

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(81) 333 final

~~OF THE COUNCIL~~  
Brussels, 29th June 1981

## REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL DECISION OF 20 FEBRUARY 1978

---

instituting a consultation procedure and setting up  
a committee in the field of transport infrastructure

---

COM(81) 333 final



Report on the implementation of the Council Decision  
of 20 February 1978

---

1. Article 6 of the Council Decision of 20 February 1978 instituting a consultation procedure and setting up a committee in the field of transport infrastructure\* stipulates that:

"The Commission shall forward at least every three years to the Council and to the European Parliament a report on the information it has received in accordance with this Decision and on the Committee's activities. Where appropriate, this report shall include observations aimed at informing the Member States of the Community's transport infrastructure requirements."

2. The Committee's tasks are laid down by Article 5 of the Decision: "It shall provide a forum for the consultation referred to in Article 3 on a project or projects of interest to the Community.

At the request of the Commission, it shall organize, taking into account any views in relation to its tasks expressed by other Community bodies:

- (a) exchanges of information on the notifications of the plans and programmes referred to in Article 2;
- (b) examination of any question concerning the development of a transport network of interest to the Community."

3. It is clear from these articles that information on transport infrastructures should basically be processed in the context of the Committee, whose work should make it possible to form a general picture of the Community's requirements.

For the sake of clarity, this report has been divided into three main sections, corresponding to the Committee's basic tasks, i.e. consultation, exchanges of information on plans and programmes and examination of any question concerning the development of a "transport network of interest to the Community", though these tasks often overlap to a large extent.

So far, insufficient progress has been made for the Commission to present any firm conclusions as regards the Community's requirements. Nevertheless, the final part of the report will include a number of thoughts on this subject designed to highlight the practical aspects of the work carried out to date and to show how a clearer picture of requirements should gradually emerge.

4. It should also be remembered that on a number of occasions the Commission has informed the Council and Parliament of the results of various studies conducted in conjunction with the Committee and of its position on matters relating to infrastructure (see in particular the Commission Memorandum on the role of the Community in the development of transport infrastructure\* and the report on bottlenecks and possible means of finance\*\*).

Consequently, in many places this report will simply reiterate previously expressed viewpoints.

5. The Transport Infrastructure Committee held its first meeting on 22 June 1978, mainly to sort out its work programme and procedures. Further meetings were held in October 1978, May 1979, February 1980 and March 1981.

This report describes what the Committee did between June 1978 and March 1981 with a view to implementing the Decision of 20 February 1978. In accordance with Art.5 para.3 of the Decision of 20 February 1978, the members of the Committee have been consulted.

#### CONSULTATION ON PROJECTS OF COMMUNITY INTEREST

6. One of the Committee's basic tasks is to provide a forum for the consultation referred to in Article 3. When a project of Community interest has been notified to the Commission by a Member State (art.2), this consultation is initiated either by the Commission or by a Member State.

To date only the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has invoked the consultation procedure (notification of projects of Community interest and consultation on these projects). The first consultations were held on 13 March 1981 to discuss various projects aimed at raising the major international road links through the Grand Duchy to motorway standard.

The Commission informed the Member States of the outcome of these consultations, as required by Article 3 of the Decision.

---

\* COM (79)550 final, 14 November 1979

\*\* COM (80)323 final, 20 June 1980

7. The consultations provided an opportunity to discuss a number of questions raised by the Luxembourg projects (notably the likely amount of traffic, the best possible timetable for the work involved and coordination with projects in neighbouring Member States) and to make sure that the work would contribute to the harmonious development of a transport network in line with the Community's requirements and hence raise no objections from the other Member States or from the Commission.

However, it was found that the background information relating to certain projects required further analysis. The consultations on those projects are not yet regarded as closed and will be resumed at a later stage.

The consultations also pointed to the fact that projects concerning transport networks that bear heavy long-distance traffic are often interdependent and have overlapping effects. When completed, the Luxembourg projects are likely to have a profound impact on traffic levels both on the roads which link up with the upgraded stretches in the Grand Duchy and on alternative routes. They will therefore affect the road-building programmes for these routes. Consequently, the Commission has stressed the need for further information on international traffic trends and traffic distribution for these routes and for the Committee to initiate an exchange of views on all projects with a bearing on the Grand Duchy's projects.

#### EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION ON THE NOTIFICATIONS OF PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

8. Conditions for the exchanges of information were satisfactory. Member States notified the Commission of their plans and programmes, as required by Article 2 of the Decision of 20 February 1978.

It was found that two steps were needed in order to make it easier for the Commission and the Committee to draw on the extensive documentation which the individual Member States submitted to the Commission in a wide variety of forms.

9. Firstly, the information from the Member States had to be presented in a more readily accessible form. The Secretariat of the Committee therefore converted the information into synopses and tables.

10. Secondly, the Commission attempted to pinpoint those aspects of the plans and programmes which were likely to be of most direct use to the Community.

One of the first tasks this involved was to piece together from the plans and programmes a picture of the future infrastructure of the Community's basic transport networks. This proved to be much more difficult than had appeared at first sight. There are enormous differences in the horizon, legal force and depth of detail of the individual Member States' plans and programmes. To make things worse, the economic crisis and the concomitant effects on traffic density, traffic structure and the budget appropriations available for infrastructure investment have cast a considerable shadow over the Member States' programmes. The draft maps which the Secretariat has drawn up as a basis for discussion will have to be amended before they can assume their full role.

The Commission also felt that specific aspects of the plans and programmes needed to be examined (e.g. methods involved in the decision-making process and criteria as regards infrastructure capacity).

The order of priority proposed by the Commission to the Committee for the examination of these questions took into account the requirements of the Council. In the course of its discussions on the proposal for a Regulation on the financing of transport infrastructure projects of Community interest, in November 1978, the Council called on the Commission to submit two reports, one on bottlenecks and the other on the criteria for assessing Community interest.

The Committee helped to prepare these reports as part of its general activities (examination of questions concerning a "transport network of interest to the Community"). The information gleaned from the plans and programmes provided valuable help during the preparation of the reports.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE "TRANSPORT NETWORK OF INTEREST TO THE COMMUNITY"

11. Report on bottlenecks and possible modes of finance :

This report, which the Committee helped to prepare, was forwarded by the Commission to the Council on 20 June 1980. The Council took note of it on 4 December 1980.

It gives an overall view of traffic conditions on the Community's main arteries, and indicates the amount of investment that the Member States regard as being necessary.

Although it will need to be supplemented or revised, even in its present form the report is an extremely useful basis for selecting groups of interdependent projects suitable for discussion in the context of consultations on the lines of those invoked by the Government of the Grand Duchy. The report also contains a more detailed defence of the system put forward by the Commission for the financial support of transport infrastructures, which the Council is now examining.

12. The report on the assessment of Community interest is nearing completion and was discussed by the Transport Infrastructure Committee (which helped with the drafting of the report) on 13 March 1981.

The report will take as its starting point the cost-benefit analysis methods which the Member States use in their decision making. It will attempt to pinpoint the specifically Community aspects and to show that they can be assessed and incorporated in national studies.

OBSERVATIONS AIMED AT INFORMING THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMUNITY'S TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

13. During this initial phase of Community action, the machinery set up by the Decision of 20 February 1978 for cooperation between the Member States and the Commission has been run in, and a firm foundation has been laid for the efforts to define the Community's infrastructure requirements.

Work has not yet reached a stage where any firm conclusions based on a solid economic foundation can be presented or any checks made to see whether the projects included in the Member States or programmes are fully in line with the Community's requirements. It would also be fruitless to recapitulate the general aims of a "transport network of interest to the Community", since these have been described in many previous Commission documents.

However, this would seem to be an opportune moment to draw attention to the practical aspects of the work that has been done or is currently under way and to its importance for the Member States and the Commission alike, and at the same time to show how these activities fit in with the various approaches which, in the context of the work programme that the Commission submitted to the Council in October 1980<sup>\*</sup>, will culminate in a statement of the Community's requirements by 1983

---

<sup>\*</sup>) COM(80)582 final, 21 October 1980.



