

INFRAMED PROJECT

"Executive summary"

PREAMBLE

On 28 November 1995, the members of the European Union and their 12 Mediterranean partners solemnly declared in Barcelona their intention to establish amongst themselves a long-lasting, stable partnership in order to consolidate peace and stability in the Mediterranean founded on economic growth, dialogue and mutual understanding and respect. Within the field of transport, the Barcelona declaration particularly emphasises the importance of developing and improving infrastructures, including through the establishment of an efficient transport system ...”.

Within this context of strengthening Euro-Mediterranean co-operation and within a broader framework, the transport ministers of the Mediterranean region and the member states of the European Union met at the conference on Transport in the Mediterranean held in Lisbon on 23 and 24 January 1997. At the time of this conference, they affirmed their determination to strengthen co-operation for the development of a multimodal transport network in the region to be integrated into trans-European networks.

The third Pan-European Conference on Transport in Helsinki provided the occasion to put forward a programme of work centred around the concept of priority transport corridors, taking up the work already done within the Euro-Mediterranean framework and in particular the work done by the Transport Group of the Western Mediterranean (GTMO).

GTMO meetings

At the level of the Western Mediterranean, discussions are more advanced and the establishment of co-operation has made it possible to give more detailed shape to these corridors. The GTMO has had three plenary sessions in Paris, Rabat and Madrid, together with thematic seminars in Marseilles (port and land), Malaga (air) and Rabat (research).

At the end of these conferences and seminars, it was decided, amongst other issues, to uphold as priority corridors:

- the Maghreb Union Motorway;
- trans-Maghreb train;
- the Latin arc;
- the network of port and airport multimodal platforms and their connections with land infrastructure;
- the networks required for the harmonisation and effectiveness of air control;
- the fixed link across the Strait of Gibraltar.

A certain number of priority issues apart from infrastructure were also established in order to facilitate exchanges:

- improvement to the quality of service;
- modernisation and adaptation of port infrastructure;
- new air control system up to European standards;
- administrative and customs procedures;
- improvements to intermodality;
- training and technology transfers.

PRESENTATION OF THE INFRAMED STUDY

In this context, the GTMO launched a study (financed by DG VII/EC) on transport infrastructure needs in the six countries of the Western Mediterranean (INFRAMED), which enabled a number of priority projects of common interest to be proposed. The study focuses on transport infrastructure in the southern countries of the Western Mediterranean and their coherence with trans-European networks. The study gives specific consideration to the infrastructure involved in developing international exchanges between the countries of the Western Mediterranean (north-south; south-north; and south-south exchanges). This infrastructure falls within the framework for the functioning of the corridors defined for the area and is one of the priorities of the Partnership.

The study was conducted in three phases:

- The first phase was to describe the existing structure of the transport sectors in the Western Mediterranean and to set up the database needed to continue the study.
- The second phase focused on defining the economic and transport scenarios which were to serve as a general framework for projecting traffic movement and for analysing infrastructure needs.
- In the third phase of the INFRAMED study, the first issue was to project international transport flows in the Western Mediterranean and then to analyse infrastructure needs arising from this movement. This phase was based on the results of the first two phases, on the work of the GTMO (especially that of the ad hoc group) and on various national and international planning documents (notably the Port Guidelines, trans-Maghreb studies and studies for the fixed link).

ANALYSIS OF INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study made it possible to evaluate growth in traffic flows in the Western Mediterranean. It also highlighted the importance for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of establishing rapid, reliable transport links for high added value goods and certain food products. In addition, the study identified a number of other specific needs. Lastly, it called attention to the fact that international flows along the main land routes remain modest in comparison with internal movement.

The principal infrastructure needs were defined on the basis of these projections. The

next stage was to analyse the projects presented to the ad hoc group and certain other proposals using the criteria of the GTMO (seven of these nine criteria were demonstrated to be useful). The projects were then classified into several groups.

The first group covers projects that meet a rapid infrastructure need and whose main objectives are to facilitate Euro-Mediterranean exchanges and to contribute to strengthening relations between the two shores of the sea:

- container terminal and development of EDI/VTS at the port of Radès;
- container terminal in Algiers (plus EDI);
- VTS and EDI projects in Algiers and Casablanca;
- linking the port of Radès to the rail network;
- modernisation and bringing up to European standards of air navigation systems;
- Tangiers - Sidi El Yamani motorway;
- TIR platform near Tangiers;
- Algiers freight air terminal.

This group includes a project whose main objectives are to facilitate Euro-Mediterranean exchanges and to contribute to strengthening relations between the two shores of the sea. This project does, however, require supplementary information (involvement of private partners) in order to choose between two options:

- extension of the port of Tangiers or construction of a new Tangiers port.

The second group consists of projects that will serve as a support for facilitating integration of the Maghreb (the Trans-Maghreb Corridor) and which meet a rapid infrastructure need (with national traffic in the majority):

- a first phase of motorway projects of the Maghreb Union Motorway (the busiest stretches, often around major towns or between large towns near in each other) in the three countries;
- a first phase of railway projects for the Trans-Maghreb Train from Marrakech to Tunis (the busiest stretches, often near major towns) in the three countries.

The third group comprises land development projects that play a role in economic growth and which may have an impact on transport in the region:

- Mediterranean coastal bypass to Morocco (which also falls within the framework of reinforcing links between Algeria, Morocco and Spain);
- Taourirt - Nador railway line;
- Jen Jen port for shipping cereals;
- Casablanca - El Jedida motorway;
- Tunis - Bizerte motorway;
- doubling of the Tunis - Sousse railway line.

Particularly important within this group are projects of an urban nature that contribute to economic growth:

- Casablanca motorway bypass (which will also help to ease flows on the Maghreb Union Motorway);
- Algiers underground system;
- railway line for the southern suburb of Tunis.

A project whose main objectives are to facilitate Euro-Mediterranean exchanges and to contribute to strengthening relations between the two shores of the sea has been distinguished:

- the fixed link across the Strait of Gibraltar.

This project does, however, require supplementary information and a concerted approach that takes into account other projects (incorporating the fixed link in Spanish and Moroccan railway infrastructure programmes and the link with the port of Tangiers).

Other projects have been presented but are of a lower priority. Consequently, they must be programmed in for later phases (2005 or beyond 2010) and will require further studies.

A global evaluation of financing possibilities was presented. However, it will be necessary to do a case by case analysis in greater detail of the advantages for each type of user and of the means to make users contribute so that the best arrangements can be made.

Over and above this investment in infrastructure, the Maghrebi transport system would gain greatly in effectiveness if a certain number of functional or organisational measures were implemented, notably those concerning the links between modes, port passages, customs points and border crossings and the management of information and the documentation required for goods transit in general.