



Urbanistica n. 129

January-April 2006

Distribution by www.planum.net

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The dynamics of international trade

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International trade has recently undergone profound modifications, especially with regard to maritime transport and ports in the Mediterranean basin. The impact of maritime transport on all commercial interactions throughout the EU is significant: 63.9% of all imports and 57.5% of all exports. In terms of dry or solid goods, the impact is not as significant, but remains important at nearly 50%.

With the exception of oil import, the trade of EU countries on the Mediterranean coastline is conducted for 36% with other countries in the MED area, for 36% with Northern EU countries and for 28% with the rest of the world. France, Italy and Spain detain the largest percentages of overall international trade; and Italy, in particular, ranks first among the Mediterranean countries of the European Union.

According to EUROSTAT data, the advantage of Italy is even more marked: more than 210 million tons per year against 111 for the Mediterranean regions of Spain, 70 for Greece and 28 for the Mediterranean regions of France.

Projections elaborated by the TEN-STAC Community Project reveal consistent increases in trade and the consequent increase in transport demand (excluding oil): + 66.4% international traffic within the enlarged EU; + 89.9% international traffic between the enlarged EU and the rest of Europe and the world.

In terms of global percentages, the differences are minimal:

- Present situation (2000). Road 58.5%, rail 12.2%, sea 19.2%;

- Projection (2020). Road 57.8%, rail 11.6%, sea

20.5%;
- Optimisation (2020). Road 56.3%, rail 12.9%, sea 20.5%.

It must, however, be pointed out that the models employed by TEN-STAC tend, in our opinion, to underestimate the potential of maritime transport with optimal intermodal conditions.