Council of Ministers

INTEGRATION

Implementation of the Helsinki Declaration
Information Note and Statement

This document is presented under item 6 of the Council of Ministers’ agenda of 30-31 May 2000, for discussion and approval.
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI DECLARATION
INFORMATION NOTE AND DRAFT STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The Helsinki Declaration adopted by the Third Pan-European Transport Conference, held in Helsinki from 23 to 25 June 1997, lays down the framework for a Pan-European transport policy, the key elements of which are presented under three headings: objectives to be achieved (Section II), basic principles (Section III) and means of action (Section IV).

In addition, Section V contains a policy commitment to “consider the need firstly to monitor implementation of the ‘means’ set out in Section IV and secondly to evaluate periodically the degree of achievement of the ‘objectives’ described in Section II”. This task is entrusted to the European Union, the ECMT and the UN/ECE, as well as to partners in multilateral and regional initiatives, who are given the mandate “to co-operate in the aggregation of relevant data, to review progress towards regional and sectoral goals, and to make proposals for more effective implementation on the basis of experience”.

This note corresponds to this mandate and reviews progress with the implementation of the provisions in the Helsinki declaration. It discusses both the process and the substance in general terms.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The EU, UN/ECE and ECMT are all heavily engaged in work related to the follow-up of the Helsinki Declaration. It is not the intention here to go into the details of all these activities, but merely to assert that they are numerous and co-ordinated.

In the particular case of ECMT, much of its work contributes to achieving the aims in the Helsinki Declaration. For example, the material presented and agreed at the Warsaw Ministerial session and published for the Prague session on integration makes a contribution in several areas including simplifying border crossing procedures, achieving legal harmonization and approximation, public private financing and links between Europe and Asia.

The regular updates on activities show that there are major efforts being made to align legislation across the continent with the aim to gradually approximate regulations in the safety, environmental, technical and social spheres, in order to eliminate distortions of competition and to assist in the creation of a unified transport market.
SPECIFIC ECMT ACTIVITIES

The ECMT conducted a survey in 1998 and 1999 on the implementation of the Helsinki Declaration in ECMT Member countries which are not EU Member States and which are not currently involved in the process of pre-accession to the EU.

The eleven ECMT Member countries concerned were asked to provide detailed information on the progress made with implementation of the Declaration and to evaluate the main difficulties encountered or foreseen, whether they are of an institutional, political, legal, economic or practical nature, indicating, where appropriate, any assistance the ECMT might provide to help countries overcome these difficulties.

On the basis of the responses a document [CEMT/CS/INT(99)8] was prepared for the last meeting of the Group on the Integration of New Member States.

These responses show, on the one hand, that many actions are being undertaken to implement the declaration. On the other hand, it is difficult to assess progress precisely since both the Helsinki Declaration and the information provided by countries are often rather general and many issues are not described in detail. Other methods also need to be used to assess progress and eliminate problems. Some are mentioned below.

REMAINING PROBLEMS

Nevertheless, there are many problems outstanding. These vary by countries or Groups of countries but can summed up as follows:

- inadequate financial resources to maintain the system properly or to invest in new or upgraded infrastructure;
- major declines in the use of railways, especially for freight, necessitating extensive restructuring and staff lay-offs;
- difficulties in crossing borders and in obtaining permits and visas for international road transport;
- uneven progress in implementing policies to liberalise and deregulate the sector;
- severe problems in some regions like the Balkans beset by wars and the run-down of the transport system;
- problems of road charges that do not reflect costs or principles of non-discrimination;
- environmental problems due to inadequate resources to renew fleets and growing pressure from increasing road transport.
- Poor road safety records in many countries.

While many of these problems are being addressed in the new ECMT programme of work, and also in the work of other organisations, a great deal remains to be done to implement the Helsinki Declaration.
WAYS FORWARD

While significant progress towards implementing the Helsinki Declaration is being made, it remains clear that it varies widely between countries. Actions and initiatives continue to be needed at different levels.

At national level, countries need to assess their own progress and, as has been stated previously, an effective way to do this is through a process of peer review. Countries are invited to express their interest in such a process.

At international level the work programmes of the EU, UN/ECE and ECMT are all contributing to meeting the aims of the declaration. Monitoring of progress in legislative approximation is being carried out intensively by the EU in the accession process and the enlargement negotiations.

As regards the Priority Corridors, the Memoranda of Understanding and other mechanisms help ensure that work is being advanced. Moreover, possibilities to discuss modifications or adjustments to these Corridors also exist.

Regional Conferences or special focussed Conferences on specific themes -- like that to be organised by Russia in St Petersburg in September on Europe Asia links -- can make concrete contributions to dealing with particular issues.

Good consultation mechanisms with social partners and with professional international organisations exist in ECMT and elsewhere and can be used to provide opportunities for the views of all actors to be heard and taken into account.

Given the numerous actions underway and the many existing possibilities for cooperation it would therefore appear that there is not, at present, a need for a further major Pan European Conference.

It may, however, be appropriate at this stage for Ministers to express their support for the work underway and the processes being used and to do so in a formal statement. A draft follows.
DRAFT STATEMENT

Ministers of Transport of ECMT meeting in Prague on 30-31 May 2000:

- Note the summary report on the implementation of the Helsinki declaration;
- Note the progress the ECMT Member countries are making to achieve the aims of the Declaration and in particular:
  - on gradual liberalisation and improvement of market access
  - on legislative approximation in many countries but especially in the candidate countries
  - on the facilitation of border crossings
  - on the introduction of green lorries and on integrating environmental concerns into transport.
- Note the close cooperation between the EU and UN/ECE, ECMT in the monitoring of the Declaration;
- Agree that the principal need at present is for the continuation of the process underway;
- Agree that focussed regional conferences on specific themes (like the forthcoming St Petersburg Conference on Europe-Asia links) represents a solid way to make progress;
- Agree that in certain areas, like the Balkans, a regional approach to deal with particular issues can be helpful;
- Ask in particular ECMT to contribute through:
  - ensuring that the key resolutions are being fully implemented
  - carrying out reviews with countries individually or on particular policy issues with groups of countries;
  - supporting regional or other initiatives to meet the aims of the Declaration;
  - continuing to provide opportunities for all key actors in the sector to communicate their views