

UNASUR

Infrastructure for regional integration



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UNION DE NACIONES SURAMERICANAS

Infrastructure for regional integration



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The opinions expressed in this document, which is a translation of an original that did not undergo formal editing, are the exclusive responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Organizations concerned.

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FOREWORD

In 2011 the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) gradually consolidated its role as the leading regional integration body with the ratification and entry into force of its Constitutive Treaty, signed in Brasilia in May 2008. The 12 UNASUR member States have thus laid the foundations for building a participatory and consensual forum for dialogue on strengthening cultural, social, economic and political integration and undertaking joint infrastructure development in South America. UNASUR offers the member States a platform for jointly addressing development challenges and pursuing socioeconomic inequality, social inclusion, citizen participation and the strengthening of democracy.

This document is the second in a series prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the General Secretariat of UNASUR in the framework of intensive collaboration between the two bodies. Its main purpose is to provide national and subnational government authorities, the academic and business sectors, and the public in general, with an analytical perspective on infrastructure and related services, which are central to the integration agenda and development of South American nations.

The document is divided into four chapters that examine different aspects of infrastructure in South America. Chapter I analyses the connection between the provision of infrastructure services, economic development and equity and reflects on the impact of infrastructure investment, as well as the role of the State, public policy and the new State-market-society equation.

Chapter II offers an overview of infrastructure in the region, referring to both investment issues and economic infrastructure (energy, telecommunications, transport and sanitation); it also addresses the organization of infrastructure markets, institutions and policies on transport infrastructure and services, putting forward the need for a paradigm shift. A number of basic indicators on transport infrastructure and logistics are presented to complement the assessment of the sector in South America.

Chapter III examines the regional integration of infrastructure and its importance, looking in particular at the progress made towards regional physical integration in South America since the start-up of the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) and, more recently, the emergence of the new regional infrastructure agenda of UNASUR. Lastly, chapter IV contains some final reflections in relation to the main infrastructure-related challenges in UNASUR countries, with a particular emphasis on transport and logistics.

One of the main challenges the document identifies for infrastructure in South America is to design new ways of approaching public policy to ensure development with equity. To that end, the conception, design, execution, follow-up, oversight, assessment and monitoring of policies on infrastructure services must be aligned in order to maximize their impact on development. What is needed is a paradigm shift in the development and oversight of public policies: instead of treating modes of transport individually and separate from each other, integrated and sustainable policies should be forged by adopting a co-modal approach to transport. By making optimal use of each mode of transport or combining different modes, efficiencies can be achieved in the distribution of transport and related services for every trip. As part of this paradigm, market regulation and technical aspects of transport should be optimized to drive the modal shift towards sustainability.

A paradigm shift is indispensable for progressing towards a strategy of integrated and sustainable policies on infrastructure, logistics and mobility in South America. This would not only help to tackle development issues, but would also favour greater economic efficiency in transport services and reduce negative externalities affecting the population, such as congestion and pollution. The integration of infrastructure and related policies within UNASUR presents great opportunities for boosting growth and economic and social development in accordance with the aims of the Union's Constitutive Treaty.

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I. INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT¹

Public policies, an efficient private sector performance and citizen participation are crucial for countries striving to meet major objectives on the path towards economic development, equality and societal well-being. The challenge facing policymakers is to find a long-term strategy in which the synergies of the production model's economic vibrancy and the principles of sustainability and equity support and reinforce one another in a virtuous dialectic. This endeavour must be framed by the awareness that growth is needed for equality and equality is needed for growth (ECLAC, 2010d).

The development of infrastructure and related services² are indispensable tools for reaching major development objectives along the road towards inclusive, sustainable and egalitarian development. Even though the positive correlation between socioeconomic development and infrastructure and its related services may seem obvious, the point made here is that it should be given priority when designing and executing development strategies; economic and social development are not possible if the infrastructure or associated services are not in place.

The efficient provision of infrastructure services is one of the most important aspects of a development strategy, both at the national and regional levels. A lack of appropriate infrastructure and efficient service provision are major obstacles to implementing a social development policy effectively, achieving sustained economic growth and attaining integration objectives. Infrastructure and the related services, by their very nature, act as vehicles for territorial, economic and social cohesion since they not potentially increase connectivity, reduce transport costs and improve mobility, logistics and, ultimately, competitiveness and trade, they also facilitate regional social development by integrating and unifying territories, making them accessible from the outside and enabling their inhabitants to connect with their environment and access fundamental services for production and for improving their situations and quality of life (Rozas and Sánchez, 2004).

Infrastructure is critical for economic growth, productivity and balanced territorial development, and expanding it helps to reduce regional and local inequalities. Economic infrastructure is key to developing exports, too. Progress and gaps in infrastructure do much to determine transport costs, which have an impact on trade just as large —or larger than— tariffs or exchange-rate fluctuations. Investment in infrastructure can be decisive in improving the living conditions of the poorest families, particularly in rural areas. In fact, in rural areas, infrastructure is crucial not only for expanding and diversifying production and strengthening competitiveness, but also for increasing employment and income in the poorest households and reducing various systemic risks. As a result, developing infrastructure and the

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