

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1982-1983

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14 June 1982

DOCUMENT 1-317/82

REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Transport

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-994/81 - COM(81) 716 final) for a decision on the collection of information concerning the activities of road hauliers participating in the carriage of goods to and from certain non-member countries

Rapporteur: Mr H. SEEFELD



By letter of 9 February 1982, the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 75 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on the collection of information concerning the activities of road hauliers participating in the carriage of goods to and from certain non-member countries.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Transport.

On 26 February 1982 the committee appointed Mr SEEFELD rapporteur.

The committee considered the Commission proposal and the draft report at its meetings of 29 March and 27 May 1982.

At the latter meeting the committee decided by 18 votes to 1 with 1 abstention to recommend that Parliament should adopt the Commission's proposal without amendment.

The committee then adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole by 18 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Seefeld, chairman and rapporteur; Dame Shelagh Roberts, Mr Carossino and Mr Kaloyannis, vice-chairmen; Mr Adamou (deputizing for Mr Cardia), Mr Albers, Mr Buttafuoco, Mr Cottrell, Mr Gabert, Lord Harmar-Nicolls, Mr Hoffmann, Mr Janssen van Raay (deputizing for Mr Modiano), Mr Key, Mr Klinkenborg, Mr Lagakos, Mr Loo (deputizing for Mr Ripa di Meana), Mr Martin, Mr Moorehouse, Mr Moreland (deputizing for Mr Marshall) and Mr Skovmand.

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The Committee on Transport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

closing the procedure for consultation of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on the collection of information concerning the activities of road hauliers participating in the carriage of goods to and from certain non-member countries

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (COM(81) 716 final)<sup>1</sup>,
- having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 75 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 1-994/81),
- having regard to the report by the Committee on Transport (Doc. 1-317/82),
- having regard to the result of the vote on the proposal from the Commission,

A. whereas there is a continuing imbalance in the use of modes of transport in East-West trade which is to the disadvantage of the Community,

B. whereas Community road hauliers do not enjoy acceptable conditions of competition,

C. whereas the present situation will lead to the gradual disappearance of West European road hauliers in East-West trade,

1. Welcomes the fact that the Commission has taken up this problem and is proposing action to deal with this situation;
2. Considers that the collection of information concerning the activities of road hauliers participating in the carriage of goods to and from COMECON countries is useful and should give the Commission an objective picture of the problem;

<sup>1</sup> OJ No. C 36, 12.2.1982, p. 8

3. Calls on the Member States to give the Commission effective support by making available all the information required on a regular basis;
4. Considers that the collection of such information must form part of a unified system for monitoring transport to and from Eastern Europe, covering all forms of transport (air, inland waterway, road, rail, sea) of goods and passengers;
5. Considers that it is not sufficient merely to observe the market and that it is the responsibility of the Council to decide on joint action in this field;
6. Approves the Commission's proposal;
7. Instructs its President to forward to the Commission and the Council the proposal from the Commission as voted by Parliament and the corresponding resolution as Parliament's opinion.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission proposal concerns the introduction of a system for the collection of information on road haulage between the Member States and most of the State-trading countries of Eastern Europe.
2. This proposal covers a field - the role of transport in relations between the European Community and Eastern European countries - with which we are not unfamiliar and on which the European Parliament has already made known its views, notably in 1978 in the opinion drawn up by Mr NYBORG on behalf of the former Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport for the Committee on External Economic Relations (Doc. 81/78).

More recently, the proposal by Mr MORELAND and others (Doc. 685/79) resulted in an important report by Mr K.H. HOFFMANN on the Community's relations with the Comecon countries in the field of transport policy, which is now being discussed by the Committee on Transport.

THE FACTS

3. Trade relations between the European Community and the countries of Eastern Europe have been developing rapidly for a number of years. This has given rise to certain problems, which is not surprising in itself given that two very different economic systems are involved, particularly with regard to the fixing of prices.
4. The transport sector has not escaped these problems. From the studies carried out, which are by no means exhaustive, it would appear that there is a serious imbalance with regard to the transport undertakings involved in trade between the two groups of countries which is to the disadvantage of the Community.
5. This problem is a highly complex one. Trade relations between the Community and Eastern European countries are governed by bilateral agreements.

