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INTERIM REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and
Transport

on the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to
the Council on action in the field of transport infrastructure and on the proposals
from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council

(Doc. 244/76) for

- a decision instituting a consultation procedure and creating a Committee in
the field of transport infrastructure
- a regulation concerning aid to projects of Community interest in the field of
transport infrastructure

Rapporteur: Mr K. NYBORG

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PE 46.350/fin.

By letter of 22 July 1976 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament pursuant to Article 75 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision instituting a consultation procedure and creating a Committee in the field of transport infrastructure and for a regulation concerning aid to projects of Community interest in the field of transport infrastructure.

The President of the European Parliament referred these proposals to the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport.

On 20 October 1976 the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport confirmed the appointment, provisionally made on 28 April 1976, of Mr Nyborg as rapporteur.

It considered these proposals, and the communication from the Commission on action in the sphere of transport infrastructure at its meeting of 20 October 1976 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Evans, Chairman; Mr Nyborg, Vice-chairman and rapporteur
Mr de Clercq, Mr Ellis, Mr Gerlach, Mr Hamilton, Mr Johnston, Mrs Kellett-Bowman, Mr Martinelli and Mr Osborn.

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The Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council on action in the field of transport infrastructure and the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a Decision instituting a consultation procedure and creating a Committee in the field of transport infrastructure and a Regulation concerning aid to projects of Community interest in the field of transport infrastructure

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication and proposals from the Commission to the Council in the field of transport infrastructure,¹
- having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 244/76),
- having regard to the interim report of its Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport (Doc. 377/76),
- recalling the disappointing lack of progress that has been made towards the construction of a common transport policy,
- taking into consideration the importance it has consistently attached to the need to give a Community dimension to transport infrastructure projects of Community interest,

1. Welcomes the present initiative taken by the Commission in this field whilst reserving its right to give a more detailed opinion,
2. Recalls to the Council the views concerning the need for common action in the field of transport infrastructure, which it has already urged in paragraph 8 I(b), II(d) and IV(b) of its resolution on the principles of the common Transport Policy² and in paragraphs 6 and 7 of its resolution concerning permanent links across certain sea straits³
3. Urges the Council to give speedy and favourable consideration to the initiative and general principles contained in the Commission's communication and proposals.

¹ OJ No C 207 of 2.9.1976, p. 7 and 9

² OJ No C 127 of 18.10.1974, p. 24

³ OJ No C 5 of 8.1.1975, p.43

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. INTRODUCTION

1. The importance of this Communication from the Council and the accompanying proposals for a Council decision and a Regulation¹ is such that the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport have considered that it would be desirable to produce an interim report (and motion for a resolution) before proceeding to a more detailed examination of the texts which may well result in their proposing certain amendments.

2. There is also a degree of urgency in that, given the importance of the subject, the committee would hope that the Council of Ministers will be able to consider the 'package' of transport market proposals at their November meeting, not in isolation, but in relation to the Commission's proposals for transport infrastructure. It would also be desirable for the Council of Ministers to be able to give the Communication and proposals at least a preliminary favourable consideration before the end of 1976 so that implementation of the Commission's proposals should not, thereafter be unduly delayed. At the same time they should not be enacted without careful and detailed examination, which the committee will give to them in their second report.

II. THE COMMUNICATION AND THE PROPOSALS

3. Broadly speaking the aim of the two proposals is to set up a Committee for Transport Infrastructure and make possible Community support for projects of Community interest in transport infrastructure. The Communication provides detailed background information and serves as an additional Explanatory Memorandum to the two proposals.

4. The two proposals replace, and amount to a significant extension of, the Council Decision of 28 February 1966² which introduced a procedure for Community consultation and communication, rather than bilateral discussions, concerning transport infrastructure projects of interest to the Community.

5. It is, however, generally recognized that this Decision was 'without teeth'. That is to say that while it provided for consultations, at the initiative of the Commission, between the Member States on transport infrastructure investment projects of 'Community interest' the Member

¹Doc. 244/76

²O.J. No. 42, 8.3.1966

States did not necessarily in fact inform the Commission of their long-term rather than their short-term projects and as the Commission points out in the Communication, there was no 'coordination with plans and programmes'. In addition, there was no form of Community assistance envisaged for projects of Community interest (which was defined partly in terms of their effect on the development of transport and trade between Member States or between the Community and third countries and partly in terms of the effect of a project on the development of one or more regions of the Community¹). The new definition of Community interest is rather more detailed to identify projects having a real importance to the Community. (see para. 8 (3) below).

