



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE ATLANTIC ARC TRANSPORT GROUP
BILBAO, 16 DECEMBER 2008**

PARTICIPANTS:

Name	Institution
Mireia Elkoroiribe	AATG Coordinator Basque Government – Transport Director
Colin Eaketts	Welsh Assembly Government - Transport Planning & Administration
Christophe Le Foll	Conseil Régional de Basse Normandie - Associate Director of European Affairs
Julie Micolot	Conseil Régional de Basse Normandie - Head of European Affairs department
Joelle Ballarin	Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine – Transport technician
Fernando Arrojo Martínez	Principado de Asturias - Head of Transport Studies Office
Alfonso Rodriguez Gallego	Castilla y León - Transport technician for Department of Development
Javier Rivas	Basque Government – Transport technician
Francisco Sabino	Alentejo - Comissão de Coordenação da Região
Xabier Hurteau	Communauté d'Agglomération de Poitiers – AIRE Cities Network
Benoit Cuvelier	Nantes Metropole – Director of European Programmes
Hélène Donnart	Limousin - Head of external relations for the Limousin Region EESC
Jose Luis Ruiz García	Euskadi - President Basque EESC
Arantza Lopez de Munain Zulueta	Euskadi - Head of studies and projects for the Basque EESC
Fabien Mesclier	CPMR - Technical Secretary
Merli Feixa	CPMR - Coordinator of TEN-T Group - Representative of the Government of Aragon for the European Regions
Virginia Gil	Plataforma Logística Aquitania-Euskadi – Director
Arantza Iturbide	Plataforma Logística Aquitania-Euskadi - Technician
María Garayo	Technical Assistance
Rossend Bosch	Technical Assistance



Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from the following persons:

Jacques Gangler, of the Conseil Regional de Limousin

Mr. Vareille of the Limousin Regional EESC

Mar Chao, of the Xunta de Galicia

John Cordwell, of Gloucestershire

Marín Vazquez, of the Government of Cantabria

The meeting was opened by Mr Iñaki Betolaza, Deputy Minister for Transport and Public Works for the Basque Government, who welcomed the participants of the Atlantic Arc Commission-Transport Group (AATG).

This welcome was followed by a presentation of the transport policy of the Basque Country, which is based on intermodality, sustainability in infrastructure planning and competitiveness of the transport and logistics sectors.

Additionally, Mr. Betolaza encouraged AATG members to continue international cooperation actions to support the development of transport projects and initiatives and to connect local and global levels.

Next, Mrs. Mireia Elkoroiribe, as AATG Coordinator, thanked the Deputy Minister and all members for attending and moved on to present the first point of the agenda relating to current EU transport affairs.

CURRENT COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REGARDING TRANSPORT

As has become usual, a brief presentation was made of transport issues currently on the agenda of the European Commission. In this case there were three such issues:

- The position of the naval sector in relation to the review of maritime policies up to 2018
- Maritime transport initiatives between France and Portugal
- Presentation of the annual report on TEN-T priority project n°3

Regarding maritime transport initiatives between France and Portugal, Francisco Sabino pointed out that currently there are already maritime lines between Portugal and Italy and Portugal and Morocco, and that the Alentejo region along with the port of Sines, has taken part in the Pirene project relating to the positioning of the Central Pyrenees Crossing (including its study in the TEN-T's priority project n° 16) relating to freight traffic.

Mr. Sabino confirmed that Portugal is currently trying to open new maritime lines with France, in the framework of the Motorways of the Sea development.



Regarding priority project n°3, Mireia Elkoroiribe mentioned the meeting held in November between the President of Aquitaine, Mr. Rousset, the Deputy Minister of Transport for the Basque Government, the European Commissioner Mr. Tajani and Mr. Davignon, with the aim of analysing the situation of the corridor.

In the meeting, emphasis was given to the need to accelerate the construction, especially in France, and to establish greater cooperation aimed at maintaining consistency throughout the entire infrastructure in technical characteristics and the usage forecast.

Xabier Hurteau, of the Communauté de Poitiers, pointed out that, in France's Grenelle de l'Environnement, the Southern European-Atlantic high speed line seems to be a priority for the French Government. He added that two branch lines, Poitiers-Limoges and Bordeaux-Toulouse, have been introduced into this project with the aim of strengthening southwestern France's connection with the rest of the high speed network.

PRESENTATION OF THREE PROPOSALS FOR A TRANSPORT COOPERATION PROJECT

In line with the commitment adopted in the Coimbra meeting, three proposals have been identified which have the potential to become cooperation projects for the Atlantic Space Cooperation Programme. Rossend Bosch, technical assistant, presented a document summarising each proposal for participants to consider. The proposals refer to the following issues:

- Creation of a Short Sea Shipping school for the Atlantic Arc
- Improve the efficiency of the logistical platforms network in the Atlantic corridor
- Experience sharing on the reduction of congestion in Atlantic Arc cities

Alfonso Rodríguez, of Castilla y León, pointed out that the existing SSS school in the Mediterranean -which has been the reference point for the proposal- is led by the Barcelona Port Authority and has an interesting programme of activities in which it has participated occasionally. He considered that the project could be developed in the Atlantic Space but it would be important for it to be led by a Port Authority.

Mireia Elkoroiribe said that this type of initiative could indeed interest the Bilbao Port Authority, either as a participant or leader.

Regarding the logistical platforms proposal, Virginia Gil of the PLAE, considered that it was an interesting project but very ambitious given the number of existing platforms in the Atlantic Space.



If the project were moved forward the PLAE would be interested in taking part as a partner but not as leader. As Mrs. Gil stated, PLAE has recently given its approval to a project to study cross-border cooperation in logistical platforms, which it will lead.