The terms of these agreements would not appear to favour Western carriers whose charges, it is true, apply to only a very small proportion of trade.

6. The Member States have very often been forced for obvious reasons to agree to charges which are highly unrealistic in economic terms. In the case of some of the rates charged by Eastern European countries there are strong grounds for suspecting dumping.

General comparisons are all the more difficult, as the two economic systems are different and it is therefore not easy to achieve price transparency.

7. Hauliers in the European Community have to face competition which, in many respects, appears to be unfair.

The obstacles facing West European hauliers may be financial (tolls, transit charges, special insurance, etc.) and administrative (issuing of visas, granting temporary residence permits etc.)

There is a risk that Community hauliers will gradually be squeezed out of trade with the Eastern European countries.

8. Another difficulty in this respect is that, although the Community as a whole would appear to be in deficit in the transport sector, the situation may vary greatly within each group of countries. Some Member States may be net exporters of transport services, while others are large net importers.

Similarly, the various categories of transport are affected to different degrees, even though, in general, transport by road and waterway is the most problematic.

9. Attempts to restore the balance in this sector have not as yet produced any significant results. The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975 did not bring about the expected improvements in transport conditions. The bilateral agreements have not been any more effective.

#### PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

10. Although it is known that there is an imbalance in the transport sector as regards East-West trade, the Commission does not have sufficiently detailed information to quantify the imbalance let alone analyse the trends over a long enough period. What is needed, therefore, is information on relations between each Member



State and East European country in order to obtain objective statistics which could be valuable during subsequent negotiations.

11. The Commission therefore proposes to gather certain items of information on the transport of goods by road on an annual or quarterly basis in order to make a detailed analysis of transport conditions.

For each pair of countries details will be collected regarding the number of permanent and transit authorizations granted and those actually used, tonnages broken down by route, nationality of haulier and category of goods and the rates and conditions applied for the transport of certain types of goods.

12. The non-member countries concerned are the USSR, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.

#### COMMENTS ON THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

13. The information which the Commission is proposing to collect would appear to be sufficient to obtain a clear picture of the quantities involved. However, if it were not too difficult, it would also be useful to request qualitative information on the difficulties encountered (crossing of frontiers, issue of visas, return loads) in order to draw up a complete list of the problems confronting Community road hauliers.

14. If the Commission proposal is to be regarded purely as one concerning the collection of additional statistics, it may be considered to be of little importance and the European Parliament's opinion virtually superfluous.

However, it would appear that, in collecting this information, the Commission is concerned above all with devising a global strategy to correct the anomalies in the conditions of transport between Western and Eastern Europe.

Consequently, the Committee on Transport has no option but to agree with this general objective of restoring balance.

15. The main problem lies in the general nature of the approach. The Commission proposal covers only one form of transport - road haulage - whereas problems also arise in connection with other methods, excluding the railways.

According to the information given by the Commission, detailed data is collected for maritime transport and rules are being drawn up to cover transport by inland waterway.

Air transport would not appear to be affected for the moment.

Similarly, information should also be collected on passenger transport, although it currently involves small numbers of people, if a complete picture of trade is to be obtained.

16. The Commission must introduce an extensive and uniform system for monitoring transport with these countries with a view to obtaining a breakdown by mode of transport, tonnage, country and route in order to highlight the anomalies effectively and make the necessary comparisons, as advocated by Mr HOFFMANN in his draft report on the Community's relations with the Comecon countries.

17. An analysis, however complete, is not in itself an answer to the problem. This analysis must not obscure the need for specific and rapid action at Community level if some measure of reciprocity is to be secured and if trade with the Comecon countries is to be increased on the basis of equality.

18. In conclusion, your rapporteur considers that the Commission's proposal must be approved, as it is an essential prerequisite for Community action to regulate the market in transport with the countries of Eastern Europe.