

**EUSDR Priority area 1b:**

To improve mobility and multimodality: road, rail and air links

## MINUTES of the 19th STEERING GROUP meeting

Monday-Tuesday, 23-24 September 2019

"Remisens Premium Hotel Metropol", Portorož, Slovenia

**Participants:** AT, BiH, CRO, CZ, DE, HU, ME, RO, SI, SRB, UA and CEI, SRC Bistra (Citywalk), NC(SI)  
(see List of Participants)

**Non-participating:** BG, MD, SK and DG REGIO, DG MOVE, DG NEAR, DTP, DSP

**Chairman:** Mr. Franc Žepič, PAC (Slovenia)

**Co-chairman:** Ms. Mirjana Jovanović, PAC (Serbia)

The two days SG meeting started with the Ad hoc group meeting, continued next day in formal SG setting and ended the third day (Wednesday, 25 September 2019) with the technical visit to the Port of Koper.

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### DAY 1 - Monday, 23 September, 2019: AD HOC WG ON PROJECTS

Closed meeting dedicated to Danube macro-region transport projects - SG members only

#### **Item 1) Welcome and introduction**

The Chairman, Mr. Žepič and the Co-chairman, Ms. Jovanović, welcomed the participants of the 19th Steering Group meeting. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to all present members and underlined that the meeting is attended by 11 out of 14 member countries. Ms. Jovanović welcomed the members and conveyed message from Mr. Miodrag Poledica who could not attend this meeting due to urgent matters at the office. The Chairman explained the idea to work the first day of the SG meeting as an Ad Hoc Working Group on Projects. The projects relevant for the PA1b have been discussed on previous SG meetings, while the list of projects has not been updated for some time. So, PACs believe it is time to revisit and update the list as well as the way the projects have been introduced and followed. All SG members agreed with the proposed work plan.

#### **State of play of PA1b projects**

##### **Item 2) Projects**

The Chairman explained the present PA1b project list and stated that the list with over 160 projects is too long. He also reminded the SG members of the TAD study (Transport Study for the Danube Region - financed by EIB) and the results of this study, in particular on the short list of projects to be started or completed by 2024. (Note: study is available at <https://transport.danube-region.eu/publications/>) He then invited SG members to a round table discussion and presentation of the status of the projects in their country.

Austria: Mr. Josef Zitzler stated that he believes the projects should be grouped to: a) strategic projects and b) important projects. He also pointed that all projects should be assigned implementation stage. Then, he mentioned two rail projects: Vienna - Bratislava and Graz - Maribor and informed members of the current status of these two projects.

At this point the Chairman raised question of taking into account or not TEN - T network and TEN-T extension to the Western Balkans and to the Eastern Neighbourhood (in particular Moldova and Ukraine). If we do, to what extent we include them into our list (all sections along the TEN-T core

network crossing the macro-region or only selected projects)? Would it be redundancy of work carried out by the EU core corridor coordinators supported by Core corridors fora or it will bring an additional added value for selected projects?

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mr. Miroslav Djerić presented major projects. Work is progressing well on corridor V-c, both Republika Srpska and Federacija BiH side. He also mentioned works on two bridges connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) with Croatia: Gradiška (linking motorway Gradiška-Banja Luka with the Croatian motorway network) and Svilaj – Odžaci (bridge Svilaj on river Sava is part of Pan-European road corridor Vc, section Budapest-Beli Manastir-Osijek-Sarajevo-Ploče). The Chairman mentioned also already constructed bridge on river Drina (bridge Ljubovija-Bratunac) that connects BiH with Serbia and start of preparatory works for another new bridge on river Sava near Sremska Rača (part of planned motorway Beograd-Sarajevo), and Mr. Djerić stated that the plans are in preparation to start construction work on this bridge as well.

Croatia: Mr. Saša Amanović presented status of several projects in Croatia. He mentioned that Croatia has many important projects at different stages of planning and/or implementation. He stressed that we have to talk about projects again and again. As an example he mentioned the Alpine - Western Balkan rail freight corridor and suggested that we should initiate proposal to include this corridor to TEN-T network during the process of revision of the TEN-T planned to be concluded between 2021-2023. Croatia is working on several rail projects along this corridor, as well as on projects related to extension to the Pan-European Corridor V-c and two bridges with BiH. One of the most important projects, currently in works, is reconstruction of railway line Dugo Selo - Križevci (connection to Hungary). Aside from these mainly rail projects, there are 6 planned and ongoing projects at the port of Rijeka. Mr. Amanović suggested that we should start with small studies on projects that can be later submitted to the EC.

The Chairman asked what are the latest news regarding construction of the Pelješac bridge and Mr. Amanović informed the members that decision on the last detail, access roads, was made few days ago. The contract for the bridge was awarded to Chinese company, EC approved it, and the bridge should be finished in 2021.

