

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 177 (2004)¹ on problems of transnational transit traffic

The Congress,

1. Having examined the report on problems of transalpine transit traffic, presented by Luigi Pedrazzini (Switzerland, R) on behalf of the Committee on Sustainable Development;

2. Thanking the experts, Ludwig Schmutzhard (Tyrol, Austria) and Davide Caccia (Ticino, Switzerland), experts, for their kind and valuable assistance with the preparation of the report;

3. Recalling that during its ninth plenary session the Congress adopted Resolution 137 (2002) on integrated transport policies, which instructed the Committee on Sustainable Development to follow up its work in the field of integrated transport policies by investigating the problems caused by transit traffic;

4. Recalling earlier texts adopted by the Congress on transport issues, including Resolution 220 (1991) on regional transport and the Final Declaration of the Conference on Sustainable development of mountain regions, European transit policy and the challenge of globalisation (Cavalese, Italy, 17 June 2003), which stresses that transit traffic should not pose an unacceptable threat to the environment of the regions concerned;

5. Considering that:

a. efficient transport infrastructure is of fundamental importance to present-day societies and national economies, and for years too little attention has been paid to growing and justified concerns about ever more serious transport congestion and the impact on the environment;

b. the present transport policy framework has been producing unbalanced transport growth. Rail's share of the modal split in land transport (road and rail) has dropped from 40% to 15% in the last thirty years;

c. the trend in north-south traffic over the next few years is set to continue. Freight traffic is growing around twice as fast as passenger traffic, and long-distance freight traffic is growing more than short-distance traffic. The above-average growth in transalpine freight transport is linked to the large proportion of long journeys;

d. it is mainly traffic in general, and heavy goods vehicles in particular, that are responsible for air and noise pollution. The lie of Alpine valleys and the thermal inversion phenomenon are factors that cause pollutants to

stagnate for longer and have a more lasting harmful effect on local communities and the environment;

6. Concerned that:

a. with the exception of Alpine transport, rail transport in Europe has lost out in comparison with road transport. The causes have been known for a long time and may be summed up as follows: the lack of standardisation at European level, the lack of a co-ordinated development policy and the fact that prices are not competitive in comparison with road transport;

b. the massive increase in heavy goods vehicles has come up against the physical limitations of the road infrastructure. These limitations are particularly obvious in the Alpine valleys and are increasing the risk of serious accidents;

c. technological measures, on their own, are insufficient to achieve environmental aims and meet limit-value targets for mountain valleys on the main transversals, since improved vehicle technology is counterbalanced by increased traffic;

d. pollution and accidents, quite apart from the direct consequences for the physical and mental health of the people affected, generate extremely high costs, which are mainly a burden on the community;

7. Convinced that:

a. transalpine transit traffic must be tackled not as a problem affecting the regions which have a route across the Alps, but as part of European policy: the whole of Europe needs to be able to cross the Alps and the problem therefore requires a co-ordinated solution involving much of Europe;

b. the management of transalpine transit traffic should not be a source of conflict among the various regions affected. On the contrary, they need to come up with a means of managing traffic as a whole, both road and rail traffic;

c. sustainability of the overall system (in terms of ecology, health, maintenance of economic performance and guaranteed interregional transport facilities) can only be achieved if local requirements are met. In transport decisions, the requirements of health protection must be given priority over freedom to choose mode of transport;

d. the transfer of a proportion of freight traffic to rail (particularly long-distance traffic) is the only feasible means not just of countering the serious environmental and noise pollution in the Alpine valleys, and elsewhere, but also of ensuring that the main European road arteries are more practicable. The objective is a modal split of freight traffic that makes optimum use of rail and road infrastructure, which means that the railways must regain their share;

e. improved lorry-engine technology on its own is not enough to achieve environmental targets and keep within pollution maxima on the main Alpine-valley routes.

Additional strategic measures are needed to curb traffic growth. Particularly in sensitive regions, lorry transit will have to be restricted,

8. Calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. improve conditions regionally for increasing rail's share of freight transport, particularly when creating business parks or industrial estates, by studying the possibility of building railway feeder lines;

b. adopt and encourage programmes of branch/feeder line construction;

c. educate the public to make more use of regional produce and goods;

d. perform regular, efficient traffic checks to make sure that road transport complies with social and technical regulations. Compliance with regulations on driving and rest periods in long-haul transport is also extremely important for improved road safety. Strict compliance with the regulations deprives road transport of some of its negative "flexibility" (particularly in terms of hours' driving and rest) that helps to make it more advantageous than rail transport.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 27 May 2004, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (11) 6, draft resolution presented by L. Pedrazzini (Switzerland, R, NR), rapporteur).