

## GREEN BALKAN TRANSPORT CORRIDORS

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### INTRODUCTION

The European policy until 2015 clearly states that 40% of the road freight should be transferred to railways, waterborne or multimodal transport. After the railway crisis in the middle of the 80-ies, which lead to a collapse of the system and wasn't accepted as a chance for further development the same might happen to the road transport if the philosophy of change is neglected. The core field of road transport efficiency is haulages at about 300 km, while searching for alternative energy sources. The tendency towards raising the fuel prices in 2011 and 2012 badly affected the road transport sector. The crisis will bring forward the "shake-off" of small and medium carriers and forwarders, causing a lot of bankruptcies and merges, but these events could also be accepted as a development impetus.

### 1. POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES

There is a persistent European tendency of restructuring the freight modes and technologies, which is not only a sequence of the crisis. Logistics development and the multimodal transport following are linked to the construction of logistic freight centers in the periphery and outside the cities, integrating the different modes of transport based upon modern transport policy and the introduction of intelligent transport systems for logistical purposes.

Brussels' transport authorities are solving a new transport task for people and freight movement outside and inside the European community. This brought forward the establishment of a Long-term program for an integrated European freight transport development, responding to the consumers' necessities, the needs to protect the environment, requiring economic efficiency and supporting competitiveness. The measures introduced and actions undertaken in the field of logistics comprise integrated and intelligent transport systems, based upon single software for travels' planning including all modes of transport. At the same time EC policies are defined in the European directives and regulations obligatory transposed in the national legislation of the member states. Within the past two years a package of measures concerning the ecological transport, logistic action plan, strategy of external costs internalization, establishment of an integrated railway space and the railway network, oriented towards the freight carriages have been approved, notwithstanding the intelligent transport systems. The most important of all documents however remains the White Paper adopted in 2011.

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As a program document it states a new beginning for European transport restructuring aided by intermodal freight carriages based upon the integrated and intelligent transport systems, as well as the revival of the waterborne and railway freight carriages. In the new model of integrated and low energy consuming transport and infrastructure logistics and forwarding play a major role potentially carrying out optimal “green” freight patterns defending the interests of clients and society.

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011 the European Commission has adopted the proposals for review of the European TEN-T policy, the backbone of the European Transport Infrastructure policy. In view of these proposals, inland ports having an annual freight transshipment of more than 500.000 tonnes are part of the comprehensive TEN-T network (basic layer). Around 80 inland ports have been selected for the core network. Inland waterways and rail transport can count on equal levels of co financing (up to 40%). Inland transport connections to ports and the development of ports and multimodal platforms can be co financed up to 20% of the eligible costs.

The European Commission seems to recognize the role inland ports can play in connecting the different transport modes. The inland ports finally receive the place they deserve in the core and comprehensive TEN-T network. EFIP considered that though difficult to define, this new TEN-T network infrastructure policy will be able to overcome the existing problems and encourage “green corridors” approach.

Among the initiatives towards the new Roadmap 2050 are the following:

- Full support for the plans of the Commission to improve the inland waterway infrastructure in view of optimising the navigability of the European waterways as well as a gradual harmonisation of EU navigation rules;
- Measures towards achieving a single European Railway area;
- Development of a “recognised model” of carbon foot print calculator in view of avoiding the proliferation of different models and the “green washing” of certain transport operations as a result of unclear calculation models;
- Support of initiatives to measure and compare the external costs of transport. Taking the externalities into account in the transport costs will help transport users in finding the transport modes that are best for both the economy and the environment;
- Highlights of the importance of the interoperability of intelligent transport systems and new technologies across different modes;
- Establishment of a close cooperation with third countries, in particular the neighbouring countries of the EU about the “green transport corridors” development, in order to extend ecological tendencies and stable transport outside the EC.