Practical aspects of the work

14. All the Member States are now taking much more care than hitherto to minimize the danger of making mistakes in their infrastructure programmes. For example, they are trying to forecast trends in transport demand on the basis of scenarios covering all the most important parameters and on the basis of strategic hypotheses as regards the development of certain policies which have a bearing on transport. In view of the current degree of economic integration and the interdependence of transport networks, it is clearly in the Member States' best interests to coordinate their decisions and avoid differences, particularly where parameters and hypotheses relating to the whole Community are concerned (e.g. international traffic trends, integration of peripheral regions, industrial redeployment, measures aiming at making better use of infrastructure capacity, promotion of certain types of transport, particularly in the context of cooperation between railway companies).

With the help of the Member States, the Commission has undertaken forward studies relating to traffic on the Community's basic road, rail and inland waterway networks. The results which will be available at the end of the year should provide pointers to future inadequacies where infrastructure is concerned. Nevertheless, the basic framework which has been established will have to be consolidated and given a more precise shape if it is to provide the Member States with the permanent store of valuable, itemized reference material that they need in order to simplify the coordination of their programmes.

The Committee has received regular progress reports on these studies, and its advice will be sought in the work ahead, particularly where important decisions are to be taken.

15. On the basis of the national plans and programmes of which it has been notified, and as a result of preparing, in conjunction with the Committee, the report on the criteria for assessing Community interest, the Commission is in a position to appreciate the stringent demands that Member States place on the methods whereby investment decisions are taken. Clearly, the demands are even greater at Community level in view of the prospect of the financial support system which the Commission has put to the Council being employed.

However, even apart from this financial aspect, Member States are clearly keen to pool their experience and work out a method of including "Community interest" as one of the criteria for assessing their own national projects and of facilitating the examination of projects at Community level.

The applied research already carried out (e.g. fixed cross-Channel link) or under way in this field, about which the Committee is continuously kept informed, will help develop better methods and increase the amount of information available about the Community aspects of certain major projects. Further project studies would seem to be a promising avenue of approach.

Fitting the work into the various approaches due to culminate in a statement of the Community's requirements

16. The next few paragraphs describe the various ways in which the Community can apprise the Member States of the Community's transport infrastructure requirements.

17. Designation of projects of Community interest

The fact that the "Community interest" concept is both a criterion for initiating the consultation procedure and a criterion for assessing and evaluating projects makes it rather ambiguous. It is therefore important to define our terms since "Community interest" has different meanings in different contexts.

The Commission would reiterate that, when designating projects which are of Community interest and of which the Commission should be informed with a view to subsequent consultation, if necessary, the Community interest is to be determined on the basis of the extremely general, flexible criteria laid down by the Decision of 20 February 1978. These criteria are designed to ensure that projects of interest to the Community are examined at Community level, as provided for by the Decision.

For example, the report on bottlenecks, which pinpoints current infrastructure inadequacies on major arteries within the Community and mentions various projects to improve the situation, coupled with the results of the forward studies referred to in paragraph 14 (future inadequacies) will help Member States to select appropriate projects and, in conjunction with the

Commission, find the best way of examining the projects at Community level (e.g. preliminary examination before consultation procedure, grouping projects together, supplementary data to be collected, and so on).

The mere act of designating a project as being of Community interest is insufficient to establish the nature and precise extent of that Community interest, which can only be determined at a later stage in the procedure. The Commission is often asked to recognize specific projects as being of Community interest. However, no such recognition can have any practical meaning unless the Member State concerned has notified the Commission of the project and the project has undergone detailed examination at Community level and been found, after exhaustive examination, to be fully warranted from the social and economic point of view.

#### 18. Assessment of projects of Community interest

This stage of the procedure involves forming a clearer picture of the projects' implications for the Community and checking that they are in line with the Community's requirements.

The consultation procedure is a particularly useful instrument for this purpose, though it does not preclude examination as part of the Committee's general activities.

The analysis framework could be improved by means of the method put forward in the report on the assessment of Community interest. The forward studies will provide the basic figures required for analysis purposes.

#### 19. Assessment of Community interest

The financial support system proposed by the Commission is intended as a means of granting aid towards selected infrastructure projects which are warranted from the Community point of view but which are not included in the national programmes, despite the fact that they are viable. Assessment

of the Community interest of such projects from the social and economic viewpoints is essential if the system is to function smoothly. One reason why the Council expressly requested the Commission to prepare the report on criteria for assessing Community interest was that it needed background information giving a much broader idea of the way in which the system could operate in practice.

