

TOWARDS EFFICIENT, SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN EUROPE: THE ROLE FOR INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS (ITS)

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ABSTRACT

It is fully recognised that efficient transport infrastructure is vital for sustained vibrant economy in any part of the world. Europe is not an exception to this. It is also important to recognise the contribution and ability of each of the modes in the provision of safe, efficient and sustainable transport. In Europe, the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) provides a significant instrument for the realisation of the vision to provide seamless travel across national, organisational and jurisdictional boundaries. The rail, road, air and water transport all contribute to the provision of mobility of goods and people. In this presentation, the contribution new technology can make to the provision of seamless road-based transport across Europe is discussed.

Road transport plays a dominant role in the provision of transport for both people and goods. However, congestion on our roads is a serious threat. The cost of this is estimated to be 0.5% of EU GDP and is expected to rise to 1% by the year 2010, some 80 billion € per year. Additional road space is not an option. There is a need for more efficient and innovative means to manage existing infrastructure that contributes to provision of safe, efficient and sustainable transport suitable for the twenty first century as indicated in the European Commission (EC) Transport Policy White Paper and its recent revision "Keep Europe moving". Intelligent Transport Systems offer valuable opportunity for active management of *existing* infrastructure in order to alleviate the impact of congestion and in the process also realise additional road capacity.

The level of deployment of ITS systems and services in the EU Member States varies considerably. The challenge is to ensure that the benefits of implementing ITS are fully exploited across Europe.

Furthermore, in addition to collaboration across jurisdictional and organisational boundaries, there is a need for more active participation of 'stakeholders' that either benefit from the deployment of ITS systems and services or are involved in their deployment. The European Commission is instrumental and has an important role to play in facilitating these processes through collaborative initiatives, initially on a regional basis, with the aim of developing a Europe-wide framework that facilitates seamless mobility of people and goods for our citizens. More importantly, it prevents the emergence of systems and services designed to meet the specific needs of the country or region thereby introducing problems of interoperability that hinder free flow of people and goods in Europe.

There is a range of ITS related initiatives underway both in individual Member States and at the European level. Work is currently in hand to assimilate all these activities into a cohesive ITS deployment strategy that can encourage wider take-up of ITS-based solutions that contribute to the provision of efficient, safe and sustainable transport in Europe.