ADVANCED STUDIES ON TRANSPORT ORGANISATION IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

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Lord CLINTON-DAVIS, Member of the EC Commission with responsibility for Transport, Environment and Nuclear Safety 1985-89

One of the most serious consequences of the current imbalance in transport infrastructure capacity is congestion, causing an increase in energy consumption and pollution. The price of failure is high. The Confederation of British Industries has estimated that the economic cost of road congestion in Britain alone is of the order of £10-15 bn a year. The road and aviation sectors are most sensitive to congestion. To mitigate this, changes in the mobility patterns of users is vitally needed. Road congestion could be reduced by encouraging a shift towards public transport, reducing accessibility to congested areas and giving more incentives to cycling and walking. All this could reduce substantially the volume of traffic and improve fluidity. Greater coordination between transport modes at different stages of a journey would also make a major contribution to this end.

Aviation congestion could be alleviated by more efficient air traffic control systems, the regional distribution of traffic and the rational use of aviation and airport capacity. The increasing availability of efficient high speed train services is likely to serve as an alternative to certain short flights, thereby contributing to some reduction in airport congestion. A single system of air traffic control instead of the 260 centres currently operating in Europe would ineluctably lead to fewer delays and less congestion and it is on this subject that the Commission is to publish a White Paper later this year.

Explicitly and implicitly, policy on airports has been to cater for whatever growth in air travel emerges and hitherto there has been no real discussion about the environmental implications for such a policy. However, the idea of simply increasing capacity as a solution to congestion simply does not work. This has been proved over and over again.

Transport demand generally reflects the level of economic activity, and both have been steadily increasing since 1970. The highest increase, largely related to tourism, has been in air passenger transport with an average growth of 6% per annum. With the completion of the Single Market, with the political and economic developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with economic and monetary union not so far away on the
horizon and with a further increase in economic activity a consequential boost in transport demand can reasonably be expected.

Over the next 15 years road transport is expected to increase by 42%, rail transport by only 33% (unless means can be discovered for enhancing this percentage), the stock of private cars by 45% and air passenger transport by a massive 74%. Service industries are growing and are expected to develop further, putting pressure on already congested transport networks in the core regions of the European Union. Subsequently, behavioural patterns with regard to transport usage will have to change dramatically if sustainable mobility is to be promoted.

The European Commission's transport policy agenda is based on more than 100 measures to tackle three main areas:

- improving the quality of the European transport system,

- integrating transport policy into the Single Market,

- developing a coherent policy towards transport links with non-EU countries.

As far as this third area is concerned, the European Commission's transport policy must anticipate enlargement and the closer economic integration of the Central and Eastern European countries into the wider European framework. The appalling record of environmental degradation in these areas stems from the poorly managed, inefficient and obsolete state-owned industries and the ruthless exploitation of natural resources under their old regimes. Agreements with the Central and Eastern European countries, therefore, are bound to involve enhanced standards relating to all the modes of transport.

In summary, the Commission's goal is to develop efficient, integrated and safe transport systems across the internal frontiers of Europe, while paying proper regard to the principle of sustainable mobility. It is only with sufficient political will that these ideals can be translated into a reality which will bring enormous benefits to the 370 million people of the European Union.