



BULLETIN

I/2007

Editorial

As one of the major pillars of European economic prosperity, the trans-European transport network has always played an important role in the UECC's agenda. The UECC keeps a careful check on the progress made in the efforts to improve European transport infrastructures and regularly corresponds with national ministries of Transport, the European Commission and the European Parliament on this subject.

This spring, the UECC will conduct a new survey among its members to obtain a comprehensive overview of the current state of the TEN projects and other major European transport infrastructures.

The results of the survey will then be used as a basis for position papers and other lobbying activities.

I would therefore like to ask you all to participate in this survey which will form an important basis for the UECC's work in the future. Your cooperation will be very much appreciated.

*Dr. Rainer Füeg
Secretary General*

Table of contents

	Page
Resolutions	2
Meetings in Strasbourg and Brussels	2
Personnel	2
Liberalisation of the rail freight market	3
EU Commission authorises German plans to promote environmentally friendly heavy vehicles	3
"Airports package" proposed	3
Working groups	4
Agenda 2007	6

Editor:

Union of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Secretary General

Aeschenvorstadt 67

CH-4010 Basel

Tel.: 0041 61 270 60 10

Fax: 0041 61 270 60 05

Internet: <http://www.ueec.org>

E-mail: r.fueeg@uecc.org

Resolutions

In January 2007, the UECC adopted the following resolution on European rail transport:

UECC demands a clear commitment in favour of the rail project "Baden-Württemberg 21": "Stuttgart 21" and "Wendlingen-Ulm".

The Stuttgart – Ulm section is an essential part of the west-east axis Paris – Strasbourg – Stuttgart – Munich – Vienna – Budapest/Bratislava, one of the most important major railway routes north of the Alps with connections to Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

With its links to the TGV Rhine – Rhone – Mediterranean at Strasbourg, to the TEN line Rotterdam-Genoa in Karlsruhe, to the Milan-Zurich-Southern Germany line in Stuttgart and to the high-speed railway line from Hamburg, Frankfurt and the Ruhr region in Munich, this railway project is destined to play a major role in the integration of large areas of the old and the new Europe.

The European Union has recognised the importance of this axis and included it in its list of priority projects of the trans-European network (TEN projects no 4 (high speed railway axis east, no. 17 Paris – Strasbourg – Stuttgart – Vienna – Bratislava, continued by the railway axis Vienna – Budapest – Sofia – Athens (part of the TEN project no. 22)).

After the Vosges Mountains and the Wienerwald (near Vienna), the Swabian Alb is the third large geographical obstacle on the route. One of Europe's oldest and steepest main rail tracks, the Geislinger Steige (which has a gradient of 22.5 ‰) runs across this part of Germany's central

mountain range. The only way to meet the standards of a high-speed train service in this area is to build an entirely new track, along the A 8 (E52) motorway.

Stuttgart's main railway station must also be converted into an underground through station with a rail link to Stuttgart airport ("Stuttgart 21"). This will help ease congestion on the lines from the north and the east and will considerably increase the frequency of train services to Stuttgart.

The old railway station cannot be upgraded adequately. Construction work would have to take place while the station is still under operation, which would cause delays and disruption in the traffic flows for many years. Despite these serious disadvantages, the upgrading of the old railway station would be only marginally cheaper than the realisation of "Stuttgart 21". The costs for the upgrading would have to be borne by the German federal budget.

On the other hand, the European Union may be willing to provide financial aid of up to EUR 250 million for the building of new infrastructure. Péter Balázs, the coordinator responsible for the TEN priority project no. 17, has qualified the entire Stuttgart – Ulm section including "Stuttgart 21" as a bottleneck. The German federal government could therefore apply for funding within the framework of the EU budget for 2007 – 2013.

To this end, the German ministry for Transport, Construction and Town Planning must make a clear commitment in favour of this project by spring 2007.

Meetings in Strasbourg and Brussels

President B. Menzinger, secretary general R. Füeg and W. Kühlkamp, secretary of the working group "Waterways", met Professor Paolo Costa, chairman of the transport committee of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in January 2007. They presented the UECC main positions and objectives and discussed the following subjects: environment/transport (lack of coordination within the European Commis-

sion, problems with the implementation of the FFH directive etc.) and the TEN projects.

