

ANNEX [8]: SUMMARY OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ROAD NETWORK IN FRANCE

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Nowadays, the “Estuaires” motorway links France with the Spanish and Belgian borders all across the Atlantic coast. Its scope covers the Western part of France, including the littoral ports while it also binds the Iberian Peninsula with the industrial regions from the North of Europe as well as England, through the Channel tunnel.

Despite the crucial economic impact of this trunk road, its modernization and enlargement was not considered a top priority by French authorities. Under these circumstances, several directly concerned entities such as local authorities, autonomous ports and certain consular companies, created the “Consortium de la rocade Nord-Manche-Atlantique” (Consortium for of the North-Channel-Atlantic by-pass) which aimed at the coordination of both public and private synergies in order to achieve the transformation of the original road into a four lane highway as promptly as possible. Members of the Consortium considered that the French Government’s intention to place France at the very center of the European communication network, necessitated the development of an efficient road network near to the Atlantic coast which, by avoiding the Paris region, could constitute a reliable alternative to the soon-to-be overcrowded Rhone road network.

Initially, the Consortium focused on promoting the modernization of the Calais-Bayonne connection through the estuaries area. However, the launch of the “Transmanche Plan” and the entry into the European Economic Community of both Spain and Portugal led to the progressive redefinition of the original aim. The Consortium was also focusing its efforts on the branches leading to ports and tourist stations (Dieppe, Cherbourg, Le Havre and its new bridge on the estuary, Saint-Malo, Saint Nazaire, Les Sables d’Olonne, Arcachon, Royan and the Verdon) or the Pyrenean border (Somport).

Thus, this main artery as well as its branches link the regions and cities whose development is important at a national level and is consistent with the steady policy of revitalizing the Atlantic coast.