTMS⁶, as well as of standardised telematic applications for freight services along the major axes, when relevant.

For **inland waterways**, the Group stressed the importance of granting mutual open access for international traffic. In parallel, implementation of traffic information systems should be pursued and their compatibility ensured, including with the river information services (RIS) of the EU. Harmonisation of rules and safety standards should be pursued.

The Group stressed the need to take measures to improve **road safety** addressing driver behaviour, vehicle safety, road infrastructure (safety audits) and traffic management systems. Priority should be given to the major axes identified by the Group. The Group recognised the usefulness of the annual Verona road safety conference, launched under the Italian EU presidency in 2003.

For **air transport**, the Group considered it desirable to gradually extend the principles of the Single European Sky initiative to the neighbouring regions along with the further enlargement of the EU or on a voluntary basis.

Implementation and coordination

The Group called for **a review and update of the major axes/projects and the horizontal measures in 2010** and regularly thereafter. To prepare this update, **a mid-term review is proposed to be carried out in 2008** based on information provided by the countries concerned on the evolution of traffic, progress of implementation of the proposed measures and on bottlenecks, including environmental difficulties that may emerge.

To ensure effective and timely implementation of the proposed measures along the axes, the Group highlighted the need for **strong and effective coordination frameworks**. These frameworks should be put in place gradually, starting from a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the European Commission and the countries concerned for axes/regions where no such cooperation mechanism exists today. For axes/regions that currently operate through MoUs, a binding **Treaty** was considered to be the best option.

Finally, the Group recommended that the European Commission, the EU Member states as well as the Banks **focus their cooperation and financing** actions on the priority axes and on the horizontal measures put forward by the Group. The Group's recommendations should also be adequately reflected in the **cooperation agreements and action plans** under the European Neighbourhood Policy. In this context, the Group considered that the

⁴ Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail, in use in the EU and several other countries.

⁵ Organisation for Cooperation of Railways law, applicable i.a. in the former Soviet Union countries

⁶ European Rail Traffic Management System

twinning of an EU Member state with a neighbouring country was a very useful and effective instrument for implementing the horizontal measures, particularly in the areas of maritime and road safety as well as to simplify border crossing procedures.

*This report forms an innovative but practical and sustainable blueprint for the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions. Action is vital in the context of further EU enlargement in particular and the wide effect of globalisation in general. The report describes the challenges ahead but also points out the opportunities for the EU and all the neighbouring countries to mutually share the multiple benefits of wider cooperation in the transport field. **The Group established the coherence of transport networks in the EU and in the neighbouring countries and coordinated and synchronised management within the networks. The Group's main priorities and a time table are presented in the operational conclusions below.***

Operational conclusions

Support for a continuous process

- **A review and update** of the major axes/projects and of the horizontal measures **in 2010** and regularly thereafter;
- **A mid-term review in 2008** to prepare the update, based on information provided by the countries concerned.

Focussed and coordinated implementation of the axes

- To **focus cooperation and financing** actions on the five major axes and on the horizontal measures put forward by the Group.
- Exchange of best practice on **financing options**, including public-private partnerships, enabling legislation, user charging, etc. through regional workshops
- To put in place **strong and effective coordination frameworks**, including sustainable long-term financial support, for the implementation of the proposed actions:
 - Starting with a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** for axes/regions where no such cooperation mechanism exists at present;
 - Strengthening of existing MoUs into a binding **Treaty**.
- To launch **twinning actions** of an EU Member state and a neighbouring country by 2008 at the latest in view of the implementation of relevant horizontal measures.

Implementation of horizontal measures

- **Simplification and facilitation of border crossing procedures** including:
 - Implementation in full and without delay of the relevant **international Conventions** and agreements, especially:
 - the International Convention on the harmonisation of frontier controls for goods, particularly as regards corresponding opening hours of frontier posts, joint control of goods and documents through the provision of shared facilities, medico-sanitary and veterinary inspections;
 - the Kyoto Convention on simplification and harmonisation of customs procedures aiming at maximum use of automated systems through the use of pre-arrival information, risk management techniques (including risk assessment and selectivity of controls) and easy access to information on customs requirements, laws, rules and regulations;
 - the Convention of the international transport of goods (the TIR carnets) for road vehicles.
 - Adoption by all the countries concerned by 2008 at the latest of the five IMO FAL documents, already in use in the EU.

- Simplification of the **language regime**:
 - To mutually recognise all trade and transport related documents in the language of the country concerned and English, or in a mutually agreed language.
 - In the longer term, harmonisation of these documents.
- Implementation of “**one-stop office**” and development of electronic data interchange systems (EDI) especially for ports.
- Promotion of interoperable **satellite radio navigation systems** (Galileo and GLONASS).
- Introduction, application and control of **security measures** resulting from international agreements and standards as well as to carrying out of security audits.
- For the **maritime transport and the Motorways of the Seas**:
 - Harmonisation of the practices and procedures of the Paris, Mediterranean and Black Sea MoUs at the highest level of performance. The European Commission is invited to approach the three MoUs in view of launching a dialogue for further cooperation.
 - Ratification and implementation of the international standards and conventions (IMO) in a timely manner and in full, including e.g. the MARPOL convention related to single hull tankers, the AFS convention on antifouling systems.
 - Technical support for actions to improve the quality of port infrastructure and services and to implement regular frequency of shipping services (at least once a week) operating on the Motorway of the Sea.
- As regards **rail transport and interoperability**
 - To monitor the on-going efforts of the two legal systems (COTIF and OSJD) in view of a unified consignment note.
 - To undertake measures to render the transport laws more coherent and convergent.
 - Gradual implementation of ERTMS or an equivalent compatible system (e.g. TEDIM) along the major axes, when relevant.
 - Standardised telematic applications for freight services.
- For **inland waterways**:
 - To mutually open access for international traffic.
 - To pursue the harmonisation of rules and safety standards,
 - Implementation of traffic information systems that are mutually interoperable.

- Regarding **road transport**:
 - To design and implement measures to improve road safety that address driver behaviour, vehicle safety, road infrastructure (safety audits) and traffic management systems,
 - To gradually upgrade the road network along the major axes for vehicles of 11.5 ton axle load and of 4-metre height.
- For **air transport**, to gradually extend the principles of the Single European Sky initiative to the neighbouring regions along with the enlargement of the EU or on a voluntary basis.

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