## **2. TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION AND CARRIAGE RESTRUCTURING**

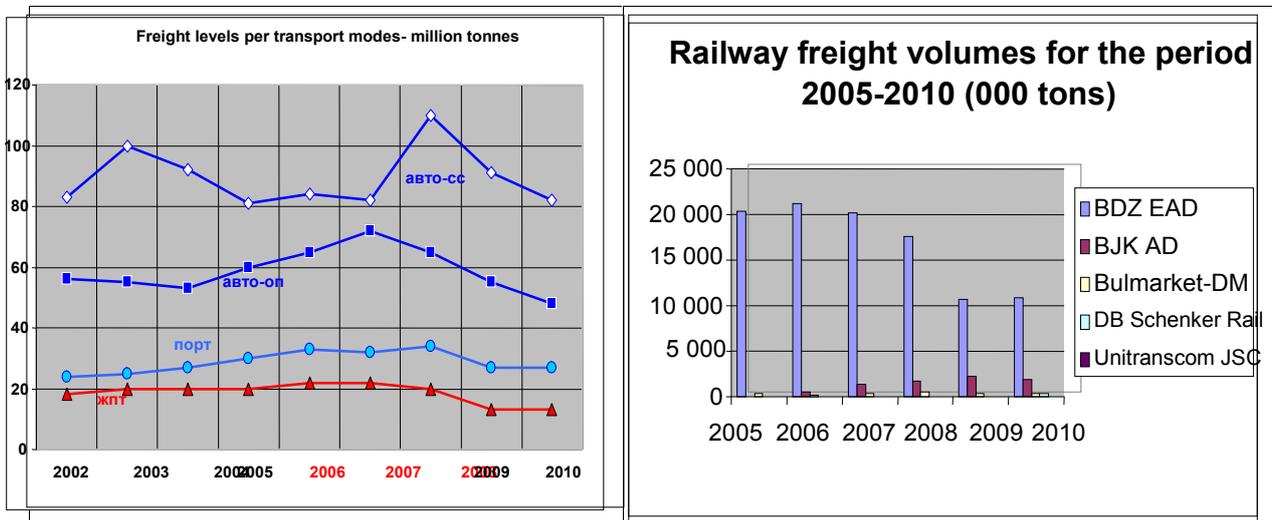
The political and technological revolutions for searching of new energy sources and transportation models have started, the main reason being outside the economic crisis. At present the road transport is European leader, still there is a trend of decreasing the freight volumes discovered in 2009 in the countries of EC, except in Bulgaria and Rumania. The sector increase amounts at 16%, while the railway traffic shows the biggest decrease, i.e. 33%, the situation in Rumania being slightly better with only 27%.

The density of railway and motorway network in Bulgaria is comparatively high in comparison with the population number, but there is a limit in the speed by railways to 100 km/hour while the maintenance technologies are out-of-date. The high maintenance costs bring forward a big financial deficit for maintenance activities.

Bulgarian railway network amounts to 4072 km, two thirds of which electrified lines (2862 km). This year the expectations are for the construction and electrification of 19 km new rail line between Svilengrad and the Turkish border, announced by the Minister of transport at the opening of EURASIA RAIL 2012 Exhibition in Istanbul. The whole railway segment will be completed in 2014.

The railway segment Plovdiv-Svilengrad-Turkish border comprises a part of the basic EC TEN-T network being an important element of the railway link between Europe and Asia. At present phase 1<sup>st</sup> of the project “Section Krumovo-Purvomai” is completed and the work over the second phase (between Purvomai and Svilengrad) has begun.

The European Commission has come to the decision to prolong the Financial memorandum concerning the construction of Danube Bridge 2 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. The biggest amount of the financial aid about the project realization coming from the Cohesion Fund for Bulgaria is € 70 million, and € 35.9 million for Rumania<sup>1</sup>. The long-term goals of the Ministry of transport, the information technologies and communications include the construction of the railway sections Dragoman-Sofia and Sofia-Plovdiv until 2020.



The European railway freight companies follow the airlines by adopting integration and privatization measures, enlarging the scale and size of operations and forming regional strategic partnerships. At present the railway leading companies in Eastern Europe are DB SCHENKER RAIL and RCA, creating subsidiaries in different countries supporting the transport integration. In spite of the fact that the railway market is already liberalized, the new comers comprise 27% of the freight traffic and there is a lack of contemporary programs for development of railway services. The national flag carrier “BDZ - Freight” Ltd. is in a privatization procedure.