Mr. Max Bauernfeind (AT) commented on 'China issue' and the fact that more Chinese companies are getting infrastructure projects in the region. Austria is neutral about this issue and understands that different countries have different approaches to improve infrastructure in order to best serve present transport needs.

The Chairman agreed that we should talk more about 'China issue', however not in order to favour it - but because it is a reality.

Mr. Bauernfeind added that he does not object involvement of Chinese companies as long as the European standards are met.

Czech Republic: Mr. Jaromir Volf said that they updated list of projects and forwarded it to PACs. He suggested that the list has up to 6-7 projects of each member country and that it is important the list indicates phase of implementation. On the 'China issue' Mr. Volf said that Czech Republic has no experience but is interested to learn and share experiences with other countries. Regarding the TEN-T and the extension of the network he supports an idea to add also TEN-T projects on the list and follow progress closely.

The Chairman, commenting on the issue of the stage of projects, stated that many countries struggle with much too long planning processes (EIA, feasibility studies, planning documents) that often are measured in tenth years before construction works can start. He presented an idea to initiate a study on these issues in order to compile the best practices so the member states can benefit from it. Mr. Volf supported this idea of sharing experiences.

*In conclusion Mr. Žepić said that PAC-s will explore possibility to organise a Workshop on this topic or to initiate a study.*

Germany: Mr. Harry Seybert presented status of the project of widening of MW No.8 (Autobahn 8) section Munich – Salzburg and long discussions held in Bavaria on number of lanes (6 or 8 in both directions). He pointed that sometime involvement of citizens in decision making process is a real challenge. For now, it has been decided to widen the road into a 6 lane (three in each direction) motorway from Rosenheim to Austrian border. He also mentioned that it is important to monitor infrastructure projects on the Rhine-Danube core network corridor. It is important for Bavaria that the projects are promoted and supported by the Danube Strategy. Next Mr. Seybert mentioned two railway projects that are in planning stage: a) extension of rail Munich - Salzburg (connection with Munich Airport) and b) rail section Augsburg – Ulm, part of the Stuttgart–Augsburg new and upgraded railway line. These two projects are in the planning stages and works will not begin before 2023.

Mr. Volf was interested in the status of the railway project ‘Regensburg towards border with Czech Republic’. Mr. Seybert responded that currently this project, that involves passenger and freight, is at the public hearing due to the noise issue.

The Chairman suggested that the project is added to the PA1b projects list since this is a perfect example of the project relevant for our discussions - links among member states.

Mr. Amanović proposed that if possible Germany lobbies to include the Alpine - Western Balkan rail freight corridor to TEN-T core network, while Mr. Žepić said that a brief information on the Alpine - Western Balkan rail freight corridor status will be sent to Mr. Seybert.

Mr. Zitzler raised the issue of funding possibilities in the Alpine region and compliance with the TEN-T provisions. (Note: Additional funding resources are needed to build infrastructure in mountainous regions unless exemptions are introduced or derogations are permitted within EU legislation.) Mr. Žepić said that an effort should be made that an exception should be introduced for infrastructure in the mountainous regions in all EC proposals on new legislation related to the transport infrastructure.

Hungary: Mr. Gergely Gecse stated that their revised list now has 6 projects (2 more than before). His suggestion is that selected projects affect at least two or three countries. Among other, he emphasized project of high speed rail network connecting 4 capitals: Warsaw-Prague-Bratislava-Budapest. The feasibility study for above project is underway. From the road projects, he mentioned Via Carpatia. Sections in Hungary are to be completed before end 2022. (Note: The road will run in a general north-south direction from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean; from the Lithuanian port city of Klaipėda, via pass through eastern Poland, eastern Slovakia, eastern Hungary, western Romania, western Bulgaria and terminating in the Greek city of Thessaloniki.)

Mr. Žepić mentioned and Mr. Gecse confirmed the ongoing project of high speed rail line between Budapest in Belgrade - the works are in progress on both sides of the border.

Mr. Amanović stated that Croatia is working on connections between Zagreb and Budapest. Railway project Dugo Selo - Križevci and also extension of the corridor Vc (both MW and rail). One of the main issues is interoperability.

Montenegro: Ms. Tanja Dašić reported on 3 projects. Works are progressing on Motorway Bar – border with Serbia (near Boljare). Second: Priority is given to modernisation of the rail line Bar - Belgrade. The third project is modernisation of Tivat airport with the aim to increase capacity and quality of service.

Mr. Žepić was interested to learn on status of railway connections with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms. Dašić responded that it has been unchanged and efforts to change the status quo are not underway.

Romania: Mr. Serban Tupa started his presentation with a remark related to absence of government continuity. Second remark was related to geographical difficulties for development transport infrastructure in Romania. It is a large country with difficult terrain and the capital city located remotely from the other capitals. Mr. Tupa presented status of all projects in Romania by using the

PPT presentation. He stated that the total need for investments in next 10 years is about 35 billion Euros.

