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MOTORWAYS OF THE SEA - DEAD AND BURIED?

Midway through the public consultation phase of the Green Paper on future EU maritime policy, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) has addressed a letter to the President of the European Commission, **José Manuel Barroso** to pass on their concerns of insufficient consideration for maritime transport in a series of documents adopted by Community Institutions. *"It seems contradictory to us,"* stated **Claudio Martini**, President of Tuscany and of the CPMR, as well as signatory of the letter, *"that the Commission would devote such talent and energy to promote Europe of the sea and oceans on a global scale, if at the same time it neglects one of the priority sectoral policies in this domain, that of maritime transport."*

Several documents recently published by the Commission on transport have not included Motorways of the Sea, therefore giving cause for concern in the heart of Maritime regions.

In the **mid-term review of the Transport White Paper**, the *"huge"* ambitions of 2001 concerning modal shift from road towards less pollutant modes of transport *"have been scaled down and maritime transport is not greatly encouraged."* Also, the **mid-term review of the Programme for the promotion of short sea shipping**, published on 13 July, indicates that the Motorways of the Sea are *"almost or fully completed."* *"Such a statement,"* according to the President, Claudio Martini, *"is not acceptable, since this initiative was quite rightly launched by the Commission in 2001 and incorporated into the Transeuropean Transport Network action plan in 2004."*

The CPMR is equally perplexed by the new **Eurovignette Directive**: Against a background of EU budget cuts, these new arrangements for the pricing of road infrastructures would help to co-finance the Motorways of the Sea. *"But this is not possible,"* stated Claudio Martini, *"Certainly the increase in tolls which member states can apply should help to fund alternative routes, but not on a Motorway of the Sea. Furthermore, the Commission's desire to propose an extension of the Eurovignette Directive in 2008 to cover modes of transport other than road constitutes another cause for concern, since this would further reduce the already weak comparative advantages that maritime transport has in competition with other modes of transport."*

Lastly, the **Proposal for amending the TEN-T Financial regulation**, published by the Commission 24 May 2006, arouses great concern, *"the term Motorways of the Sea was never even mentioned, whilst the waterways and river projects are cited numerous times,"* reported the CPMR in their letter addressed to Mr Barroso. In the framework of the co-decision procedure on this fundamental text, the CPMR will take action, in particular by contacting the European Parliament to re-establish the vision of the Maritime Dimension. In addition, they feel that it would be relevant for this financial regulation to foresee that a share (to be defined) of the budgets allocated in the multi-annual programming of the TEN-T budget is dedicated to maritime transport.



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President Martini also recalled that in the context of TEN-T, the Commission still has not named a Motorways of the Sea co-ordinator, while six co-ordinators have been named for rail transport. According to the President, *"the Co-ordinator is a leader, an important catalyst. We had asked Commissioner Barrot for a co-ordinator to be appointed for each Motorway of the Sea. At the time he granted us only one to cover them all. This is yet to be seen."*

"We hope," continued Claudio Martini, on behalf of the CPMR, "that at the Conference on a policy for ports, to be held in Asturias (Spain), in early 2007, we can count on the presence of Commissioner Jacques Barrot, so that we might hear from the Commission a strong message of support for maritime transport in response to regional interrogation."

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