

**INFRASTRUCTURES COMMISSION**

Brussels - 19 April 2005

**Minutes of the meeting****Present**

Klaus MILZ, President of the Infrastructures Commission

BelgiumPol BOËL  
Albert FREICzech Rep.Petr AUGUSTA  
Antonin PELTRAMFrance

Paul MENTRÉ

Germany

Georg SCHATTNEY

NetherlandsFrederik de COCK BUNING  
Roger MARTIN  
Matthijs van der VELDEN**Speakers**

Elisabeth ALTEKÖSTER, Director Transport - COUNCIL of the EU

Norbert GEBBE, Consultant - Unternehmens Beratung UBG - Germany

**ELEC Secretariat**

Jean-Claude KOEUNE, Secretary General

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**Introduction**

The *President* took the chair at 10:15am and welcomed participants to the first meeting of the year, recalling that it was originally scheduled for March 10 but had been postponed due to the unavailability of several speakers.

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The *President* proposed to drop point 5 on TENs financing off the agenda. With this modification, the draft agenda was adopted. Further he mentioned that, at the request of ELEC's Spanish section, he had had a recent contact with some of the originators of the "Ferrmed" project, a rail connection for freight transportation from Algeciras to Duisburg, along the Mediterranean coasts of Spain and France through the Rhone valley and beyond. He proposed to discuss it under point 4 of the agenda.

**2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held in Brussels on 18 October 04 were approved.

### **3. Report on ELEC Central Council (dec04)**

At the president's request, the *Secretary general* reported on the work of the latest Central Council [04-R227/CC]\*, more particularly on the debate over the necessary modernisation of ELEC, whose conclusions had stressed several needs, namely:

- (1) to identify better ELEC's nature and specific missions;
- (2) to elaborate an action programme outlining priorities (taking into account the various commissions and their respective interests and strengths);
- (3) to start a recruitment drive, aiming at both the rejuvenation of existing national sections and the creation of new national sections in countries where ELEC was not (or no longer) present;
- (4) to increase ELEC's visibility and influence by a better communication strategy and contacts with European authorities on a more systematic basis;
- (5) to tackle financial problem by setting up a financial committee.

Further, he indicated what steps had already been taken to implement the Central Council's recommendations, including a new mission statement and the drafting of an action programme [05-D025/Str]\* to be adopted by the next Central Council, which he briefly summarized.

The *President* thanked the *Secretary general* and underlined the need to raise ELEC's profile. Mr. *Boël* stressed the necessity of defining priorities for ELEC's work and suggested that its name be changed to reflect in a better way its focus and priorities. MM. *de Cock* and *Frei* agreed that the adoption of a new name might help raise ELEC's profile, though its initials and acronyms ought to be retained. Mr. *Martin* argued that one should be careful before changing the name of an organization as old as ELEC. The *President* concluded that this was a matter for the Central Council to decide upon.

### **4. 2005-2006 Programme of the Infrastructures Commission**

The *President* presented an updated version of his report to the Central Council in December proposing a working programme for the Commission. Mr. *van der Velden* suggested that the issue of water supply management be included among the Commission's priorities. Turning to specific projects, the *President* commented on the "Fermmed" initiative mentioned earlier and said that it raised two basic questions: did it represent an important market corridor and how, if found valuable, could it be brought forward? Mr. *Boël* praised the project as a good initiative. Mr. *Martin* said that ports along the contemplated route should be given greater emphasis in the design of the project and stressed the need for greater trans-border cooperation in order to achieve its full potential.

### **5. European Transport Policy: euro-vignette**

The *President* briefly presented ELEC and the work of the Infrastructures Commission to the guest-speaker before giving her the floor. Mrs. *Alteköster* first outlined the facilitating role of the Secretariat of the Council in the European decision-making process, in particular through observing the evolution of member states' positions on issues at hand and trying to deflect potential clashes in the Council.

Next she retraced the already long and conflictual history of the euro-vignette draft directive, aiming in its present form to establish a common framework for charging for road infrastructure use by trucks over 3.5 tons. It originated with the European Commission's desire to have different freight transport modes priced correctly in order to achieve a level-playing field among them, but was handicapped, when it came to the Council's working party, by the fact that the Commission had not taken into consideration the existing reality of national tolling systems. Additionally, she stressed, there were highly contradictory interests between peripheral countries (such as Finland and Portugal) and central transit countries (such as Germany and Austria), with the so-called concessionary countries (such as France and Italy, where roads are built on the basis of a concession contract) forming yet another category. Therefore, she concluded, this dossier was very complex and remained highly problematic.

The *President* thanked Mrs. Alteköster and asked if any progress was to be expected from the forthcoming transport Council. Mr. *de Cock Buning* inquired about the possible uses of the proceeds from the euro-vignette. Mrs. *Alteköster* replied that in the Commission's proposal the receipts were to be used for encouraging alternative transport modes, but that this was strongly opposed by the European Parliament and by member states, which wanted to be free in the use of such revenue <sup>1</sup>. Mr. *Koeune* asked whether a uniform tax on fuel used by commercial vehicles would not achieve the overall same result, and the *President* inquired about the possible steering function of the system, in terms of modal shifts in transport. Mrs. *Alteköster* answered that a tolling system offered more flexibility than a tax to the extent that the level of the toll could be varied according to the season or the time of the day; she also indicated that, in her opinion, the draft directive adopted an old-fashioned historical approach because it aimed at setting tolls on the basis of historical costs incurred in the construction of road infrastructures. Mr. *Frei* asked what would happen to countries which already had tolls. Mrs. *Alteköster* replied that they might be given an exemption, provided they gave proof that their own system could achieve comparable results.

The *President* thanked Mrs. Alteköster for her informative presentation and for the interesting exchange it had provoked.

## **6. New concepts for intermodal transport**

The *President* introduced Mr. *Gebbe*, who gave a presentation on "Integration of intermodal transport systems in logistic processes". He first briefly described his consulting firm, how it had come into being and the kind of services it provided, before stressing the growing needs for such services on the part of transport companies at times of rising fuel prices and increasing use of tolls. Next he explained what were in his view the keys for a successful intermodal logistic process, underlining in particular the importance of low-cost transshipment points.

Questions were asked by Mr. *Martin* on the economics of transshipment points, by Mr. *Boël* on the role of trading desks in the overall scheme, and by Mr. *Mentré* on the "Port 2000" project in Le Havre. The *President* concluded by stressing the need for intelligent systems allowing the use of intermodality to cut transport costs, which had become a big factor in determining the relative competitiveness of countries and regions.

## **7. A.O.B.**

The *President* asked the Commission to think about the need to enlarge its membership by attracting new members, pointing out that its next meeting with Commissioner Jacques Barrot as guest-speaker might provide a good opportunity to do so.

## **8. Date, time and place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will take place in Brussels on Monday 19 September 2005, with Mr. Jacques BARROT, Vice-president of the European Commission and Commissioner for Transport, as the main speaker.

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting in Luxembourg on April 21, the Transport Council reached a political agreement, under the terms of which the member states will be free to decide on the allocation of receipts - and may therefore channel funds towards other sectors than transport - though the text recommends their use in developing transport infrastructures.