The Chairman suggested that national projects for the projects list clearly state to which TEN-T or main corridor the project belongs. This would make it considerably easier to follow progress on these corridors.

Ms. Jovanović raised question regarding connection with Serbia, rail and road. Previously initiated feasibility study, that was supposed to be financed from the CBC funds, failed due to Romanian side inactivity. She wanted to know if there is any chance to reinstate the study. Mr. Tupa responded that indeed commitment from two countries is needed.

Serbia: Mr. Željko Janjoš informed that the list of projects from Serbia has been updated, but needs further consolidation of projects by corridors - similar to Romania. Among most important projects, he mentioned railway line Belgrade - Budapest where the work is in progress on section Stara Pazova - Novi Sad, which includes the most difficult section - tunnel named Čortanovci. The second priority on the rail infrastructure has been given to rail line Niš – Dimitrovgrad (border with Bulgaria). In the road sector, beside completion of the Pan-European Corridor No. X, the work is in progress on the MW from Belgrade to Montenegro. Also, the plan to start works on MW to Bosnia and Herzegovina is being materialized these days, starting with the bridge over Sava in Sremska Rača. Mr. Janjoš mentioned that this year a contract will be signed for construction of the first modern intermodal terminal in Serbia near Batajnica (in vicinity of Belgrade). This terminal will be co-financed 85% from the IPA funds.

Ukraine: Mr. Rostyslav Tomenchuk presented projects in Ukraine by using PPT presentation. He said that a new government has been formed. Also, a national transport strategy has been adopted and work is now focused on the action plan. Mr. Tomenchuk mentioned that out of 4 airports, only one is in the region that belongs to EUSDR. The problem they have is that Ukraine has not signed 'Open Sky Agreement', as they have an issue similar to Gibraltar i.e. Great Britain vs Spain. Also, most of the rail lines are in areas outside of the Danube region provinces.

The Chairman noticed that many priorities are not impacting Danube region and that the list of projects we would follow shall be with focus on Danube region. Also, attention could be given to secondary network links with TEN-T network (i.e. network that 'feeds' the TEN-T).

Slovenia: Mr. Žepič presented several Slovenian projects with added value also for the wider region i.e. that contribute to transnational transport of goods and people. Firstly he mentioned three successfully completed projects: a) in 2016 reconstruction, electrification and upgrading of the railway line Pragersko – Hodoš (border with HU): part of Baltic-Adriatic Core corridor, b) in 2016 GSM-R implementation on the Slovenian section of the Priority project No.6 (note: PPNo.6 is renamed the Mediterranean Core Corridor) and c) in 2018 motorway Maribor-Gruškovje (border with Croatia).

Next he presented three road projects:

- a) Motorway Postojna/Razdrto to Jelšane/border with Croatia, which is at planning stage. Due to the long procedures at planning and preparatory phases it is unlikely that the construction phase of this important approximately 34 km long missing part linking Slovenian MW A1 with Croatian A7 will start before 2030.
- b) Construction of a second tube of the Karavanke/Karawanks motorway tunnel is ongoing. The 8 kilometres long tunnel that connects the MW A2 in Slovenia and the A11 in Austria is to be completed by 2024.
- c) 3<sup>rd</sup> development axis: The axis is divided into three parts: the northern (31.5 km), the middle (cca 80 km) and southern axis (17.9 km). The planned road means a transport link that will in the future run from the north to the south-east of Slovenia (from the border with Austria to the border with Croatia) and is an important connecting road for TEN-T core network in Slovenia, as

well as in Austria and Croatia. Preparatory works at the northern part of the 3rd development axis road project started in 2019 and start of construction works is planned in 2020.

Mr. Amanović stated again initiative to include the Alpine - Western Balkan corridor to TEN-T network. He believes that this is the most natural alignment. According to him, the Rhine Danube Corridor was formed contrary to regulations, and the only argument against Alpine - Western Balkan corridor is that Serbia is not a member of EU. He appeals to all members to support his idea.

The Chairman agreed that this is a good initiative and excellent example how to bring awareness on regional transport needs.

#### List of PA1b infrastructure projects:

The Chairman opened discussion on finalizing the list of projects, how to prioritize projects, how to include map and what kind of form we need to introduce new projects. He suggested if a member state has more than 5-8 projects, then they need to be prioritized (transnational criteria). The List shall include also DTP and other relevant 'soft' projects (e.g. CBC) if members find it beneficial for project implementation.

Ms. Jovanović added that prioritization shall also include readiness of the project for implementation or status of completion. She presented 3 versions/examples of the project form: PA1b present form and forms used by PA1a and by EUSAIR TSG2. She proposed using our existing form also in the future. She added that it can be improved by modifying it slightly by adding few details from other 2 versions. She took upon herself to develop a new version of PA1b project form and circulate it to SG members for comments.