Quite apart from the question of financial support, an assessment of this type may also be needed if the Community is called upon to deliver a reasoned opinion on any specific project.

It should also be remembered that the draft Regulation on financial support states that the Committee shall provide a forum in which Member States can enter into consultations on any applications for support that they have submitted.

#### 20. Articulation of Community requirements

As long as the Member States give due consideration to the outcome of the consultations and take the interests of the Community into account when drawing up their plans, national plans and programmes should eventually broadly reflect the Community's specific requirements. Wherever national requirements still differ from Community requirements, even after the national plans have been revised or extended in this way, the Commission will have to look into the work that has been done and inform the Member States concerned of any shifts in emphasis or additions that should be made.

#### CONCLUSIONS

21. This is the first report on this subject, and covers the period during which the system instituted by the Decision of 20 February 1978 was set up and during which the Transport Infrastructure Committee, the cornerstone of the system, started its work. It was inevitable that it would take a certain amount of time before the machinery which the Decision had set up for cooperation between the Commission and the Member States came into operation, particularly the consultation procedure.

Nor does the fact that no conclusions have yet been reached on the Community's specific requirements give any cause for concern.

The Commission feels that, all things considered, results to date have been encouraging. The main points, and the basic lines of approach which it feels should be adopted, are as follows.

22. (a) The consultation held proved the benefits of invoking the procedure laid down by the Decision of 20 February 1978.

This heightens the need to use the procedure more often, as the Commission has urged on numerous occasions. In this context, the Commission would again draw attention to the proposals that it has already put to the Transport Infrastructure Committee and set out in its conclusions in the report on bottlenecks, whereby, in the first instance at least, Member States should invoke the procedure for groups of interrelated projects on the routes which are of greatest importance to the Community. It is important that Member States should notify their projects of Community interest so that consultations can be held, either at the request of a Member State or on the Commission's own initiative.

Such an approach by the Member States would help to give a clearer picture of the benefits accruing to the Community from the various alternative projects and enhance the socio-economic return on the investments planned.

It would also contribute towards meeting the request voiced by the Council in November 1978 that an inventory should progressively be prepared of specific operations which, from the Community's point of view, there are convincing socio-economic arguments for completing in the short term, and which could qualify for financial support from the Community.

Consultation does not preclude certain simple forms of project examinations by the Committee as part of its general activities. Such examinations can help pinpoint projects that are of Community interest and ensure that suitable projects are chosen for subsequent more detailed assessments of evaluations.

23. (b) The exchanges of views on plans and programmes, the work with the Committee on preparing two major reports - one on bottlenecks and one on the assessment of Community interest - have cast light on the problems which Member States face when drawing up their plans and on the benefits which can be gained from Community action designed to bring closer together the data, forecasts and methods upon which national decisions are based and to facilitate the adjustment called for by the interdependence of the national economies and by the Community's requirements.

Although the specific results are far from complete, considerable progress has been made towards increasing our knowledge of the factors which affect investment and, assuming further active cooperation within the Committee, a way has been found of making more informed decisions on infrastructure investment.

It should be noted in this connection that this progress is the direct result of the system set up between the Member States and the Commission by the Decision of 20 February 1978. This system therefore represents a great step forward in comparison with the Decision of 20 February 1966, which was confined to instituting a consultation procedure alone.

24. (c) This brief survey of the Committee's activities illustrates the thoughts set out by the Commission in previous transport infrastructure documents with regard to the complexity of the field and the need for decision-makers to be able to base their choices on a wide range of extremely complex data. One should avoid falling into the trap of seeking excessive perfectionism, but at the same time the unbending rule must be to have a solid economic foundation for investment decisions, particularly when economic factors dictate the shrewd use of resources. This economic foundation will include many components of a Community character.

Now more than ever, the efforts involved in continuing with the work at Community level, progressively putting the results achieved to practical use and incorporating the conclusions in national programmes call for cooperation between Member States and the Commission and the active support of the Transport Infrastructure Committee.

---