In February, the UECC visited Ms. Kerstin Jorna, deputy head of cabinet to Commissioner Jacques Barrot in Brussels, where the topics environment/transport, Alpine Crossing Exchange and NAIADES were discussed.

Personnel

Teun Muller will resign as chairman of the working group "Waterways" in summer 2007, when his mandate as a member of the board of directors of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce comes to an end. At its executive committee meeting in

Salzburg on 16 February this year, the UECC elected Cees de Graaff as Mr Muller's successor. Mr. de Graaff runs a tanker shipping company. He is member of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce and joined the working group last year.

Liberalisation of the rail freight market

On January 1, 2007, all rail freight services were opened up to competition. Until then, in the Member States which have followed the EU timetable, only international freight services, which represent approximately half of the total market for the transport of goods by rail in Europe, were liberalised.

The opening of the market should help network operators and transport companies to attract new customers and new investors. It is hoped that high quality services that are adapted to the needs of the customers will enable rail freight to increase its share of the market.

EU Commission authorises German scheme to promote environmentally friendly heavy vehicles

The European Commission has no objections to a German State aid scheme that aims to help transport operators acquire heavy vehicles with better emission performance. The new measures consist of investment grants or interest allowances granted to transport operators investing in trucks that comply with stricter environmental standards than those already in force. The scheme has been approved for

six years, with an annual budget of EUR 100 million.

Although the payments will give hauliers an economic advantage, the Commission believes that the aid scheme is in line with Community regulations, as it covers spending for environmental protection within allowed ceilings. Similar programmes are already underway in the Netherlands and Denmark.

New regulatory package for airports

On January 24, 2007, the European Commission adopted an "airport package" consisting of a proposal for a directive on airport charges, a communication on airport capacity, efficiency and safety in Europe and a report on the implementation of the ground handling directive.

The directive redefines the relationship between airport operators and airport users and proposes to create a strong, independent national authority in each Member State to arbitrate and settle disputes quickly.

The Commission also suggests a coherent strategy for dealing with congestion at European airports.

The measures include optimising the use of existing capacity, providing a coherent approach to air safety operations at airports, promoting "co-modality", improving the environmental capacity of airports and the planning framework for new airport infrastructure, and developing and implementing cost efficient technological solutions.

Working group "General Transport"

Dr. Veronika Kessler, Abteilungsleiterin,
Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (A)
Tel. 0043 5 90 900 4009, Fax 0043 5 90 900 259
e-mail: veronika.kessler@wko.at

At its meeting in Basel in January 2007, the working group "General Transport" discussed the following subjects:

Safety of the supply chain

Many States have reservations concerning the EU's draft directive. Ms. Jeanine Henis-Plasschaert, member of the Transport committee of the European Parliament, has also criticised the proposal. Transport Commissioner Barrot has meanwhile decided to "put the topic on ice" for the time being. The UECC has written to the EU-Commission, asking for a formal withdrawal of the proposal.

European rail axis / Stuttgart 21

The rail axis Paris – Strasbourg – Vienna – Bratislava is one of the major corridors within the European transport network. In the Stuttgart area, where the axis links up with the Rhine – Rhone – Mediterranean line, building could begin shortly. However, there is still disagreement concerning the financing of the project, in particular regarding who will have to provide the risk capital if costs are higher than originally budgeted. The UECC has adopted a reso-

lution asking the German federal government and the German minister for transport to give the green light for the project.

Environmental standards in overland transport

The project is based on a Master's Thesis published at Basel University. 62 completed questionnaires were analysed and showed that companies attach an average importance to environment-related regulations in road transport. 80 % of the companies surveyed believe that hauliers from Eastern Europe have an advantage, not only because of the smaller amount of regulations but also because compliance is monitored less frequently in their countries.

On average, companies use about 17 % of their gross turnover to meet environmental standards; Austria has the highest percentage (23 %), whereas in the Netherlands this share is "only" 10 %.