6. The Communication also refers to the 'often irreversible nature of the projects communicated', and while this is undoubtedly true, your Rapporteur would recall in the case of the Channel Tunnel that while the formal notification of the Channel Tunnel project was received by the Commission in November 1973 (nine years after the French and British Governments had suspended in 1964 their agreement in principle to the construction of a rail tunnel) that project was by no means irreversible and was indeed abandoned, unilaterally, in January 1975. Following this decision, frequent efforts have been made in the European Parliament to try to have the project revived, if necessary with Community assistance. This is a matter to which the committee will be returning in greater detail when they come to consider in the near future the Motion for a Resolution on the construction of a tunnel under the English Channel (Doc. 7/76) which has been referred to them. In the meantime, your Rapporteur would point out that the case of the Channel Tunnel demonstrates clearly the ineffectiveness, or impotence, of the 1966 Consultation procedure even when it is applied, as it has not so far been, for example, in the case of the Straits of Messina or of the various Danish bridges or tunnel projects. He cannot then regret the fact that Article 9 of the proposed decision will cancel the 1966 decision.

7. The present proposals also represent a significant advance in the Commission's thinking as expressed in its Communication on the development of the Common Transport Policy of May 1973² when little more was envisaged than making more effective use of the 1966 Consultation machinery by placing the projects 'within the framework of general infrastructure programmes'. In his second report, your Rapporteur

¹O.J. No. 42, 8.3.1966 - Article 2

²COM (73) 1725 final, paragraph 68

will consider re-introducing an amendment to the Communication proposed by Mr Mursch (and accepted by the Parliament¹) to ensure that the proposed new Committee for Transport Infrastructure will also be able to consider questions of research and decision-making machinery for the introduction of new transport techniques.

8. Briefly summarized the main features of the two proposals now under consideration are:-

- (1) to establish non-compulsory guidelines for action in the field of infrastructure by the Member States;
- (2) to set up a Committee for Transport Infrastructure, consisting of a member and a deputy appointed by each Member State and chaired by the Commission to consider, inter alia matters of Community interest referred to it by the Commission;
- (3) matters of 'Community interest' include cross-frontier projects, Member State projects likely to affect trade with other Member States or third countries, projects improving access to outlying or less developed regions, projects having an influence on the effectiveness of a common policy and finally projects making use of new transport technologies (see para. 7 above).
- (4) the Committee for Transport Infrastructure has also a right of initiative to consider certain matters, including regional development (Article 5(2) (c));
- (5) financial support may be granted in particular to projects which will help avoid 'bottlenecks' in Community traffic, to cross-frontier projects where a Member State has not the resources to intervene, projects which have a greater Community benefit than is profitable at a national socio-economic level, and projects which aid standardization of equipment on the Community communications network;
- (6) Community aid will be in the form of loan guarantees, loans, subsidies and interest rate reductions.

9. As he has already stated, your Rapporteur is reserving his right to offer more specific comments, proposals or amendments until his second

¹
Doc. 215/74, p.70

report, but at this stage he would suggest that it will be necessary to look carefully at the proposed new Infrastructure Committee's rights of policy initiative and also perhaps at the question of its relationship with other Community bodies, for example the Commission's Regional Policy Committee.

10. As far as the granting of financial assistance to Transport Infrastructure Projects is concerned, there are important budgetary implications involved in the proposed financial regulation; it would appear clear that any such expenditure will be placed under the heading of 'non-compulsory' expenditure, and that the Commission do not envisage (reasonably enough) that it will be possible to submit precise estimates for likely expenditure (or guarantees or loans) in any budgetary year. He welcomes this approach but feels that it may well be desirable to have the benefit of the Budget Committee's opinion on the proposed Regulation on support for projects of Community interest in transport infrastructure before the final report is drawn up.

11. If the proposals operate as intended, then your Rapporteur believes, it will be possible for very much more, and more effective, action to be taken at a Community level in encouraging transport infrastructure projects which are not only of 'Community interest' but which ultimately will be for the benefit of the Community as a whole.

12. In conclusion, and subject to more detailed comments, the Commission's Communication and proposals are to be warmly welcomed. They represent a very real advance and it is an advance in a direction towards which the European Parliament has been urging progress for a number of years. It is to be hoped that this initiative by the Commission will be as acceptable to the Council as it will be to the European Parliament.

