Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other transport modes'

COM(2008) 887 final — 2008/0263 (COD)

(2009/C 277/17)

Rapporteur: **Mr ZBOŘIL**

On 29 January 2009, the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 295 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other transport modes

COM(2008) 887 final – 2008/0163 (COD).

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 15 April 2009. The rapporteur was Mr ZBOŘIL.

At its 453rd plenary session, held on 13 and 14 May 2009 (meeting of 13 May), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 183 votes to 3 with 6 abstentions.

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. The EESC welcomes the Commission's initiative, believing it essential to have a reliable, functional, effective and safe road transport system (including services provided in this area).

1.2. The Committee agrees that the proposed directive should be adopted to make the ITS action plan possible, since it constitutes the required legal framework for coordinating the intelligent transport system while being supple enough to meet the proportionality and subsidiarity principles.

1.3. Enabling traffic to flow smoothly on road networks necessitates having real-time transport information and data on incidents and conditions causing complete or partial congestion at certain locations or on certain stretches. ITS must provide accurate, reliable and standardised information in real time and give users the freedom to choose.

1.4. The EESC considers it essential to have a unified European taxonomy (such as the AlerTC system) of incidents and conditions affecting traffic flow and safety on the roads. An XML data exchange format also needs to be standardised to enable the exchange of real-time traffic data and travel information. The parameters also need to be established for creating a standardised georeferenced network of road infrastructure for a standardised digital geographical localisation of conditions and incidents, including information on roads and stretches of road and associated infrastructure.

1.5. A system should be used to process and distribute the necessary data to the end user so that it does not unduly inconvenience drivers, but actually make things easier for them and so increases traffic safety.

1.6. The EESC recommends that the architecture of ITS systems be speedily established at national level by defining specific functions as well as the basic standard equipment for TEN-T roads with tangible telematic systems to deliver the specific functions required.

1.7. The Committee points out that building the infrastructure should involve relevant sources of funding from the Community, the Member States and the private sector. Operating costs should be funded from taxes or tolls. Obligations to be met by central bodies at national level in the collecting, processing, sharing, publishing, distributing and cross-border sharing of traffic data must also be worked out in further detail.

1.8. ITS will involve the increasing use of high volumes of data. Their implementation, therefore, requires the development of a long-term approach, taking into account not only current applications but also possible future system developments and the role and responsibility of the various parties involved. The intelligent transport systems put in place must also strictly comply with data protection requirements. The directive and action plan must ensure necessary protection against misuse via any technical, technological, organisational or legal means, in accordance with the legal provisions of the EU and Member States [1].

[1] Opinion No 4/2004 of Article 29 Working Party on the Processing of Personal Data by means of Video Surveillance, WP 89, 11.2.2004. Declaration of the Article 29 Working Party on Enforcement, WP 101, 25.11.2004. http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/workinggroup/wpdocs/2004_en.htm

1.9. The EESC recommends that appropriate measures be included in the action plan to promote modern IT transport technologies e.g. through the organisation of a competition for intelligent vehicles.

2. **Introduction – Commission Documents**

2.1. According to the mid-term review of the White Paper on EU transport policy, innovation will play a big part in greater road transport sustainability (i.e. in making it safer, more economic and efficient, cleaner and smoother), especially through the deployment of information and communication technologies – i.e. intelligent transport systems.

2.2. The increasing overload on our transport systems (with a 55 % rise in road freight transport and 36 % rise in passenger transport expected by 2020) and the energy consumption and related environmental damage (CO_2 emissions from transport slated to go up 15 % by 2020) call for an innovative approach that copes with the growing needs and demands of transport and mobility. Traditional measures, such as extending existing transport networks, will not be possible on the required scale and fresh solutions will have to be found.

2.3. The deployment of intelligent transport systems is slower than expected and generally piecemeal. The result is an atomised structure of national, regional and local solutions lacking any clear harmonisation. As a result, ITS is used ineffectually and so incapable of making a telling contribution to achieving (transport) policy aims and to mastering the growing number of difficult challenges with which road transport is contending.