Mr. Janjoš suggested that members use results of TAD study and then build on this. Also, the final list of projects by member states should be organized uniformly, with maps and status/stage of the projects.

The Chairman, Mr. Žepič concluded discussion and closed the first day of work.

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## **DAY 2 -Tuesday, 24 September, 2019: 19<sup>th</sup> PA1b STEERING GROUP MEETING**

The meeting started at 9.00 o'clock.

### **Items 1-2) Welcome and introductory topics**

#### Item 1: Welcome and introduction

The Chairman, Mr. Žepič and the Co-chairman, Ms. Mirjana Jovanović, welcomed the participants of the 19th Steering Group meeting. The Chairman briefly informed all about yesterday's meeting on projects and introduced two invited speakers of today's meeting: Ms. Andreja Knez, Director-General for Inland transport at the Ministry of Infrastructure, Slovenia and Ms. Andreja Jerina, National Coordinator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia.

Ms. Knez welcomed the participants and guests of the PA1b 19th Steering Group meeting. She noted that since the first SG meeting in June 2011 in Ljubljana the Priority area 1b contributes a lot to the enhanced cooperation in the field of road, rail and air transport infrastructure and services in the Danube region and also beyond. She stressed that working on several modes of transport is not an easy task. Yet tangible results were made by: understanding better differences in transport development in the Macro-region, completing several studies, contributing to merging of the EU and non-EU transport systems, supporting, facilitating and initiating many infrastructure projects with added value for the Danube region, enabling stakeholders to meet at over 20 conferences and workshops in order to exchange best practices and network and by making various efforts to narrow the transport gaps between the Danube macro-region member countries.



Then Director General mentioned the importance of process of agreeing the EU budget for the financial period 2021-2027, and expressed wish that the newly appointed Commissioners for transport policy, regional policy and neighbourhood policy will continue to support implementation of macro-regional strategies. Talking about investments into transport infrastructure Ms Knez said that Slovenia is looking forward to strengthen synergies among the EU programmes and implementation of the Danube Strategy in the next programming period 2021-2027.

Director-General stated that Slovenia is paying special attention to the two multimodal TEN-T core corridors crossing it: *The Baltic-Adriatic and the Mediterranean*. She acknowledged the importance of the *Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor* (established by the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/500 of 22 March 2018) that is representing the shortest route between Salzburg in Austria and Bulgaria, continuing further to Istanbul. She supports also the Priority Area 1b position that *the Alpine-Western Balkan Corridor* starts in the capital of the Free State of Bayern and at the same time this corridor becomes multimodal. It should be part of the process within the already started revision of the TEN-T to become a new TEN-T Core Corridor at the latest by 2023.

Finally, she briefly spoke of the main short- to mid-term Slovenian projects with the added value to the macro-region. These are: a) *Second railway track from the Port of Koper to Divača*, b) *Second tube of the Karavanke road tunnel* (joint project with Austria to remove the only bottleneck and improve safety on a motorway network between Munich and Belgrade) and c) *Third Development axis* that will link Northern parts of Slovenia with the Southern part and will at the same time add to better regional connections with Austria and Croatia.

Before conclusion Director General welcomed work on the first revision of the EUSDR Action plan and expressed belief that it will be adopted in the beginning of 2020 during the Croatian Presidency of the EU.

Ms. Andreja Jerina (Slovenian National Coordinator for MRS), after welcoming everyone in Portorož, invited all to explore also events of the Mediterranean Cost and Macro-regional Strategies Week taking place from 18th to 28th September along Slovenian coast. Ms. Jerina pointed out issue of capacity - people and finances, she said that we are talking but not progressing enough. She mentioned that EUSAIR is doing better job in embedding MRS projects in national documents. She also talked about commitment of EC to incorporate IPA funds and that now is moment to join forces to select MRS projects and align them with funding sources. Ms. Jerina stated that process of revision of Action Plan missed opportunity to significantly change things - did not drop any topics. She mentioned that Baltic Strategy is at the 3rd revision and they will change some topics that are not relevant anymore. Furthermore, EUSDR is lacking strategic vision and funds - but there is no answer to these issues. Ms. Jerina said that "other players" are coming. Three Seas Initiative is a Presidential Initiative for now, but there are intentions to be institutionalized. Slovenia was host in 2019 and next is Estonia. Initiative is open to other countries and time is to introduce MRS to the Initiative. Most discussed topics are energy, transport and digitalization. Ms. Jerina mentioned upcoming communication conference and welcomed Ukraine in more active role in EUSDR and possible role of PAC in PA1b.

#### Item 2: Approval of Agenda for 19th and Minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> SG meeting

Next the Chairman reviewed the agenda and explained the course of the meeting. He invited for any comments on the agenda and minutes of the 18th SG meeting held in Belgrade on 26 March 2019. The Agenda was approved as proposed by the Chairmen. There was no intervention to the 18th SG meeting minutes and the minutes were unanimously approved.