### 3. ALTERNATIVES AND PROJECT PROSPECTS

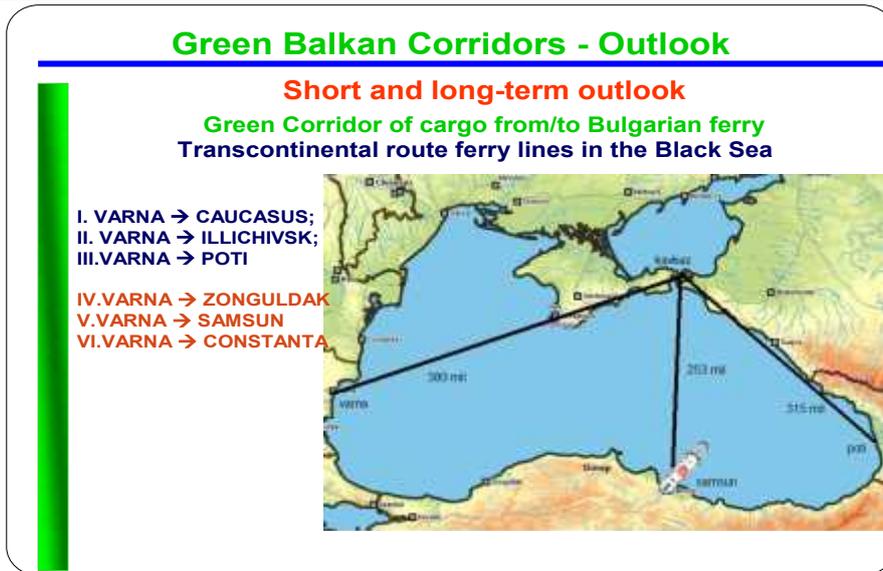
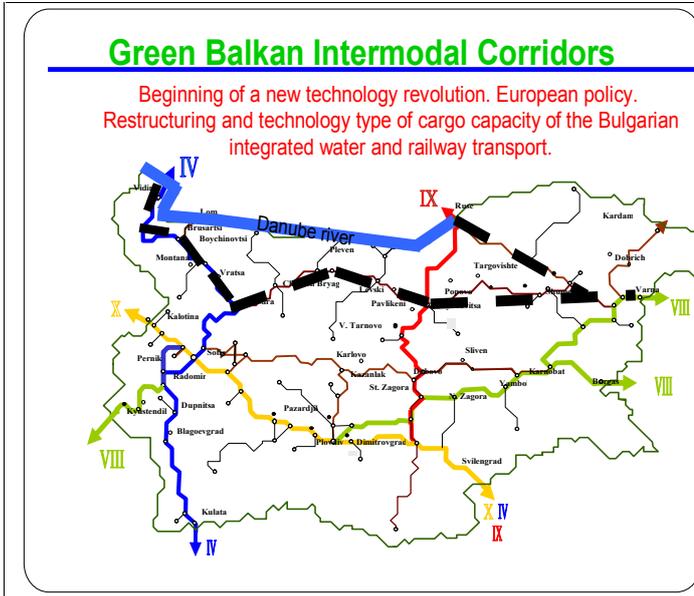
A very promising alternative of the well-known models is represented by the so called “green corridors”. They belong to the railways and waterborne transport as main participants, with almost no negative influence over people and the environment. This is a very good opportunity which can be used as a background for multi-modal options in the transport policy of every country and a possibility to solve transport problems by means of natural “green corridors”, simultaneously developing the railway sector and re-distributing the traffic. Three acceptable policies could be formulated for the Balkan region:

- Definition and acceptance of common regional strategic and political goals concerning the railways, based upon the preparation and approval of an united plan for “Green transport”;
- Realization of common projects for building an efficient infrastructure through financial support and public-private partnerships;
- Aiding all the processes connected to the better communications, regional and social development and establishment of clusters based upon a wide support from the different transport sectors as well experts.

Two current projects started with the realization of the first multimodal haulages in our country could be turned into the spine of the “Green Balkan Corridors”:

<sup>1</sup> The total investments amount at almost € 106 million

- 1) Europe → Bulgaria: Danube Bridge 2 at Vidin – Kalafat through the Varna Ferryboat → Russia, Eurasian Union, China;
- 2) Europe → Bulgaria: Danube Bridge 2 at Vidin – Kalafat → Turkey (Asia), Greece.



The realization of these projects requires modernization of the infrastructure and working terminals. From economic and geopolitical points of view, the most suitable places in Bulgaria are Burgas, Varna, Sofia (Yana), Russe and Vidin. At present the container traffic by combined transport chains and unaccompanied trailers on a liner basis follows the destination Copper (Slovenia) to Sofia, from Austria and Germany to Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.

These patterns are only a part of an eventual new attractive corridor and an alternative door between Europe towards Russia, Eurasian union and China. Bulgaria could provide a convenient link through the railway network of the country connected to the transcontinental, railway and multifunctional ferryboat lines in the Black sea to Russia (Varna – port Caucas ferryboat), to Ukraine and Georgia (port of Poti).

The success of similar projects could only be guaranteed if the state interests are linked to the business goals. This is the best way to determine realistic project terms and financial budgets.

## CONCLUSION

Infrastructure is an important factor for economic growth and development ensuring mobility of production factors within and across economies and leading to a more efficient allocation and utilization of resources.

Demographic structures are an important determinant for regional developments in terms of expected population growth rate. Another important factor is the number and density of population because the bigger the density the greater the infrastructure needs. Besides, the land prices in the densely populated territories will be higher. As a consequence the costs of obtaining the necessary land should be accounted for in the plans made.

The Treaty on the functioning of the European Union provides the legal basis for the Trans-European Networks (TENs)<sup>1</sup>. The European Union aims at promoting the development of Trans-European Networks as a key element for the creation of the Internal Market and the reinforcement of Economic and Social Cohesion, enhancing the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as the access to such networks.

Establishing an efficient trans-European transport network (TEN-T) is considered among the key elements in the Lisbon Strategy about raising the competitiveness and employment in Europe. It will thus play an important part in the attainment of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The fulfillment of the economic and social potential of EC requires building the missing links and removing the bottlenecks in the transport infrastructure, as well as ensuring future sustainability by considering the energy efficiency needs and the climate changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter XV, Articles 170, 171 and 172