2.4. One particular aim is to improve the interoperability of the system, ensure a smooth approach, support the continuity of services and create mechanisms for effective cooperation between all entities involved in the ITS sphere. A (framework) directive is judged the most appropriate way of achieving the intended goal in conformity with the subsidiarity principle.

2.5. However, the technical details of deployment – the procedures and specifications – will be adopted by the Commission, aided by a committee made up of representatives from the Member States. Without prejudice to the remit of this committee, the Commission will set up a European advisory group for ITS (service providers, consumers' associations, transport and equipment operators, the manufacturing industry, the social partners and professional associations) to which the relevant stakeholders in the field will be invited; it will advise the Commission on the commercial and technical aspects of setting up and deploying ITS in the EU. This advisory group for ITS will gather and collate input from existing fora such as eSafety and ERTRAC.

2.6. This proposal deals with ITS applications and services associated with road transport and their interfaces with other transport modes. Road transport is regulated by various legislation: Directive 2004/52/EC on the interoperability of electronic road toll systems, Regulation 3821/85/EEC on recording equipment in road transport and Directive 2007/46/EC establishing a framework for the approval of motor vehicles and their trailers, and of systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles. A clear complementarity between the work of the committees concerned will be ensured.

2.7. The proposal will help towards a number of (microeconomic) goals of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. Above all, it will help to facilitate the proliferation and effective use of ITS. It will also contribute to the following goals:

— facilitating all forms of innovation: cross-border information transfer on the effective deployment of ITS;

— expanding, improving and connecting European infrastructure and completing priority cross-border projects; assessing the arguments for suitable price-setting systems in the infrastructure;

— supporting the sustainable use of resources and improving synergy between environmental protection and growth, especially helping to develop ways of internalising external costs;

— increasing and improving investment in research and development, especially from private companies: better environment for the use of innovative ITS solutions.

2.8. Chapter 4 of the Communication on Greening Transport, adopted by the Commission in July 2008 (COM(2008) 433), sets out an action plan for ITS in road transport to be achieved through a legislative initiative that establishes a common approach to getting existing technologies onto the market and used. In addition, using existing infrastructure more efficiently will mean that less new infrastructure will be needed, avoiding habitat fragmentation and soil sealing.

2.9. This proposal also meshes with the EU's sustainable development strategy, since it tackles several key issues flagged up for greater effort in the course of the 2005 review. What these have in common is the aim of making transport greener – for example, through better management of demand for transport and helping to improve road transport safety by halving the number of road accident fatalities by 2010 (compared with 2000). Another question to be addressed indirectly is cutting energy consumption in the EU and hence reducing the contribution to climate change. The proposal also supports the implementation of Regulation 1/2005/EC on the protection of animals during transport and related operations (navigation systems).

2.10. The proposal for a directive sets forth a framework for implementing the ITS action plan. To back up the obligations the directive imposes upon Member States, the Commission will bring in uniform specifications, following discussions in the committees, to ensure a Europe-wide coordinated introduction of ITS interoperability systems. This work will be carried out by the Commission, assisted by the European committee for ITS. The directive also establishes a framework for exchange of information with the Member States. The proposed ITS action plan brings in priority areas for speeding up the coordinated deployment of ITS applications and services throughout the European Union.

2.11. The ITS action plan builds on a series of European Commission initiatives currently underway, including the action plan for freight transport logistics ([2]), the action plan for urban mobility ([3]), the introduction of the Galileo system ([4]), the package of measures for greening transport ([5]), the i2010 initiative for intelligent vehicles ([6]), the eSafety initiative ([7]), the Seventh Framework Programme for research and technical development ([8]), the eCall service ([9]), the European technology platforms and their strategic research plans ([10]) and the CARS 21 initiative ([11]).

3. **General comments**

3.1. The EESC welcomes the Commission's initiative, believing it essential to have a reliable, functional, effective and safe road transport system (including services provided in this area). Coordinated deployment of ITS means ensuring optimal traffic flow in the individual Member States and in Europe as a whole for as much of the time as possible.

