

Transport and Connectivity Strategy Group



On 1 July the Transport and Connectivity Strategy Group held its third strategic meeting, the purpose of which was to review the progress made on four concrete initiatives, namely inland water transport, shorter shipping, an online freight platform, and the clean buses initiative.

Inland water transport

The group working on this project intended to carry out a benchmarking of the regulatory and investment frameworks of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.

The benchmarking revealed that the countries have put in place a light touch but adequate economic regulation framework, with the result that companies do not have to wait for years to get a license if they meet certain standards.

For this reason, East Africa can be seen as a blueprint for other countries, showing that inland water transport is doable and encouraging replication in that region, as well as Africa more widely.

The inland water transport group recommends attracting “champions” at the continental level, since when inland water transport becomes established at a policy level and is included in strategic plans at the continental level, it will then start cascading down into regional and national policies.

The group is asking the Foundation to help find those champions and invite them to a strategy group meeting to obtain their buy-in to support inland water transport.

Finally, the group wants to get inland water transport on the agenda of webinars, international events, and transport discussion platforms to raise awareness, demonstrating the commercial potential and helping develop best practice guidelines and KPIs.

Short sea shipping

Short sea shipping presents a real opportunity to link up smaller markets at the periphery of the African continent.

One of the main suggestions from this group was to consolidate efforts at the continental level, leverage political engagement, and create an elaborate framework at the continental level to standardise the operations of the institutions which lead the planning of the investment on the ground.

Online freight platforms

The group proposes establishing a pilot digital platform to access both the availability of cargo and the availability of transport.

The real impact of such a tool would be to reduce transport costs and time, increase the competitiveness of supply chains, and enable intra-African trade to function more effectively.

The group wants to commission a study that looks at the actual costs and how these are impacting the purchasing power of communities who are the recipients of the cargo, as well as obtain high-level political support from the African Union.

Clean buses initiative

It was explained that with European cities renewing their bus fleet to make them cleaner and less polluting, the older, dirtier buses previously in service are often sent to Africa.

The group is calling for a structure to ensure that the companies that are replacing buses send good quality ones that are checked, controlled, and distributed.

It also proposes organising a conference on secondhand buses in Africa where technical elements can be discussed and the role of international associations can be better defined, as well as linking up with the United Nations and the bus manufacturing companies.

It was proposed to see if there was interest from the European Investment Bank and the European Commission to provide funding and to establish a dedicated resource to this workstream.

As a conclusion to the meeting, it was suggested that representatives of the group meet with national ministries to share these initiatives so that it becomes clear who is willing to take these ideas forward. In the meantime, working group meetings and “side meetings” will continue until 15 July and will resume on 1 September.