

SOUTH EAST EUROPE TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

3rd Call for Proposals

Terms of reference

Efficient access to a SEE coordinated multimodal freight network
between ports and landlocked countries

March 2011

1. Background

It was in 2001, when the Commission in the White Paper, **“European transport policy for 2010: time to decide”**,¹ included, among its priorities the need to shift the balance and improve the links among modes of transport and secure intermodality, especially by enforcing the connection between sea, inland waterways and rail, to cope with the growing congestion of roads and to eliminate bottlenecks. In the mid-term review of 2006², disconnecting mobility from its negative side-effects, shifting to more environmentally friendly mode, and co-modality, i.e. the efficient use of different modes on their own and in combination, became part of the renewed agenda. Lately in 2009, the Commission has launched a reflection on the **Sustainable Future for Transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system**³. What came out, *vis-à-vis* the impressive growth of the transport demand (between 1995 and 2007, 1.7 % per year on average for the passengers and 2.7 % per year on average for freight) point to the need for satisfying a rising demand for ‘accessibility’ in a context of growing sustainability concerns. The most immediate priorities appear to be the better integration of the different modes of transport as a way to improve the overall efficiency of the system and the acceleration of the development and deployment of innovative technologies⁴.

The SWOT analysis which has served for the definition of the SEE Programme has highlighted that accessibility of the SEE space and the mobility of passengers and goods inside the Programme area is – in the majority of countries - still sub-standard and provides a poor level of service.

The reason for this is primarily to be identified in the lags in the quality and quantity of infrastructure, a problem which needs enormous financial investments and a relevant lapse of time to be improved effectively. However there are diverse other possible actions for substantial improvement of the accessibility, as pointed out by the EU strategies mentioned above, that can be put in place. These are directed to optimize the coordination among the existing services, now supplied by different modes of transport, creating intermodal connected systems by existing transport facilities, overcoming discontinuity across borders and finally the lack of infrastructure.

The programme has set the enhancement of multimodal transport among its objectives, taking advantage of the possibility offered also by the richness of inland waterways and the vast maritime surrounding waterfront of the Programme area and its relevant ports (in addition to the road and rail network). Multi-modal platforms should be promoted and developed as a potential for consolidation and optimisation of passenger and freight flows to

¹ DG Transport (2001) *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide*, Brussels COM(2001) 370 final

² DG Transport (2006) *Keep Europe moving - Sustainable mobility for our continent - Mid-term review of the European Commission’s 2001 Transport White paper* [COM(2006)314]

³ DG Transport (2009) *A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system* 17 June 2009 [COM(2009) 279]

⁴ In line with the flagship initiative “Resource Efficient Europe”, *Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, COM(2010) 2020

and within the SEE area, with airport, ports, stations and urban centres acting as natural intermodal nodes.

Improving intermodal links could effectively help in overcoming the lack of accessibility of the Programme area related to:

- scarcity and fragmentation of infrastructure (and high costs and time necessary for restructuring/modernisation)
- lack of coordination in procedures and facilities causing impediments and long waiting time at border crossing and subsequently low interest in market operators
- increasing road congestion (as cheapest and most flexible transport mode) with strong negative territorial and environmental impact as well as reduction of the quality of life

The SEE Operational Programme does not tackle the intermodal accessibility for goods or people separately.

However, at advanced stage, they require different approaches and different instruments, thus 2 terms of reference are defined.

THEME 3.2: Efficient access to a SEE coordinated multimodal freight network between ports and landlocked countries.

The optimal functioning of the transnational transport system requires full integration and synergy of transport modes of the national and individual components of the network, as well as interconnection between the networks of the various transport modes for the creation of potentials for their synergy. This is true for the traffic of passengers, but twice as much for the transportation of goods.

The general preference to move the goods by road is a fact, as it represents the cheapest as well as the most flexible mode of transport, which better adapts to the general poor infrastructural network of the SEE Programme area. This, as defined before, is the highest obstacle to the improvement of the accessibility of the region and cannot be solved in limited time and with the limited financial availability of the SEE Programme.

However, the predominance of road transportation has important consequences in terms of environmental and territorial impact, but also on the deterioration of the present road network. There are areas of the programme area which are nor origin neither destination of important transit freight flow and are not getting if not minor benefit from the increase exchange of goods between (often) countries or ports at the two opposite ends. In many cases the quality of life of the population is highly affected by the intense and growing traffic of trucks on roads crossing villages.