The survey concludes that environmental regulations do not cause any serious distortions of competition. From a political perspective, it calls for a pan-European approach, a shift from fixed to variable costs and for uniform rules for the internalisation of costs for all modes of transport. The differences in the treatment of external environmental costs in the various countries and the variety of regulations

that still impede access to the markets could be future topics of interest for the UECC.

Trade platform for Alpine crossing slots

The debate on this issue continues. Austria is planning a similar trade platform. In Switzerland, the consultation procedure has been completed, and the federal government is expected to present its proposals in June this year, which will probably include specific plans for a trade platform for Alpine crossing slots.

The European Union largely approves the idea and supports the "Zurich Group" in its efforts to compile an expertise which is due to be published in autumn 2007. However, it is important that measures in Switzerland are coordinated with those of other countries.

Trucks banned from roads in Tyrol

Tyrol has announced more driving restrictions for trucks, which are to be implemented step by step over the next few years. The restrictions include the sectoral traffic ban that was rejected by the European Court of Justice last time. Now, however, the text seems to be more in keeping with the criteria stipulated by the court. A decision is expected for this summer.

The driving restrictions in detail: On November 1, 2006, Tyrol introduced a speed limit of 100 km/h on the A12 between Kufstein-Süd and Zirl. On January 1, 2007, the night-time ban for trucks on the A12 was extended to a stretch of 80 km, and a general ban for trucks of emission classes euro 0 and 1 was announced for the A12 between Kufstein-Süd and Zirl. Euro 4 and

Euro 5 articulated trucks and tractor-trailers will be banned from that route as from 1 November 2008. As from 1 November 2009, the ban shall also apply to single Euro 0 and Euro 1 trucks of more than 7.5 tons. A night-time ban on Euro 5 and Euro 6 trucks will be introduced as well.

Rotterdam – Genoa railway (axis no. 24)

According to national network operators, demand for rail freight trains along this axis has long since outstripped supply. When the Lötschberg tunnel becomes operational in December 2007, this problem will only get worse, particularly on the stretch between Frankfurt and Basel.

Germany will probably not be able to keep the promise made in a bilateral treaty with Switzerland to provide a sufficient number of rail tracks.

Several Chambers of Commerce from Italy, Switzerland and Germany and the Port of Rotterdam have formed the Communauté des Chambres de Commerce (CCC) in order to demand the necessary upgrading measures.

A coordinator has already been appointed. The CCI plans to publish more information on the project by providing a list of the infrastructures and network operators and a description of the terminals. A road show will present the project to the general public in November 2007. Further information can be found on the website www.nord-sur.info.

Working group "Waterways"

Dipl.-Volkswirt Werner Kühlkamp,
Geschäftsführer, Industrie- und Handelskammer
Duisburg-Wesel-Kleve (D).
Tel. 0049 203 2821 278, Fax 0049 203 285349 278
e-mail: kuehlkamp@niederrhein.ihk.de

Straubing – Vilshofen

Bavaria has accepted the outcome of the planning procedure, which found that the version C/C 280 was best suited to eliminate the bottleneck on the Danube waterway without having too strong an impact on the environment. The project would considerably improve the draught for ships on this stretch and is therefore supported by the UECC. However, the German federal government in Berlin still feels bound by the decision of the German Federal Parliament of 2002 that only envisaged the version A, which included plans for deepening the river bed. The UECC has written

to Ms. Annette Fasse, who chairs "inland navigation" working group in the German Parliament, suggesting a meeting to discuss the subject.

Naval technology and upgrading of infrastructures

A representative of the institute for shipbuilding technology and transport systems in Duisburg presented two studies which examined whether building techniques can help avoid the need to upgrade infrastructures. Technology can certainly make ships more efficient, but shipbuilding measures alone are not sufficient to eliminate bottlenecks on inland waterways.

Agenda 2007

Executive committee:

22 June 2007

Arnhem (NL)

27/28 September 2007

Frankfurt (D)

General assembly:

27/28 September 2007

Frankfurt (D)

Working group "General Transport"

4/5 June 2007

to be determined

Working group "Waterways"

4/5 June 2007

to be determined