

Marco Sorgetti, CLECAT Director General, spoke at the stakeholders consultation session on the occasion of the TEN-T Days 2010 in Saragossa 8th-9th of June 2010

Brussels, 10th of June 2010

"Ministers, Authorities, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks for inviting CLECAT at this high level conference in the intriguing and fascinating Saragossa. CLECAT represents commercial logistics, i.e. the largest portion of freight users of TEN-T's.

CLECAT submitted its views on TEN-T's on several occasions and more comments will come in due time. Without repeating the sensible comments and suggestions we heard yesterday, or the concepts already submitted in our previous position papers, today let me look at a different perspective and please forgive this fast-lane approach imposed by the timing.

I was pleased to hear freight being debated with the same attention as passengers: a word of appreciation for this is not wasted in this case.

The "conceptual pillar" we heard about contained a daunting dilemma, at least from a user's point of view: how do we achieve an integrated, efficient and environmentally friendly transport system that also works toward cohesion, and ... where is the money for it?

In order to try to rise to this challenge we need to pull three elements together:

- Infrastructure, i.e. construction, maintenance and connection, in other words no longer "deaf and dumb infrastructure";
- Users, i.e. giving them service and charging them appropriately and proportionately for it;
- Facilitation, i.e. making services users friendly by ensuring interoperability.

This, without getting overenthusiastic with one idea over another, e.g. rail transport, IWT, the "nodes" i.e. ports and inland terminals: all these are just elements of the bigger picture. Individually these cannot drive us anywhere.

The only silver bullet is working together: modes, politicians, countries, people.

Vice-President Sim Kallas was clear: the main problem is financing, he said there is a growing fracture between needs and resources. I think he is quite right, even more so than it looks at first sight.

We have a problem with finance not only because there isn't enough, but also because there is probably less than it is expected, even in the private sector. Has the private sector's finance such a capacity that it can sustain the required level of investments alone? Will the user foot the bill forever, without certainty on how the money is used?

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We can only hope that EU consumers won't simply close the wallet... renounce a holiday, cut on some other expenditure?

How many companies are already cutting on travel costs?

Expenses may not be running at the same speed... Economists may be building their creative mechanisms on endless supply of wealth that has in fact already been destroyed by the crisis.

I think we need more Main street economy and less Wall street economy to make ends meet...

If we do not build real services and real infrastructure our revenues will start spiralling down. Let me tell you a little story: a new employee asked me after a few days she was working for my company: "how do I distribute these goods to all these consignees?"

I replied "start by finding your correspondents, your partners, those with reciprocal interests, to build this distribution channel; they will take care of your goods at their end as well as you take care of theirs here. Once you find the right partner, you decide (with them) who charges what and how you share the revenues: here is the spreadsheet that will help you keeping all partners happy"

What we need in TEN-T is to write the spreadsheet that will make everybody a partner.

First you need to find the right people and to settle the money issue. In networks you cannot work alone, working with your partners for a common interest is key.

Charging in proportion to the level of services makes it a thriving network: the one that customers want to use.

With an agreed system of guidelines, politicians could avail themselves of the same simple principles, they could use a new form of "enhanced cooperation": find their partners to create the connections that make sense, pull them together, state their commitment and only then use the TEN-T funds as a multiplier of resources.

This covenant must contain an agreed and appropriate charging policy, a decision on how revenues should be used "within the network" to create better infrastructure and services. This public commitment will avoid unrealistic ambitions that never see the light of day. Sharing the benefits is the main point, but this discussion should take stock on how much revenues are raised and by whom, by involving finance ministers, who should be first in line to see the accruals of a thriving network that users will pay for.

An anti-cyclical element to curtail the growing urbanisation and congestion trends may be very helpful, as more people will concentrate in dense demand-driven areas.

A wise charging policy can mitigate the downside of this, but it must apply all the way; i.e. mainly locally, in the cities, certainly not only on the extra-urban infrastructure. It must also be applied across the board: all users must pay in proportion.

This means coming to terms with another "pillar" and – alas – with subsidiarity... This is also about political competence, because financing the transport system by charging only part of the users, only on some parts of the network cannot provide a satisfactory solution... and hardly enough money.

An incomplete charging system will not create cohesion and prosperity, to the contrary. It will just drive down the revenues in the long run.

This is not about sitting in the middle of 500 million people and charging those who come and go, it is about connecting the periphery.

So let us get to work: Finding partners in other cities, in other regions and in other countries who share the interest and the intention to finance and implement TEN-T axes is a first step; persuading them to create a pool of common resources by sharing the revenues within a European framework is the second step; creating appropriate quality infrastructure and making services possible (for a charge) is the aim.

In this complex endeavour the enhanced role of the executive agency is crucial. This catalyst role can be of strategic advice, as well as suggesting good practices in charging and spending policies.

Finance and transport ministries should sit side by side in this endeavour, as reinvested revenues will generate more revenues. Diverted revenues will only vanish in the haze.

Thank you for your attention."