3.2. The Committee agrees that the proposed directive should be adopted to make the ITS action plan possible, since it constitutes the legal framework needed for coordinating the intelligent transport system and is at the same time supple enough to meet the proportionality and subsidiarity principles.

3.3. It is important to achieve the objectives of the proposed directive, in particular to improve the functionality, reliability, effectiveness and safety of road transport, if we are to ensure a more stable economic and social environment in individual Member States and throughout the EU. The deployment of ITS will have an impact on regional development, particularly where the volume of goods exceeds the capacity of the existing road network. The regions should play an important role in implementing the Directive and the action plan by pooling experience and sharing best practices.

3.4. The Directive does not contain any specific provisions ensuring the effective deployment of ITS, via concrete control mechanisms, in the road systems of the Member States, despite the funding from the Commission and the projects mentioned above (Easy Way etc.).

3.5. Enabling traffic to flow smoothly on road networks necessitates having real-time transport information and data on incidents and conditions causing complete or partial congestion at certain locations or on certain stretches.

3.6. ITS must provide reliable, standardised and sufficiently accurate information in real time, as well as delivering information on intermodal transport and giving users the freedom to choose between the various modes of transport available.

3.7. ITS will involve the increasing use of high volumes of data. Their implementation, therefore, requires the development of a long-term approach, taking into account not only current applications but also possible future system developments and the role and responsibility of the various parties involved. To ensure the protection of privacy, personal data which can be used to identify individuals should be processed within a legal and technical structure that allows the transmission of personal data for strictly defined purposes only in accordance with the legal framework of the EU and the individual Member States.

3.8. The core requirement is to ensure that the initial provider can guarantee the anonymity of the data. The advisory group must cooperate and consult with the European Data Protection Supervisor on such issues; we recommend that the data supervisor be represented directly within the advisory group.

3.9. There must be no exclusive status for Galileo and cooperation with all available satellite navigation systems must be possible.

3.10. To garner and share information and data on road blockages or hold-ups, we need to have a unified European taxonomy of the monitored incidents and conditions that cause such events and so reduce safety and smooth flow of traffic, as well as an XML data exchange format.

3.11. Similarly, there needs to be unification of the parameters for creating a standardised georeferenced network of road infrastructure for a standardised digital geographical localisation of conditions and incidents, including information on roads and stretches of road and associated infrastructure. Use should be made of the Member States' experience and best practices. Also involved here are systems for managing the state of road surfaces to ensure they are always technically sound.

([2]) COM(2007) 607.
([3]) To be submitted by the European Commission in 2009.
([4]) http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/galileo.
([5]) COM(2008) 433.
([6]) COM(2007) 541.
([7]) www.esafetysupport.org.
([8]) http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7.
([9]) www.esafetysupport.org/en/ecall_toolbox.
([10]) http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms.
([11]) COM(2007) 22.

3.12. A system should be used to process and distribute the necessary data to the end user so that it does not unduly inconvenience drivers, but actually makes things easier for them and so increases traffic safety, particularly taking into account the ageing population. The Directive should also envisage providing ITS users with information support to maximise benefits to the operation, effectiveness and safety of the system, while at the same time lowering the accident rate.

3.13. ITS is also understood to include the information systems used by the transport units of the Police, the fire service, road network operators, meteorological services as well as by drivers themselves. The travel information and data from such systems must be an integral part of the content of travel information.

3.14. In addition to processes to improve traffic flow, new roads need to be built to extend networks (especially in places where these are incomplete) and reconstruction and repairs carried out so that enough road capacity is available, while respecting land conditions, the environment and so on. ITS should be integrated into not only newly constructed TEN-T networks but also into already existing networks.

4. **Specific comments**

4.1. The Directive and the action plan should identify tangible objectives which all Member States can achieve during the opening phase:

— o ensure the collection and collation of travel information and data on the current transport situation in the Member States at national level;

— o ensure the cross-border exchange of travel information and data on the current transport situation on the TEN-T network in real time;

— o provide drivers with basic travel information, free of charge, as a public service.