#### **Items 3-6) EU Transport policies, the Danube Strategy and PA1b**

#### Item3: Summary of work carried out by Ad Hoc WG on projects

Ms. Jovanović and Mr. Janjoš summarised and presented work of Ad Hoc WG from yesterday by stating main points and conclusions. It was agreed that the list of projects by countries will have one more round of updating, where the members will consolidate the list, include maps, use TAD study results as a baseline and cross-reference it with the current PA1b list. We expect to follow a list of 5 to 8 projects per country. Ms. Jovanović will develop a new version of PA1b project form and circulate it to SG members for comments.

Item4: EU transport policy, including WB Connectivity platform and EaP Transport Panel

Mr Žepič briefly outlined three processes that together represent the most important parts for shaping the direction in the development of transport policy for the Danube macro-region as a whole. These are: Eastern Partnership (EaP) – Transport Panel, Western Balkans - WB 6 Summit and Transport Community Permanent Secretariat, the EU transport policy (legislative and non-legislative acts proposed by the European Commission and adopted by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament).

**Eastern Partnership** (EaP) was launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative. The Eastern Partnership aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Within four key priority areas transport is part of the priority area “STRONGER CONNECTIVITY: Improving transport links and infrastructure”. The EaP Transport Panel was established on 23 September 2011. The Panel is a framework for exchange of information and best practice between the partner countries and the EU Member States. Its goal is to strengthen transport connections both between the partner countries and the EU and between partner countries themselves. So far 16 meetings were held (last: 10th April 2019; Brussels) and several EaP Ministerial Meetings. At the last one on 6 June 2019 in Luxembourg the Joint Declaration “Eastern Partnership - taking the transport cooperation agenda forward” was adopted.

Three priorities are currently set:

- a) Road safety (including establishment of Road Safety Observatory)
- b) Infrastructure Connectivity: Transport Corridors (incl. Extension of TEN-T) and
- c) Addressing reforms underpinning regulatory convergence across transport modes.

**WB TRANSPORT POLICY: WB 6 and Transport Community**

I) Summit Western Balkans 6 (WB6)

In 2014 the political leaders of the Western Balkan countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia met for the first time under the term Western Balkans Six (WB6) in Berlin. The aim is to bring a new dynamism to regional cooperation. One of the main aims is building and connecting transport and energy infrastructure as a driver for growth and jobs.

Summits are taking place annually (28 August 2014: Conference of WB States (The Berlin Process), 21 April 2015, Brussels: Commissioner for transport meets with WB6 Prime Ministers, 22 June 2015, Riga: Ministerial meeting with WB Ministers at TEN-T Days 2015, 27 August 2015, Vienna: Western Balkans Summit, 20-22 June 2016, Rotterdam: Ministerial meeting with Neighbourhood countries Ministers, incl. WB Ministers at TEN-T Days 2016; 4 July 2016, Paris: WB6 Summit, 12 July 2017, Trieste: WB6 Summit, 17 May 2018, Sofia: WB6 Summit, 5 July 2019, Poznan).

Apart on financial support for infrastructure transport projects in the Western Balkans, informal agreement on Extended Indicative Core Corridors: a) Mediterranean Corridor, b) Orient/ East-Med Corridor and c) Rhine/Danube Corridor is of the utmost importance.

II) Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community Treaty

In the first half 2008 Commission received mandate for negotiating Transport Community Treaty (TCT) between the EU and six WB countries. After long negotiation period the TCT was signed in 2017 and Permanent secretariat of TCT was inaugurated on 13 September 2019

Priorities set by Permanent secretariat are:

- a) Making Road Safety a priority: eliminating high risk road sections on the TEN-T networks in Western Balkans
- b) Improving operations and infrastructure at Border and Common Crossing points (BCPs) and
- c) Developing a Regional Rail Strategy for the Western Balkans.

Finally, the Chairman spoke about the EU transport policy. To tackle nowadays challenges the European Commission focuses on:

- ✓ DIGITALISATION (e.g. ITS, ERTMS; SESAR, VTMSIS, RIS, Sharing Economy, Drones)
- ✓ DECARBONISATION (-20% CO2 emissions from transport by 2030, Global solutions to reduce emissions (IMO, ICAO), Polluter pay principle, Modal shift / Co-modality / Full modal integration)
- ✓ INVESTMENT (Innovative financing mechanisms e.g. EFSI, Infrastructure investment (CEF) and Strategic Research and innovation)
- ✓ PEOPLE (Safety and security e.g. halving road deaths by 2020, Passenger Rights, Jobs)

Some of the issues are reflected in the current dossiers under consideration for adoption by the EU two legislators: Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Mentioned were:

- Charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures („Eurovignette“): Proposal for a directive amending Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures;
- Posting of drivers in the road transport sector (the First Mobility Package);
- Minimum requirements on maximum daily and weekly driving times and rest periods (the First Mobility Package);
- Access to the international road haulage market (the First Mobility Package);
- „Combined Transport“ (Second Package: Clean Mobility Package);
- Common rules for access to international market for coach and bus services;
- Transport infrastructure: „SMART TEN-T“ (Third Mobility Package);
- Road infrastructure safety management (Third Mobility Package);
- Rail passengers' rights and obligations;
- Safeguarding competition in air transport;
- Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) 2021-2027 for which the EU institutions reached a partial agreement on the CEF for 2021-2027 at the final Trilogue on 7 March 2019.