The reasons for a limited use of the alternative transport modes are not only to be found in the lack or poor quality of infrastructures, above all if considering a transnational area. There is a general lack of shared standards and procedures and harmonised legal framework, among the countries of the SEE Programme area; administrative and communication processes if modernised and correctly tackled to the final users (often SMEs), could lead to substantial increase of the share and efficiency of alternative transport modes in the SEE region.

Crucial in achieving this result is the improvement of the efficiency of nodal points of the transport networks for transshipment and/or distribution, e.g. hubs, intermodal terminals, multimodal platforms. This will typically be the case in areas with a high activity of freight transport, i.e. where high volume corridors of different modes are intersecting.

At a transnational level, this requires coordination among the partner countries; following this approach, relevant results for the programme area - which suffers of low accessibility - can be achieved also without infrastructural development, at an early stage. Transnational cooperation in the SEE Programme area could give an important contribution to seamless accessibility by supporting the improvement and organisation of services and procedures for a quality and less polluting integrated transport system.

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall objective

The ultimate goal for a strategic project under this ToR is to support the improvement and organisation of intermodal services and procedures for a quality and less polluting integrated freight transport system between the sea and inland ports and the landlocked countries , through a better use of the existing infrastructure for alternative transport modes (railways, inland waterways and maritime) as well as by promoting coordination between the stakeholders and the decision makers, to pave the way to a more flexible and easy-to-access intermodality for the SMEs.

2.2 Specific objectives

- To facilitate the access to greener transport modes in transnational pilot routes feeding traffic of goods to, from and across the programme area, with focus on connections between sea and inland ports to landlocked countries.
- To improve the institutional framework, through definition of transnational agreements for harmonised simplification of the legislation and custom procedures and waiting times reduction at border crossing for greener modes of transport (railway companies and maritime and inland navigation) , also with introduction of one-stop shop solutions.
- To improve efficiency, reliability and quality of the greener transport modes by optimisation of organisational procedures and the implementation of shared ICT solutions in multimodal platforms of the pilot transnational network
- To make the access to multimodality for SMEs easy and attractive through intense information and promotion programmes, transparency, awareness raising campaigns, flexible solutions and incentives specifically targeted on the end users, also on cross border relations
- To decrease road congestion and rebalance the transportation market in the SEE Programme area, by promoting measures for internalisation of external costs taking into account environmental and territorial impact and the quality of life of the affected population
- To pave the way for better, more efficient, well organised transportation of goods to and across the SEE programme area, and implement infrastructures used to their full potential, not suffering but designing actively the future infrastructures and priority corridors in line with the EU regulation (in the field of labour, safety, CO2 emission, cabotage).

3. Activities

The project activities must build on a careful assessment of the previous achievements in the field, including SEE projects approved under the 1st and 2nd call for proposals and other actions implemented through different regional development programmes. Capitalisation of previous results is of utmost importance in order not to duplicate activities and to bring added value to the project.

The activities listed under 3.1 “Compulsory activities” must be included into all proposed strategic projects for consideration.

The activities listed under 3.2 “Additional indicative activities” are optional (and intends to offer a non exhaustive list of possible complementary activities). Additional activities can be added to the minimum set of compulsory activities, however their presence does not automatically ensure higher scores in the quality check of the assessment. Additional activities to the minimum set of compulsory ones are assessed according to the contribution they bring in to the achievements of the objectives of the project, their concreteness, feasibility and adequacy, also in relation to the budget, the partnership and the timeframe foreseen

3.1 Compulsory activities

- Census of existing intermodal nodes on a representative freight network (to be proposed by the applicant) connecting ports to landlocked countries, and assessment of the existing legislation, standards, procedures and services, which can be improved in order to increase the competitiveness of the infrastructure and increase attractiveness of multimodal transport.
- Discussion platform of the main stakeholders (i.e. public authorities, transport companies, logistics operators) with the aim of harmonising standards and procedures on the pilot freight network to allow multimodal transport be efficient and attractive to operators
- Joint pilot implementation of ICT solutions (or systems for harmonization of existing) in the selected multimodal platform of the network based on existing successful systems to be adapted to the specific network (for exchange of data, paperless administrative management, tracking and tracing systems...), targeted on transnational transport and the local level of origins and destinations.
- Targeted information and promotion of intermodal transport facilities to the representative of the productive sectors, the SMEs and the other end users, in order to tailor the system on their needs and facilitate their access – above all the local entrepreneurs - to alternative and greener transport modes
- Concluding transnational agreements on common measures for internalization of external costs of road transport on the pilot transnational network for raising competitiveness of the multimodal transport

