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Greek contribution:

The European Union, through its policies, has contributed decisively to the development of the transport sector, which constitutes a significant factor for the wider economic growth and the cohesion of the European Union. The overall objective of the E.U. is the formation of a dynamic transport sector, at the service of citizens, enterprises and governments. Therefore, the creation and development of an integrated, interoperable, reliable and efficient transport network is of paramount importance.

The geographic particularity of the Greek insular area is unique among the countries of the European Union. The fractured geographical allocation of the region of south Aegean, which constitutes of 79 islands (48 inhabited and 31 uninhabited) and numerous islets, as well as the existence of intraregional differences, give a distinctive character to the region of south Aegean, as far as the transport sector is concerned. This distinctiveness creates special needs and asks for the development of a particularly complex network of maritime and aerial transport.

As far as maritime transport is concerned, the already extended network of harbor infrastructure in the region of south Aegean (there exist 54 ports in the 48 inhabited islands of the region), within which 20% of the total national maritime transport is taking place, has further expanded with the construction of new ports, on the one hand, and the implementation of ameliorative work in a significant number of existing ports, on the other hand. More specifically, two new ports of a total cost of 6.2 million euros have been constructed, in the islands of Kos and Pserimos, whereas various kinds of ameliorative work, such as extensions and modifications of existing ports, has been performed in the islands of Kythnos, Kalymnos, Tinos, Naxos, Santorini, Mykonos and Anafi.

As far as aerial transport is concerned, there exist thirteen (13) airports in the islands of the south Aegean region. Two of them, the airports of Kos and Rhodes, are international airports, whereas another two, that is the airports of Mykonos and Santorini, are authorized crossing points. Non-authorized crossing points are the airports of Karpathos, Milos, Naxos and Paros, whereas solely national are the airports of Astypalea, Kasos, Kastelorizo, Leros and Syros. Apart from the thirteen airports the aerial transport network of the region of south Aegean, also includes heliports in 22 islands, thus contributing greatly to solving the problem of isolation of the smaller islands of the region.

Given the paramount importance of the aerial transport network for the region of south Aegean due to its insular character, its distance from the continental part of the country and its tourism development, a substantial number of improvement projects have been implemented in eleven of the thirteen existing airports of south Aegean during the last programming period. More specifically, expansion work and work for infrastructure ameliorations has been carried out and equipment has also been provided in the airports of Naxos, Syros, Santorini, Astypalea, Kalymnos, Kastelorizo, Leros, Paros, Kasos, Karpathos and Mykonos.

Moreover, during the next programming period 2007-2013, a series of actions for further improvement of maritime and aerial transport is also scheduled.

The main objectives are:

- Improving coastal and air connections
- Linking the region's several complex of islands with all the continental ports and airports, in order to ensure accessibility in an interinsular, intrainsular and interregional level
- Improving ports' and airports' infrastructure, particularly in passenger service areas
- Increasing the competitiveness of the region's key ports and airports, within the framework of establishing an Inter-European Transport Network
- Turning the region's ports and airports to hubs of national and international commerce
- Boosting the competitiveness of Greek coastal and air navigation by encouraging entrepreneurship in these sectors
- Creating a viable network of combined maritime and aerial transport, in order to cover the increased transport needs in the region of south Aegean
- Increasing investment in projects for the improvement of ports' and airports' infrastructure
- Improving service quality

It is obvious that the challenges we need to face both in a national and a pan-European level, as well as the opportunities emerging in the dynamic sector of transport call for specific plans and actions. Moreover, it is also clear to everyone that a competitive economy cannot exist without an efficient transport network.

The development, establishment and competent functioning of an Inter-European network of integrated, operable and reliable transport, which has been recognized as a Community Policy for the last decade, constitutes a necessary precondition for a fruitful internal market and for guaranteeing

sustainable mobility within the enlarged European Union. Furthermore, it is important to underline, on the one hand, the need for a successful transition to an environmental friendly transport network, by directing investment to this kind of transport and, on the other hand the necessity of adapting the functioning of transport networks to the use of new information technology.

Before closing, I would like to express my strong belief, as the General Secretary of the Southern Aegean Region and the Vice-President of the CPRM Political Bureau, that the achievement of all the above mentioned goals is possible on the basis of joint programming, hard work and resourceful cooperation.

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