The Chairman concluded his presentation by challenging SG members asking them if PA1b shall enhance monitoring or/and engagement in above mentioned and new policy initiatives in the future?

The following contributions have been made in the post-presentation debate:

- Mr. Dileno, CEI, said that the Trieste Declaration strengthens connectivity of Western Balkans. He mentioned that in June 2019 Trieste was host of the annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of 17 Member Countries of CEI and that Montenegro is taking over next presidency in January 2020.
- Mr. Amanović commented the map of TEN-T corridors and said that the map is OK. However, Croatia has started activities to get involved in Baltic - Adriatic corridor (ports of Rijeka, Zadar and Šibenik). He once more stated that Croatia supports initiative that former multimodal Pan-European Corridor no. X becomes a new TEN-T corridor. (Note: sections of this corridor between Ljubljana – Belgrade are now tentatively part of the Mediterranean corridor and in terms of rail sections from Salzburg to Belgrade are part of Alpine-Western Balkans RFC).

#### Item 5: The Danube Transnational Program

The Chairman informed members about DTP 3rd Call for projects launched on 28 January and closed on 8 March 2019. The Call follows 2-step procedure. Out of 35 submitted proposal for Priority 3, 15 were on SO3.1 (transport). Eight (8) projects were selected for the second phase. The chairman hopes that 2 or 3 projects will be approved for financing.



In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> DTP PAC call is to be closed on 8 October 2019. Maximum financial support per PA is 100.000 EUR/year.

Due to new financial period and yet unknown EU budget, Ms. Jerina said that it is open question on Transnational Programmes and financing. She is not sure if the 1st Call in next period will be possible already in 2021, most likely it will be in 2022.

#### Item 6: Revision of the EUSDR Action Plan: State of play - information

Mr. Janjoš presented material PA1b received on September 17th from DG REGIO. He also informed SG members that a very short notice was received for a workshop on the Action Plan revision that is being held in Vienna today, despite many objections and requests from NCs and PACs to reschedule it. During presentation an interactive discussion has been initiated.

- Ms. Jerina questioned why EC deviated from the project examples that PA1b defined in Consolidated Input document. She also stated that Action Plan is our document and that we should insist on details important to our work.
- Mr. Žepič pointed out that the document included new EC President's focus headline ambitions and that we should pay attention to this in formulating our response to the document.
- Mr. Janjoš underlined a statement in chapter of the documents dedicated to Geopolitical settings and initiatives. It states that 'China currently realizes the Budapest-Belgrade railway: A \$2.89 billion, 350km high-speed rail line project ...'. He believes that the statement was not formulated correctly and that we should pay attention in our response to this document. Particularly since the document states that this action 'is at the core of PA1b and EUSDR needs to reflect how to deal with such foreign interventions.'
- Mr. Bauernfeind stated that China and Russia are active and that we shall recognise it, but not endorse it. He believes that MRS need to have a coordinated approach to this matter.
- Mr. Amanović said that this is a political issue. He mentioned the Pelješac bridge project where the contract was awarded to a Chinese company after approval by EC.
- Mr. Žepič agreed that we should pay attention to this issue and he mentioned the EU-China Connectivity Platform<sup>1</sup> to improve connections between EU and Asia. He believes that we will be talking about this issue many time in the future.
- Mr. Zitzler asked what is expected from SG members regarding the Action Plan draft document.
- Mr. Janjoš replied that for now we know that we need to redefine and/or add details highlighted in the document and comment on anything we find necessary. Once we receive more information from the workshop that is taking place in Vienna, PMT will circulate all documents to SG members for their comments and inputs. He stated that the deadline for PA1b to respond is end of October, so he asked members to respond with their comments by the mid of October.

