

Check Against Delivery!

Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,
Distinguished representatives of the European Commission and the Delegation of the European Union to Belgrade, Mr. Paquet and Mr. Gomez

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Transport I would like to welcome you and express the official support to aspirations and objectives of the

CONFERENCE: TRANSPORT DAYS OF THE DANUBE REGION 2013

which is this time held here, in Belgrade.

Today's conference aims to present the importance and the progress of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, that stakeholders' needs can be heard, and projects and regional initiatives relevant to the Danube Strategy can be presented, as well as funding opportunities. Also, it is very important to exchange information about current plans for the development of transport infrastructure, and that in a friendly and collegial atmosphere we can give answers to complex questions of one of the most important areas of the Danube Strategy, which is to **IMPROVE MOBILITY AND MULTIMODALITY THROUGH ROAD, RAIL AND AIR TRANSPORT**. The realization of this area, Serbia has the honor to coordinate together with Slovenia with the help of expert teams from the European Commission. I would really like to praise more than good cooperation in this work between our Ministry of Transport and the Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, namely Mr. Miodrag Poledica and Mr. Franc Žepič !

As you are aware, improvement of mobility and multimodality is beyond the technical aspects, infrastructure, and national boundaries. It involves in a large scale also organizational issues, the completion of the reform processes, fulfilling the overall transport demand, seasonal and daily rush hours, spatial planning, lifestyles, innovations, etc.

Transport infrastructure, inland waterways, road and rail links, present important international connections within the Danube Region, the ports on the Black Sea, as well as those on the Adriatic Sea, including railway lines and airports that are direct entry points into the region of the basin from other regions.

The Danube River is definitely the backbone of the region. However, the development of waterways as navigable corridors must be implemented together with the creation of modern and efficient intermodal ports to integrate water, rail and road transport.

There is a general standing that good, interconnected and sustainable transport systems are important for the region, and it speaks in favor of the example of the TEN-T network of the EU and the Western Balkans SEETO Comprehensive Network in which Serbia has a significant place.

In this context, ensuring the interoperability of the railway lines in the region, for example, implementation of railway freight corridors, then the possibility that a locomotive can cross many borders, the introduction of the European system for railway traffic management (ERTMS), has a crucial role in the improvement of the competitiveness of railways.

Interconnected with intermodal terminals, the Danube River, competitive rail freight corridors can reduce congestion on the roads and contribute to an efficient transport system and environmentally sustainable transport modal split.

When it comes to river traffic, it is clear the full potential of the Danube is not used. The volume of cargo transported on the Danube is only between 10 % and 20 % compared with the cargo volume on the Rhine. The aforementioned potential can be better utilized for example, by enhancement of multimodality, infrastructure and by introduction of new logistics principles. Ports must be modernized and adapted to the needs of the economy. While inland waterway transport has significant unused potential in the Danube Region, attention should be directed also toward other modes of transport. Modern, well-connected and outspread infrastructure is essential, but should be completed also by railway traffic, in order to avoid congestion and ensure an efficient and environmentally friendly transport system. Air transport is also crucial for taking the important role of the Region in a globalized world.

Talking about the road and rail transport, infrastructure is often not enough or is missing somewhere and the result is that the mobility of citizens is reduced or non-existent.

Airports need to be easily accessible, safe and secure. In certain parts of the Danube Region, some airports are in the process of privatization and/or administrative decentralization and the need to have a strong and effective

management. The potential of regional airports emerged due to scheduled flights and increased air cargo traffic. Such growth should occur in a balanced and unhampered manner.

All the challenges that arise in transport are mainly related to the lack of coordinated planning, funding and implementation. European Union Strategy for the Danube Region provides answers to these questions, given that mobility and accessibility require huge investments; plans are very important so that the potential of these investments is thoroughly used (for example, joint ventures planned transnationally, including shared costs and benefits).

Multimodal nodes must play an important role, not only in terms of accessibility, but also as optimal places for economic and industry grouping. Railway freight corridors, which have already been mentioned, also include intermodal terminals, thereby providing effective three-modal connections of inland waterways, railways and roads, as logistics centres in the Danube Region.

The Republic of Serbia has a great importance in the future realization of the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Currently, about 2 billion euros is being invested in road infrastructure in Serbia; investment of over 1 billion euros in Serbian railways is expected soon. We are constructing two bridges over the Danube, one in Belgrade and the other in Novi Sad. Simultaneously we are carrying out projects of airport infrastructure, multimodal nodes in Belgrade and Nis, as well as a project of construction of intermodal terminal in the vicinity of Belgrade. All of these projects are carried out on the basis of credit lines of EIB, EBRD, the World Bank, bilateral loans and thanks to the EU pre-accession funds with the support of the EU Delegation to Serbia.

The participation of the Republic of Serbia in the implementation of the Strategy contributes to: the economy strengthening, the integration of sectoral policies of the Republic of Serbia into EU development plans, improvement of bilateral and multilateral cooperation of Serbia with all the countries of the Danube Region.

Because of all the mentioned, I want that today's conference proceeds in the best way possible. I want you to make the most of your time in formal and informal communication, to exchange views and development plans of your countries and the entire Danube Region, which will send a unique and strong message from today's event.

Thank you for your attention!