In any case, to articulate a position it would be necessary to set up a project defining participants and financing, and seeking to complement other projects already underway dealing with the same area.

Taking advantage of the discussion of AATG initiatives, the Coordinator thought it useful to introduce into the debate the study project on air transport, a project which has probably become out of date because of the time elapsed in orientating it.

With regard to this project, the Cantabria region had forwarded a letter which Mrs. Elkoroiribe read out, stating the different factors which had made it difficult to carry out the initiative: the small number of participants, the difficulty in adapting the project to the INTERREG programme, the recession which the sector is in, and as a result of all this, the region is abandoning the project. Given this situation, Mireia Elkoroiribe asked for the regions to give their opinions on the matter.

Alfonso Rodriguez of Castilla y León, commented that he recognised the situation of the sector and the bureaucratic difficulties that existed regarding the financial commitments, and that thus, if it was decided not to continue, Castilla y León would also reject the initiative.

Fernando Arrojo, of the Principado de Asturias, added his support to the rejection of the project for the reasons stated.

Joelle Ballarin stated that the heads of air transport for Aquitaine would take a position on the issue based on an exchange of views among the participating regions and on whether the project was revived and the direction it was given.

Given all of this, the Coordinator stated that the air transport issue could become a fourth issue that would be added to the three proposals made by the technical assistants for possible transport cooperation projects.

Benoit Cuvelier of Nantes Metropole and Christophe Le Foll of Basse Normandie thought that the working document presented with the three proposals was interesting and that it was necessary to approach the CAAC or other agents to see if there were other projects being created with identical subject matter, in order to avoid duplication.

In this regard, Julie Miclot of Basse Normandie informed the group about the START project to coordinate sustainable public transport, with actions tied to ticketing, promotion, information, interoperability, etc.



Given this, Mireia Elkoroiribe concluded that the proposals would go forward and regions will shortly be required to express their interest in any of them. She also added that it would be positive if it was not always Euskadi that became the leader of these projects.

Maria Garayo, technical assistant, added that if the objective was for AATG members to present the Atlantic Space with a project it would be necessary to carry out an action to define the content and budget, decide the partners and leader and assign the tasks, in line with the timetable indicated in the call for projects.

QUALITY OF RAIL SERVICES

Maria Garayo presented a communication from the European Commission on the quality of rail freight transport services which set out the actions to be taken to bring the rail transport up to the same quality level as the other modes.

In particular, it emphasised the improvement of rail traffic management and infrastructure maintenance, and more intensive use of innovative technologies.

The Commission's proposals involve strengthening of development of competition, through improvement to infrastructures and their interoperability, and through creating quality measurement instruments and publishing quality indicators.

THE VITORIA-BRETIGNY RAIL MOTORWAY PROJECT

The next presentation to the meeting was given by Virginia Gil of the Plataforma Logística Euskadi-Aquitania.

After presenting the European references in rolling road transport, Virginia Gil presented the data from the market study carried out for the future Vitoria-Bretigny rail motorway project.

Its entry into service is planned for 2010, between Irún and Bretigny (on the outskirts of Paris) and between Vitoria and Bretigny once the Basque Y is in service (approx. 2016).

Mrs. Elkoroiribe indicated that, as in the case of the Motorways of the Sea, it was necessary to promote these new services among logistical operators and transport firms. In the case of Motorways of the Sea, the Basque Government has introduced an ECOBONO recently to encourage the use of the Bilbao-Bruges line among transport firms located in Euskadi.



REVIEW OF THE TEN-T

Merli Feixa, as coordinator of the work group created in the CPMR to articulate a joint position on the Green Paper on the TEN-T review. As well as holding a meeting of the work group in Brussels, a scientific commission has been created which will meet in Zaragoza in April (coinciding with a meeting of the work group).

In the first meeting held in Brussels, the elements to determine the CPMR's position were defined:

- General planning of EU infrastructures: overall vision, improvements of existing infrastructures or creation of new infrastructures
- Environment and climate change
- Territorial cohesion
- New financing formulas: public-private shareholding
- External relations with third countries
- The role of the regions

As well, from a meeting held with the Commission members responsible, Merli Feixa noted that the position to be set out must take the Lisbon strategy into account.

It is expected that the Green Paper will be published at the end of January or in March 2009, and that the subsequent public consultation will be open until May 2009. This will be followed by a report from the Parliament on the Green Paper initiative, and an Informal Transport Council meeting that will deal with the issue so that its conclusions can be taken to the Council meeting in July 2009.

On the CPMR's part, the position document would be presented to the Policy Bureau at the Odessa meeting (in June 2009).

Fabien Mesclier proposed joint AATG and GTAA participation in working out a common position. Mireia Elkoroiribe expressed her agreement although she noted that certain elements could interest some players more than others (regions and cities) due to their scale or the type of problems they involve. She also explained that, if there was no agreement, two position documents would be prepared.

Xabier Hurteau of Poitiers considered that there were several areas of reflection common to the AATG and the CAAC:

- Common elements relating to the Atlantic Space in which relevant strategic planning aspects are developed, as well as East-West connections



- The role of the EU in project financing
- The community dimension of the projects: urban networks, poles of competition, regional connections, etc.

The Policy Bureau of the CAAC will meet in Poitiers in April and will be dedicated to the TEN-T: for this reason, it will be necessary before the meeting to send a document contributing to this Bureau's Green Paper. To prepare this, in March a joint CAAC and AATG technical meeting could be held to work on this common document.

NEXT MEETING

Having dealt with all the items on the agenda, Mireia Elkoriribe, as AATG Coordinator, thanked all those present for their participation as well as the simultaneous translation service for the work carried out.

The next meeting of the group will be Poitiers in March 2009, coinciding with the joint CAAC-AATG meeting proposed above.