



WORKGROUP ON TRANSPORTS FINAL DOCUMENT

Ancona, 27th May 2010

Foreword

The transport workgroup of the AIC Forum has also considered the subject of the protection of the environment as essential for the development of maritime activity, in particular in port areas which are next to inhabited centres. For this reason the work was divided into two separate phases: the first dedicated to the analysis of maritime traffic in the basin in the light of the grave international economic crisis and with a focus on rail-sea intermodality understood as a possible means to lessen the negative external effects on the environment; the second part, on the other hand, was organised jointly with the environmental workgroup and was dedicated to the initiatives in the port area for the protection of the environment and to the analysis of the most interesting best practices.

Strategic guidelines

This year too the workgroup on transports of the AIC Forum has seen the participation of numerous Chambers of Commerce and of the Port Authorities of the various countries of the Adriatic and the Ionian area. The discussion also saw the participation of companies, which have gained significant experience in the logistics and management of transport information, all tending towards an integrated approach.

The analysis conducted by ISTAO (Adriano Olivetti Institute for Studies on Economic and Corporate Management) for the sea traffic observatory has shown that even the Adriatic and Ionian area has suffered negative effects from the international economic crisis. 2009 can be described as a dreadful year also from the transport point of view, even if there were some positive elements which showed the vitality of the ports which look out onto the two seas.

Goods traffic has suffered the most consistent negative variations, returning to the level of 10 years ago. The traffic in the port of Taranto has fallen by 37%, in Ravenna by 28% and in Koper by 17%; the only exception was that of Ploce, where traffic increased by 44%. Even the HGV and trailer traffic has not been spared in the crisis, considering that Patras registered a fall of 20% of crossings, and Trieste and Bari a fall of 13%.

Even in the container sector there has been a general average downward trend, with Ancona and Durres being the only exceptions, whilst passenger traffic has kept up relatively well, with just Patras being an exception. On the tourism front, we can report good growth in cruises, which increased by 10% during 2008, helped particularly by Venice and Bari (this latter reached the same number of passengers as Dubrovnik) but also by smaller ports, like Ancona.

The baseline scenario for maritime transport in the Mediterranean is evolving rapidly and competition from North African ports of call is increasing; this observation means that the maritime ports in the Adriatic and Ionian must act rapidly in order to maintain an adequate level of competitiveness.

The workgroup also analysed the initiatives of integration between ship and train, in the firm belief that the development of intermodality can contribute to improving port logistics services, also paying great attention to environmental sustainability. The ports of the Adriatic and the Ionian need to win back space and visibility in the markets in order to fully develop the role of contact between southern and northern European countries.

In this field, the port of Trieste has, up until today, been the most active and the only one to have created a link via the railways on an international level. Other ports have started to move with projects aimed at the partial movement of goods traffic by railway, but there is a clear necessity emerging of the need to financially support the start up of similar activities, which otherwise will not be competitive when compared with the traditional road method.

The ports of the northern Adriatic, in particular Ravenna, Trieste, Venice, Koper and soon also Rijeka, have created a network in which they have started up a significant lobbying action to extend the priority Project 23 to Ravenna. The ports of the middle and lower Adriatic have not yet succeeded in working together cooperatively and this must be the main objective in the next few years in order to avoid ending up on the fringes of the great maritime traffic of the Mediterranean and missing a great opportunity.



The Chambers of Commerce can make a worthwhile contribution in this direction. In March this year an association of European Chambers of Commerce was set up, called Blue Chamber Network, which brings together numerous countries and which aims to tackle initiatives within the framework of maritime policies in a professional way and involving various players at a regional level. It is a network which will allow the Chambers of Commerce to equip themselves with professional expertise and be ready to contribute in a more incisive way to the future choices by the European Commission around maritime transport.

It is important that the AIC Forum also begins to have a dialogue with this network within Eurochambres. Up until now the deliberation taking place within the Forum has shown up numerous fields in which joined-up work is necessary, but the diversity of conditions in the various countries (divided between EU members, potential members and countries which have not started the procedure of joining the EU) has limited the ability to transform project ideas into action. Something else which has also had a great influence on this impossibility is the lack of specific technical expertise (in particular in relation to the Marco Polo project, which has several times been suggested as the ideal way to begin concrete actions and even to involve private partners). This could be remedied by participating in the Blue Chamber Network.

The discussion has also enabled us to learn of some significant initiatives started by the port authorities in the area, particularly Ancona and Rijeka, on the subject of improving port infrastructures and the management of transport logistics.

In particular, in the port area of Ancona new container wharfs have started being built, as a result of which goods traffic will increase significantly, thus supporting trade between the south and north of Europe. There are some significant investments planned even in Rijeka, with some businesses being moved in order to create a commercial area on the waterfront which will hand the port back to the city and its inhabitants.

Another particularly interesting project is the one submitted by an Italian society which specialises in integrated data processing management of information relating to the various types of public transport. At the moment there is no means available to tourists and travellers to allow them to plan their own journeys by combining various types of transport (boats, buses, trains, etc.); computer platforms exist which can gather together all the existing information and make it available to the traveller, both on-line and in specific collection points of traffic flow. This tool is aimed at the port authorities and institutions; those present in the workgroup showed their interest in the idea and the desire to extend its future application to include the Adriatic-Ionian area.

The workgroup is aware of the necessity to put its own work into a wider context, sharing with the institutions of the Adriatic and Ionian regions their convictions that we must work in an integrated manner, presenting ourselves as one hub in the eyes of the great international carriers, in order to supply competitive services and space.

We must also strongly rely on our own specialisations, without uselessly wasting resources and energy: The ports of the middle and lower Adriatic have a competitive advantage in medium-short distance journeys, those of the north in long-distance journeys. However, a new joint focus is needed!

We must therefore quickly involve the institutions in a lobbying action to bring to the attention of the European Commission the development opportunities for this important part of the Europe of the future.

Conclusions (concerted actions)

The workgroup intends to:

- continue to carefully monitor the progress of maritime traffic in the Adriatic-Ionian basin in order to assess the medium and long-term effects of the international economic crisis. The significant downward trend in trade in 2009 could also reflect on the transport industry and on sector employment;
- check the possibility of joining the Blue Chamber Network and also include the needs of the Adriatic and Ionian ports in Community discussion;
- try to bring even further together the Port Authorities of the central and southern Adriatic in order to create an action group able to bring to the attention of the Community institutions the requests of this area, following the example of the northern Adriatic ports.

Annex:

Observatory on Sea Traffic in the Adriatic-Ionian basin
Report on traffic 2009
(source – ISTAO, Ancona)