### **7-8) Policy development**

#### Item 7: Monitoring transport policies, Identification and Selection of priority transport topics

Mr. Žepič opened this item by proposing a round table discussion and suggested that all members think of 3 topics they believe are important enough for our PA to be addressed in coming years. Based on this discussion, PA1b can later formulate a set of priority topics for PA1b. Members suggested:

- Slovenia (Mr. Žepič) started with: 1. Road Safety, 2. Railway interoperability, 3. Sustainable Rural and Urban Mobility, including focus on Micro-mobility;
- Serbia (Ms. Jovanović and Mr. Janjoš): 1. Upgrading railway infrastructure and rail operations in the region, 2. Road safety, 3. Air transport (but not sure what topic);
- Austria (Mr. Zitzler) underlined all above mentioned topics. He believes that the key is Railway sector, both infrastructure and also removal of other bottlenecks - technical and operational. In his opinion, passenger rail transport is not competitive enough yet. Mr. Zitzler is sceptical what

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international/eu-china-connectivity-platform\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/international/eu-china-connectivity-platform_en)

can be done by PA1b and in particular if we can make change in air transport, since aviation sector is business driven. He proposed to look into PSO possibilities for the air sector. Some countries have experiences in this. We (PA1b SG) could initiate a study to at least analyse potential in regional air sector.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mr. Djerić): stated that for his country the most important is infrastructure development, both rail and road.
- Croatia (Mr. Amanović): 1. Expanding corridors / extension of TEN-T, including new multimodal corridor (Alpine-WB corridor) to better link with non-EU countries, 2. Multimodal freight transport and intermodality (with focus on higher harmonisation with inland and maritime transport), 3. Issues related to transit transport, including cross-border (a topic of utmost importance for Europe in the future).
- Montenegro (Ms. Dašić): 1. Rail development, 2. Cross border improvements, 3. Capacity improvements of airports e.g. Tivat airport;
- Czech Republic (Mr. Volf): 1. Upgrading rail lines and service (passengers cross border tickets), 2. Multimodal freight transport (long distance) 3. Cross border improvements in road transport;
- Hungary (Mr. Gacse): 1. Travel time in rail transport, 2. Road safety, 3. PSO in air transport (HU has lines approved by EC to Priština, Skopje, Sarajevo and Tirana);
- Germany (Mr. Seybert): 1. Environment friendly transport - modes to make it functional, 2. Rail interoperability, 3. Inter modality;
- Ukraine (Mr. Tomenchuk): 1. Budget for non-EU countries and Synchronisation of resources, 2. Extension of TEN-T with the EUSDR network and cross border connectivity, 3. Modernisation of railway, including electrification and digitalisation
- Romania (Mr. Tupa): 1. Removal of bottlenecks (both rail and road) - cross border, 2. Connecting two TEN-T Core corridors: Orient-East/Med and Rhine-Danube, 3. Reduction of emissions caused by transport (e.g. more RO-LA transport and other combined transport services).
- CEI (Mr. Dileno): 1. Prioritisation of investments by MRS, 2. Border crossing, 3. Improving public transport in cross border connectivity

*Conclusion: The Chairman asked all representatives of countries to rethink their preliminary suggested topics and confirm or modify them by (or at) next meeting. He also added that attention is to be paid to topics that contribute to cohesion and narrowing gaps between the countries or parts of the macro-region.*

#### Item 8: Cross-border issues: What actions to be taken

The chairman stated that solving the cross-border issues in the Danube macro-region are of great importance for smooth transport and development of all member countries. While many decision-makers and experts are trying to find the best solutions for years, in practice there are almost no progress in terms of shortening the time needed to cross the border by truck or train. Nevertheless, we need to continue looking for practical solutions.

- Mr. Bauernfeind informed SG members that he, and the Chairman, is involved in an OECD ITF Working Group on planning transport infrastructure that is preparing a report. The Group is interested in the Danube macro-region and in particular border crossing issues. He was asked to write a text on this and circulate to SG. (Note: more about WG at: <https://www.itf-oecd.org/strategic-infrastructure-planning-working-group>)
- Mr. Paolo Dileno informed members about project he has been involved in and latest news on the analysis they have done. They selected several nodes. Results of the survey are available on the web site. There was delay caused by SEETO ending work in 2018, but the problem was resolved by including Chamber of Commerce of Serbia instead. The plan is to shift the report into Action Plan and to disseminate it to stakeholders. Two projects were mentioned in this respect: a) CONNECT2CE (co-financed by the Interreg Central Europe Programme) aims at improving rail connections and smart mobility in Central Europe by promoting innovative Public

Transport (PT) solutions and b) Inter-connect (Intermodality Promotion and Rail Renaissance in Adriatic - Ionian Region), co-financed by ADRION programme

## **9 - 11: Capitalisation and Communication**

Item 9: Capitalisation - thematic pole 6 (moved ahead in the agenda after item 6)

On proposal of the Chairman and agreement of SG members, this item was moved ahead in agenda. Pole leader, Mr. Danilo Čeh presented process of capitalisation of the 6 projects related to PA1b financed by DTP. He used PPT presentation. These projects have been presented at several SG meetings before and all of them were completed in May - June this year. As one of the key points is that sustainable mobility takes significant place in Action Plan, especially in urban areas. Mr. Čeh stated that funding for all projects was finished in June and that Capitalisation activities he and his partners are doing is voluntary.