3.2 Additional indicative activities

- Planning future activities for further development of multimodal transport in the network of freight traffic nodes, including possibilities to transfer the best practices to other freight traffic nodes.
- Development of common training modules for human resources employed in ports and logistic facilities.
- Common strategy for the application of measures for the internalization of external costs of road transport on the pilot transnational network for increasing competitiveness of the multimodal transport
- Identification of future investment needs in the multimodal platforms of the network with the purpose of facilitating efficient freight transport
- Pilot actions, i.e. launching of experimental services and small infrastructural investments for reinforcing expected impacts of project results

4. **Outputs**

- A discussion platform of the main stakeholders of the intermodal freight in place and functioning with the aim of improving the organisation of existing facilities for improved transnational accessibility via alternative modes of transport
- A pilot network of well connected freight multimodal hubs covering relevant part of the programme area, and linking sea and inland ports to landlocked countries, identified, and shared common solutions for a higher synergy of transport modes
- Agreements on alignment of legislation and multimodal logistics facilities, procedures and standards at transnational level developed to facilitate access to alternative modes of transport and interoperability of hubs, included agreements on border crossing
- Set of harmonized procedures and standards at hubs on the pilot network as a result of shared organisational restructuring towards a common transnational goal
- Main ICT and other soft infrastructure solutions implemented harmonically in the pilot network, allowing efficient management of the access to alternative transport modes
- Information and promotion activities implemented for the involvement of the SMEs and targeting of the multimodal services to the need of the end users – above all the local entrepreneurs -, including information on the impact on the environment and the territory, but also the quality of life of the population affected by the high road transport
- Transnational schemes or agreements on internalisation of external costs for rebalancing the transport market towards less polluting modes in the region

5. Beneficiaries

5.1 Eligible Partnership

Maximum 3 (three) financing partners per country and per project concept can be involved (due to the high number of countries involved in the Programme, developing too large partnerships might hamper a smooth management, leading to strong deficiencies of the implementation).

At least 8 (eight) Partner States shall be included (in terms of location of Partners – both financing and ASP).

5.2 Further Recommendations

A strong partnership consists of a variety of stakeholders with different perspectives, capacities, and roles to play in the strategic project and includes partners with the specific competences to carry on the foreseen tasks per each region involved, towards the best transnational impact. A good partnership is balanced with regard to participation per country, distribution of the budget and responsibility and does include neither silent partners, nor all-purposes partners. A good partnership includes only partners which ensure a clear benefit for the country/region they represent, not only a financial benefit for the partner itself. Each proposed partnership must contain a lead partner, who will manage and coordinate the activities. The lead partner must have some demonstrated capacity (previous projects, etc.) to lead and manage large, international projects of this character.

Project partners should consist of the following types of institutions and authorities:

- National/ regional authorities with clear competences of development of freight transport and connections with neighbouring countries (included custom procedures)
- Customs authorities
- Railway freight operators, Port Authorities, inland navigation institutions, shipping operators, logistics operators if eligible according to programme rules
- Chambers of commerce and logistics associations if eligible according to the programme rules
- Institutes for research and innovation on transport able to support the adaptation of tools and ensure theoretical advice towards the specific project objective

In addition, ideally, the proposed partnership specific to this theme:

- should consist of maximum 20 (twenty) partners, able to insure high political commitment
- at least 4 (four) of the project partners should be sea or river ports
- at least 4 (four) of the project partners should be railway freight operators
- Business association or chambers of commerce participate to foster the dialogue with the SMEs and the final users

- no more than 2 (two) partners should be Institutes for research and innovation on transport or bodies with similar competences and offer scientific support to the whole partnership for the adaptation of the available tools to the specific network
- Associations of freight transport operators and providers of intermodal services should be involved preferably as ASPs their role being relate more to harmonization of different procedures/ standards/ policies.