

## The People Behind the Projects

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# Maritime highways to unlock a key transport route

The Motorways of the Sea – Black and Caspian Sea project, funded by the EU as part of its broader efforts to consolidate a direct transport corridor from Europe to Asia through the Caucasus, was launched at the beginning of 2009.



■ Marc Abeille

These maritime highways aim to establish “sustainable, quality transport logistic networks”, Marc Abeille, project team leader told the ENPI Info Centre in an interview. It seeks to identify bottlenecks in the chain connecting land and maritime routes.

The reward would see huge economies in transport costs, an ecological windfall, and a strong development potential by rerouting traffic currently forced into detours of thousands of kilometres to reach its destination.

**Q:** *What is this project trying to achieve?*

**Marc Abeille:** Our aim is to try to find ‘motorways of the sea’ solutions along every link of the chain – good practices, infrastructure, equipment, organisation, partnerships, transport policies, facilitation, identification of bottlenecks.

The project is part of the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) transport programme, an alternative to the dominant freight routes through Russia and Turkey, both entirely overland. We are trying to encourage transport networks that make sense, both in distance and sustainability, working on intermodality between maritime and land transport along the route.

*How do you go about achieving these objectives?*

This project focuses entirely on diagnosis and technical assistance. Once we have established the diagnosis, we ask what improvements can be envisaged, and at which point along the chain. Until the end of 2010, we will be working on the design of two pilot projects, before handing over for implementation. We do not have our own budget for the projects, just for their preparation, and we will have to identify appropriate financing instruments to match with the necessary investments.

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This is a series of interviews with leaders of projects funded by the EU's Regional Programme, prepared by the ENPI Info Centre.  
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*What is the expected impact on the Partner Countries?*

You can identify the potential by looking at the existing situation. There are plenty of exchanges between the Partner Countries themselves, with Europe, and with Asia, and therefore there is transport traffic. The region is a hub for trade between China and Europe.

The central freight route should be an obvious choice, it should be competing with the southern maritime route through the Suez Canal. But take an example: Kazakhstan has a border with China, and to cross it, goods take the Chinese maritime route to the Baltic ports, before travelling overland through Russia back down to Kazakhstan – and this with Kazakhstan wanting to develop a direct transit role from Asia to Europe.

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*What are the greatest difficulties you face?*

Political tensions are a major obstacle: the conflict between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008 did nothing to encourage international operators to use the TRACECA corridor.

At the same time, we have to overcome a number of administrative hurdles, through which the operators on the ground themselves have to pass. It's not always easy to explain the value of preliminary tasks, when what people are often asking for is direct financing.

*What are the perspectives emerging in this initial phase?*

The motorways of the sea are a new type of solution, which can build on the existence, on both the Black Sea and the Caspian, of ferries capable of carrying trains. It's a mode of transport that has almost completely disappeared in Europe, but which exists in the region, with quality vessels. It could act as a powerful lever: you could go from Turkmenistan to Ukraine and Turkey by rail, a far more direct, more secure route than the alternatives.

## Motorways of the Seas – Black Sea and Caspian Sea (TRACECA)

Promotes the Motorways of the Sea (MoS) concept and the creation of better maritime transport connections in the wider Black Sea and Caspian Sea region.

[www.traceca-org.org](http://www.traceca-org.org)

*Participating countries*

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan

*Objectives*

It aims at improving transport connections between the EU and its Eastern neighbours, as well as better intermodal freight operations, through the integration of short sea shipping into the transport logistics, improving port operations and making hinterland connections more efficient.

*Timeframe*

2009-2011

*Find out more*

Motorways of the Seas – Black Sea and Caspian Sea fiche [www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id=208&id\\_type=10](http://www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id=208&id_type=10)  
ENPI Info Centre – Transport thematic portal > [www.enpi-info.eu/themeeast.php?subject=8](http://www.enpi-info.eu/themeeast.php?subject=8)

*Budget*

€ 2.5 million

The ENPI Info Centre is an EU-funded Regional Information and Communication project highlighting the partnership between the EU and Neighbouring countries. The project is managed by Action Global Communications.

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