

**Dear participants of the RAIL4SEE conference, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen,**

Your Conference here and today, is an important step in the development of establishing a well-functioning, sustainable rail network between the Northern Adriatic regions and hub cities in Central and Eastern Europe. Bologna, which you have chosen for this conference, is not only the capital of Emilia-Romagna, the lead partner of the project. By its location, it is a "natural" transport hub in Northern Italy, a location where the "Baltic-Adriatic Corridor", "da Polonia a Bologna", merges with TEN-T Priority Project no. 1 Berlin – Palermo, respectively with the future Helsinki – Valletta Corridor. And TEN-T Priority Project no. 6, the future "Mediterranean Corridor", connecting Spain and France with Eastern and South-Eastern Europe will be accessible through Milano, Verona and Venezia.

What is the European background of this situation?

Since its very beginning some twenty years ago, the trans-European transport network has been derived from the EU Treaty, at those times the Maastricht, currently the Lisbon Treaty. According to the objectives laid down in that legal base, i.e. enhancing internal market and competitiveness, strengthening cohesion, supporting employment and growth, protecting the environment and contributing to de-carbonisation, the Commission has adopted, on 19 October 2011, its Proposal for the future Regulation on the development of the trans-European transport network.

The base of this Regulation is a multi-modal dual layer concept which consists of a relatively dense "comprehensive network" and, as a subset thereof, a "core network" of the strategically most important nodes and links. While the "comprehensive network" has been established "bottom-up" by the Member States, however following certain general planning principles, the "core network" was determined "top-down" by the Commission, applying the criteria of a planning methodology developed for this purpose, with the input from six expert groups.

This planning methodology follows a mixed geographical-demand driven approach, which allows a real strategic infrastructure planning, beyond coping with growing demand, also shaping space structure – and with the goals of sustainability in mind. Accessibility has been acknowledged as a key to spatial integration, economic development and welfare. And giving priority to rail, inland waterway and maritime transport, as well as to technological innovation on all modes, will lead to reduced CO<sub>2</sub> and polluting emissions.

In this context, reference should also be made to the no.1 of the above mentioned six expert groups, stating in its final report that "Improving accessibility of peripheral regions does not necessarily mean the construction of transport infrastructure within those areas but rather towards them, thus not excluding measures in central regions of the Union." This will be possible only if Member and non-Member States realize and accept their responsibility for their neighbours.

While large or important cities like Member State capitals and other relevant conurbations are the cornerstones of the "core network", the most important seaports and airports, as well as the relevant border crossing points to neighbouring countries will open it to the

neighbourhood and the rest of the world, both for passengers and for freight. This will help the EU to maintain and to enhance its strong position in the global economy and trade.

Finally, exploitation of innovative technologies for traffic information and management, as well as for supply of alternative, low-carbon fuels and electricity, in particular on the "core network", shall be the infrastructural base of an efficient and sustainable use of the infrastructure, as a building block of a really "green" transport system.

Complementary to network planning, the Commission elaborated a Proposal for the "Connecting Europe Facility" (CEF), the funding and implementation tool for the TEN-T, with a proposed volume of 31,7 billion Euro earmarked for transport infrastructure, in particular in cohesion countries. EU funds will contribute to the implementation of a high-quality transport infrastructure, spanning the entire EU and interconnected with its neighbourhood and the rest of the world as well as enabling sustainable, low-carbon operation. This will enhance the competitiveness of Europe, even in peripheral regions, and thus contribute to creating sustainable jobs throughout all EU Member States. Therefore, it is key and should be transported also to politicians responsible for budgets, not to cut this funding volume!

As an instrument for a better coordinated implementation of the "core network", mainly of its cross-border sections, multi-modal "core network corridors" are foreseen (of which I mentioned three at the beginning of this message). These corridors will also be a focus of pilot applications of new technologies and the infrastructural base for efficient and sustainable operation, according to the "green corridor" concept. Of course, the final vision is a really "green" transport system, comprising and combining long distance, regional and local traffic, integrating all modes of transport and taking advantage of the most advanced technologies, for passengers and freight.

Showing the further path both towards regional development by improving accessibility and strengthened cohesion and towards higher efficiency and sustainability of transport and logistics, will contribute to a relevant extent to achieving our common policy goals.

This is of particular importance, with respect to the geographical scope of RAIL4SEE project: The TEN-T does not cover the Western Balkans Region, which is not yet part of the EU. However, this region of Europe is surrounded by EU Member States and its transport infrastructure is of highest strategic importance for Europe, including for intra-EU traffic. Integrating this region by developing its transport system is a valuable contribution to strengthening economy, increasing welfare and, as a consequence, stabilizing peace.

The current conference of the RAIL4SEE Project is an opportunity to welcome your efforts, to thank you and to wish that your work be successful.

With best regards from the European Commission,  
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