

Dear colleague State Secretary Mr. Poledica,

Dear director Mr. Paquet,

Friends of the Danube Region,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the first stakeholder conference of the Priority Area 1b: To improve mobility and multimodality – rail, road and air links of the Danube Strategy.

At the beginning I would like to thank the Serbian Ministry of transport for excellent cooperation in coordinating the priority area 1b.

I would also like to thank the European Commission, both Directorate general for regional policy and Directorate general for mobility and transport for valuable support to Priority area coordinators since the very start of implementation of the Strategy.

And I would also like to thank all the speakers and participants of today's conference. It is wonderful to see so many of you here in Ljubljana, at the biggest event of this priority area so far. I believe that your dedication to this conference represents an important basis for our future joint activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is great supporter of the EU strategy for the Danube region.

We believe the Strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube region and thus presents real European added value.

The Danube macro-region has a unique geo-strategic location, linking the East and West Europe, Europe and Asia, EU Member States and non-EU Member States. Our region, with its economic potential and dynamic work force, unique nature and natural resources has a huge development potential. By pursuing regional cooperation, enhancing existing relations and strengthening the Danube economic ties among the member countries, we are today much more optimistic

that the Danube strategy will demonstrate its potential and contribute to the prosperity of the Region.

We understand that there are huge challenges across almost all member states in terms of the impact of recession. But I believe that this is the time to coordinate our activities and seek best ways to invest in the future. It is vital that Danube region states make a real effort to meet the goals of the Strategy as endorsed by the heads of Governments in June 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Strategy is a great opportunity for EU Member States and non-EU Member States to cooperate, coordinate and work together to improve mobility and accessibility that would benefit all countries in the region.

When we consider today's transport system, we might indicate that it is about time when the countries need to see the future transport system at wider than national level. And that is not easy, while the first priority of each government is the well-being of the nation it is representing. It is about time that all of us recognise that the coordination on trans-national activities, in particular cross-boarder projects, contributes to common benefits of the Region and beyond. The identification of the TEN-T and connections to neighbouring countries together with the common financial facilities are the tools which helps us in developing the common transport infrastructure.

However activities to remove obstacles for mobility and accessibility by eliminating missing links and bottlenecks should be in parallel with activities to remove administrative barriers. To do this we need political will of all States and most advanced tools for realization of these ambitious goals, such as for example use of information technologies which would enable deployment of interoperable transport systems in all modes of transport.

I hope that in coming years we will be able to see real progress with transport connections. Particularly important is going to be progress on key projects with high added value to the Danube region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you will remember this first, historic stakeholder conference of Priority Area 1b and that today we will lay the foundations for an excellent partnership in future.

I wish you all a pleasant stay here in Slovenia and a safe trip back home.

Thank you!