4.2. Road traffic and travel data on partial or complete congestion at points and sections of transport infrastructure are used in associated processes for:

— checking and monitoring the removal of the causes of congestion or the management of adverse conditions until these have been completely eradicated;

— providing information about the place, time, extent and causes of traffic congestion or adverse conditions to all those on the roads (the driving public, drivers of emergency vehicles, etc.);

— managing traffic on roads to ensure smooth traffic flow on the network based on identified incidents responsible for congestion or adverse conditions (management of a certain stretch of the network and on alternative routes, etc.);

— analysis of recurrent causes for incidents impeding traffic flow on roads in certain places and stretches so that measures can be proposed and implemented to reduce or eradicate them.

4.3. The proposals fail to define the functions that ITS systems should address or at least indicate when these functions will be defined by experts. These are framework documents and too general, which could lead to different procedures in individual roles and areas.

4.4. For this reason, the Committee proposes defining some ITS functions as follows:

4.4.1. Operations management systems: These gather and process information as part of the operation of bodies, organisations and institutions (police, fire brigades, medical emergency services); some parts of this primary information can serve as traffic information about the present situation on the roads.

4.4.2. Collection of data and information from telematic applications: This monitors specified characteristics of individual elements of the transport system at certain sections of road using telematic systems (ITS).

4.4.3. Managing and routing traffic: The intelligent transport system assesses tangible traffic information and sensor data automatically, or through an operator, and directs traffic on a given stretch of road via the appropriate means (variable message traffic signs, illuminated arrows or signals, and so on).

4.4.4. Surveillance: visual surveillance by road traffic bodies, organisations and institutions using shared camera systems.

4.4.5. Information provision: Road traffic and travel data on partial or complete congestion is published or distributed to all clients and road users. Information is provided through normal and accessible media and information technologies by public or private companies in the form of pre-trip and on-trip information services.

4.4.6. Monitoring and sanctions: Telematic systems verify that certain obligations (e.g. tolls) are met and road traffic rules obeyed, possibly followed up by sanctions for the most serious infringements (e.g. speeding, jumping red lights, exceeding weight limits, tracking stolen vehicles), in accordance with the traffic regulations of the Member States and at EU level ([12]), in the event of their harmonisation.

4.4.7. Maintenance checks: Telematic systems also monitor the reliability of individual system elements, including the automatic identification of problems and triggering of follow-up procedures or back-up.

4.5. The EESC also recommends defining basic European standards (or model examples) for equipping roads incorporated into TEN-T with 'standard' telematic systems for collecting travel data, traffic monitoring and management:

— CCTV surveillance system,

— traffic-flow monitoring, congestion detection and traffic census systems,

— variable traffic sign systems and information transfer equipment,

— meteorological information system for roads,

— traffic management on major transport routes,

— rescue system.

4.6. These systems and information from operations management systems can be used to evaluate traffic flow and conditions, including estimated travel time to key destinations.

4.7. The EESC draws attention to possible problems in retrofitting vehicles with dedicated ITS equipment; the architecture of systems must have the necessary compatibility. Vehicle systems and infrastructure must be developed to operate on open platforms. This applies not only to systems and technology but also to the services provided through them.

4.8. There is no doubt that ITS will involve the use of a whole range of information and other technologies that are available now. A coordinated EU approach to these systems should also involve specifying the target areas which will have to be made ready for practical implementation. Thought should also be given to the relevant sources of funding from the Community, the Member States and the private sector. Operating and investment costs should be funded from existing duties, taxes and tolls.

4.9. The Commission's proposals also provide for a whole series of practical measures for introducing ITS for each of the main areas of the action plan. These schedules will, of course, also have to detail the time needed for the end users – drivers – to be trained and to master the relevant elements of the system. This will involve supporting publicity and information campaigns about these modern technologies using innovative methods (e.g. promoting the development of intelligent vehicles through the organisation of a competition for the best intelligent vehicles in Europe).

Brussels, 13 May 2009.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Mario SEPI

([12]) EESC Opinion on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council facilitating cross-border enforcement in the field of road safety, rapporteur: Mr Simons, 17.9.2008 (TEN/348), OJ C 77 of 31.3.2009, pp. 70-72.