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## **Euro-Med Transport Project launches expert visits to MEDA countries**

### **A team of international experts embark on short-term transport fact-finding assignments in the Mediterranean area**

A group of 20 international transport experts will carry out short-term information-gathering missions in all 12 countries of the MEDA region, in what marks a decisive phase of the Euro-Med Transport Project. The visits, which will last for up to a week and take place from December to February 2004, will enable a great deal of data and information to be collected and appraised. Input will be gathered during meetings with key personnel in national administrations and representatives from the business sector, and through talks and exchanges with recognised local specialists and researchers. Technical site visits will also take place.

The team will arrive in Beirut as of Dec. 03, to embark on a set of meetings and discussions with officials from the Ministry of Transport & Public Works, Ministry of Economy & Trade, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, Civil Aviation Authority, Beirut Port, Customs Authority, Railway Authority, Chamber of International Navigation, Chamber of Commerce, ESCWA, in addition to a private companies and associations operating in the transport (land, maritime, and aviation) sector.

The team of international experts was appointed by the European Commission to undertake an in-depth evaluation of the various elements of transport systems and policies in each country visited and to perform a detailed analysis of existing national legislations. The experts will assess the performance of the transport sector in the Mediterranean region, highlighting the major issues to be addressed, and will also report ways to improve the harmonisation of legislation and how to remove transport bottlenecks in the Mediterranean countries. Their findings will be compiled in a Diagnosis Study due to be published in April 2004.

So as to cover the many issues to be addressed in the regional and national studies in a more effective manner, the group of international experts has been split into four teams established according to the following themes:

- Economics and regional transport exchanges (economics and trade, international transport legislation and harmonisation, customs and cross-border issues, logistics et freight transport, transport planning/statistics).
- Liberalisation and regulation issues (regulatory issues and EU Acquis, public-private partnerships, environmental issues).
- Maritime and air transport (port reform policy, maritime freight, maritime safety and GNSS, airport reform, air transport policy, multimodal and intermodal transport).

- Land transport (railway reform, roads sector).

The programme of assignments was decided upon by the national coordinators nominated by the governments of the each MEDA country, in collaboration with the experts themselves. The assignments will take place in two stages, each focusing on a different regional area:

- December 2003: Mashreq countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria)
- January 2004: Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia):

The dates of the assignments to Cyprus, Malta, the Palestinian Territories and Turkey will be set in the coming weeks.

A total of approximately 50 transport experts are involved in the Euro-Med Transport Main Project. The knowledge of the international experts allows a strong understanding of the specific themes related to air, maritime and land transport. The international experts are supported by national experts who provide deeper insight into the transport context for each country.

Another task for the expert teams will be to study cooperation agreements on transport issues, in order to assess the relevancy of such mechanisms within the framework of existing EU and international agreements. This should enable MEDA countries not yet involved in such regional or sub-regional agreements to assess the advantages of increased cooperation with neighbouring countries in the field of transport.

A preliminary version of the Diagnosis Study will be reviewed during the next National Counterpart Team meeting due to take place in February 2004 in Damascus, Syria. The report will seek to identify specific actions to be undertaken as part of the Regional Action Plan which will convert theoretical recommendations into practical and concrete measures.

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### **NOTE FOR EDITORS**

The Euro-Med Transport Project is a 4-year project funded by the European Union (20 million euro budget). The project, which started in the beginning of 2003, aims to facilitate the co-operation and integration of Mediterranean countries with the goal of creating a Mediterranean Free-Trade Area through increased harmonisation and deregulation in the transport sector.

The project draws its origin from the 1995 Barcelona Declaration, which emphasised the need to connect the Mediterranean transport networks to the Trans-European Transport networks and the development of link between countries of the southern Mediterranean shore, with a view to enhancing the growth of commercial trade and supporting the Euro-Mediterranean economic and financial partnership.

The project covers the MEDA countries (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) based on the concept of neighbour relations aiming to encourage a sustainable and balanced economic development.

The Project aims at fostering cooperation in the development of integrated and sustainable multi-modal transport networks, by contributing to the approximation and harmonisation of legislation. Emphasis is also given to assistance for the preparation and implementation of institutional and policy measures decided upon collectively, in particular in economic policy

and regulatory issues. Policy convergence will take place through reforms in the transport sector and national legal and regulatory frameworks and a relevant evaluation of existing accords regional and sub-regional agreements.

The Euro-Med Transport Main Project is operated by a consortium of five companies led by GTZ (the German Technical Cooperation Agency). A project office, based in Tunis, is responsible for daily project management; its main role is to oversee the implementation of six main tasks:

- Diagnosis Study
- Regional Transport Action Plan
- Various studies (thematic, specific, regional sub-regional, national)
- Policy Dialogue
- Training
- Internal and external communication system.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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