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Dear Commissioners Barrot, Dimas and Huebner and President Maystadt,

In mid-December 2007, after a long negotiating process, the Commission approved the Czech OP Transport.

In the attached document, please find a summary of the most problematic aspects of this program from the point of view of Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, CEE Bankwatch Network and Environmental Law Service.

The paper contains:

- A summary of the problems that were encountered by NGOs during the preparatory process of the OP.
- A compendium of problematic highway/motorway projects that are present on the indicative list of major projects.

The paper also draws on numerous conclusions of the Czech National Supreme Audit Office that has discovered massive ineffectiveness of expenditures caused both at the planning level for motorway infrastructure in the country as well as on the level of individual projects.

We would like to turn your attention to these findings because what is at stake now is EUR 5.8 billion from the Cohesion funds and the ERDF to be spent on this programme (plus additional planned co-financing via a loan of EUR 1.3 billion from the European Investment Bank).

The Commission and the EIB should be seeking to ensure that ineffective use of these public resources is, if not avoided completely, minimised. They should also avoid financial support for those projects that in their proposed form will seriously damage the environment and contradict the EU environmental integration policy, only because there is not enough will from the Czech authorities to impartially assess alternatives (which, moreover, are often found to be less costly and more suitable from the transport point of view). EU and EIB resources can be used much more effectively if they are disbursed only on properly prepared project variants selected through unbiased assessments of their economic, transport and environmental aspects.

We would also like to raise our concern that attempts will be made, as declared by a Ministry of Transport senior official internally, especially in the case of controversial projects, to split them up into smaller subsections (this is commonly known as the "salami tactic") where the required contribution from the Cohesion fund will be under the EUR 50 million starting point. This of course would be a practice designed to avoid due European Commission scrutiny over certain projects.)

We hope our paper will provide the European Commission and the EIB with independent information and contribute to the quality of their decision making on the controversial transport projects mentioned, thus ensuring the sound use of public resources for transport projects that are really beneficial for the society in the Czech Republic, not just a few.

Yours sincerely



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