Mr. Janjoš commented that it is sad that we learned today about future DTP funding and that there will be no calls for projects in next 2-3 years. Also, he suggested that we should advocate for separate funding for the capitalisation of the results after the projects are officially completed.

Item 10: Activities undertaken for publications on Transport infrastructure in the Danube Region: Railway links and Air links

The Chairman explained that efforts to prepare the brochure on Rail links failed, while brochure on Air links is planned for the next three-year implementation period (2020-2022).

Item 11: PA1b communication activities

Mr. Luka Škoda, assistant to the Slovenian PAC, in charge of PA1b communication explained present activities. He informed the participants of the new PA1b Website with new domain (<https://transport.danube-region.eu/>). In addition, he said that two PA1b projects were recently prepared for the DSP "facebook" storytelling.

## **12 - 16: Cooperation, Joint Initiatives and Events**

Item 12: Cooperation

The chairman informed participants of the three PA1b activities related to cooperation:

1) Joint PA1a and PA1b meeting (Vienna, 12 June 2019)

2) EUSDR PA1b and 3SI (The Three Seas Initiative): How to build synergies?

3SI is flexible political platform at Presidential level, launched in 2015). The Initiative includes the 12 EU Member States located between the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black seas: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Up until today, four summits took place: Dubrovnik Summit (2016);

Warsaw Summit (2017); Bucharest Summit (2018, <http://three-seas.eu/>) and Ljubljana Summit (5-6 June 2019, <https://www.three.si/>). As an outcome of the third Three Seas Initiative Summit in Bucharest a "Status Report on the List of Priority Interconnection Projects" prepared in 2019 and reviewed in Ljubljana. It is clear that number of prioritized transport projects are same as within macro-regional strategies (EUSDR, EUSAIR). Hence rethinking how to join forces in project implementation should be of interest to all initiatives.

3) 8<sup>th</sup> EUSDR Annual Forum (Bucharest, 27-28 June 2019): The co-chair Mrs. Jovanović brief participants on her involvement on behalf the PA1b SG at the 8<sup>th</sup> EUSDR Annual Forum session on projects.

Item 13: Joint Initiatives

*PA1b and UNECE Joint workshop on Regional Rail Connectivity* (3-4 October 2019, Belgrade): Mr.

Janjoš brief on the WS: The WS was organised by the EUSDR Priority Area 1b and UNECE. Both support development of sustainable and efficient transport system.

The aim of the Workshop was to increase awareness on importance of better Danube region rail connectivity and to strengthen cooperation between the regional transport stakeholders to create common, reliable and sustainable rail services on the international market. The workshop allowed attendees (ministries, railways, terminal operators, hauliers, experts) to link regional rail connectivity with national transport policies and to discuss wider prospective of the region to attract international transport flows. A key aspect of the workshop was the exchange of information and experiences of participants in relation to rail connectivity in the Danube region.

#### Item 14: MR Strategies - EUSDR and EUSAIR: Possibilities of mutual cooperation

The Co-chairman, Ms Mirjana Jovanović is on behalf of Serbia also coordinator (together with a colleague from Italy) of the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group 2 (TSG2): "Transport & Energy, subgroup transport". She said that existing cooperation is based on the fact that five EUSDR countries are also part of the EUSAIR countries. It is true that EUSAIR transport issues are focused on shipping and hinterland connections in the first place. She explained that work on a Transport Master Plan for the Adriatic-Ionian region has started. It is to be completed in 2022.

The Chairman added that indeed information on work carried out by PA1b and TSG2 is exchanged. He welcome the Master Plan activities, since this document is much needed for MRS. He regrets that PA1b failed to start and complete "The Transport Vision for the Danube Region" document.

*Conclusion: While cooperation between two MRS exists, it is noted that mutual cooperation can be strengthen in future.*

#### Item 15: Planning 20th SG meeting - date, venue and content

Next meeting is planned to be organised tentatively in Serbia and exact date is to be agreed by the PACs. Information will be passed to the SG members in due time.

#### Item 16: AOB

There were no topics to be discussed under any other business.

The 19<sup>th</sup> SG meeting started on 23 September 2019 at 14.00 and ended on 24 September at 16.30.

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### **DAY 3 - Wednesday, 25 September, 2019: TECHNICAL VISIT TO PORT OF KOPER**

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Several SG members and participants joined the technical visit to the Port of Koper that lasted two hours (9.00 to 11.00 o'clock) in the morning of 25<sup>th</sup> September. During the bus ride through Port of Koper terminals, participants were able to learn the history of the Port and about its logistic services. The vision of the Port of Koper is to become the leading port and logistics system as well as provider of global logistics solutions for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Place, Date

Chairman:

Portorož , 25 September 2019

Mr. Franc Žepič, PAC 1b

#### Annex:

- List of participants