

AGREEMENT

On the establishment of a high performance railway network in South East Europe

The Ministries responsible for coordinating transport activities meeting in the context of the SEECP (South East European Cooperation Process), hereinafter referred to as the Parties:

Mindful that an efficient transport system is essential to the economic and social vitality of South East Europe;

Desiring to exploit the inherent advantages of rail over other transport modes for certain types of journey and to reverse the decline in modal share that rail transport has experienced in recent decades;

Aware that the current rail network suffers from a low commercial speed (60 km/h), insufficient capacity on core routes between key urban centres, excessive delays at border crossings, from poor service quality for passenger, freight and intermodal transport, and that there is a need for related legislative improvements;

Reflecting on the difficulties still encountered by rail transport at border crossings, which are detrimental to the efficient flow of passengers and goods;

Committed to achieving synergy between the efforts they undertake to improve the quality and speed of rail transport across the network by coordinating their activities;

Bearing in mind that the development of a true high speed network is a long-term goal which they all share;

Convinced that in order to lay the groundwork for the eventual realisation of a true high-speed network Parties should realise in the short to medium term a “High Performance Network” with a design speed of 160km/h, to be achieved in stages, and should also conform to the relevant technical specifications for interoperability;

Noting that in furthering the aims of this Agreement the Parties will progressively reduce travel times on the network, thereby increasing its attractiveness to passengers;

Considering that progressively reduced travel times on the network will increase the attractiveness of the rail network for freight traffic;

Confirming their willingness to make available, in the framework of their national or international financing schemes, investments required to realise network and rolling stock improvements, in order to implement a national policy of direct investments in rolling stock to achieve a comprehensive solution and improve service levels;

Stating their willingness to conform to prevailing legal provisions governing rail transport and especially the EU Acquis and UN/ECE norms;

Noting the commitments of some Parties arising from their membership or prospective membership of the EU;

Aware of their commitments stemming from multilateral agreements (for instance AGC and AGTC) and key conventions (for instance COTIF) in the field of rail transport as well as bilateral agreements;

Pledging their full support to the project management structure described below in this Agreement in order to facilitate its role to ensure the implementation of a coherent, effective, efficient and transparent programme of activities;

Have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

Aim

This Agreement aims at the implementation in South East Europe of a High Performance Network of railways for passenger, freight and intermodal transport offering faster, higher-quality and more competitive rail connections with significantly reduced travel times between the main urban and commercial centres.

ARTICLE 2

Field of application

This Agreement applies to rail axes in South East Europe that are deemed to be of sufficiently high quality for inclusion in the High Performance Network and that meet certain Quality Criteria established by the Steering Committee. For instance:

- Axes that form part of the Trans European Network, Pan European Corridors, or the Southeastern Axis;
- Axes that are expected to achieve a design speed of 160 km/h by 2020 in stages which will be defined by the Steering Committee referred to in Article 4.

The High Performance Network includes the 16 rail axes identified below and in the network map in the attached annex:

1. Athens – Thessaloniki – Skopje – Nis – Belgrade – Zagreb – (Ljubljana – Salzburg)
2. (Budapest –) Subotica – Belgrade – Dimitrovgrad - Sofia – Plovdiv – Istanbul – Ankara – Adana/Sivas
3. Constanta – Bucharest – Brasov – Arad (– Wien)
4. Durres – Tirana – Qafë Thanë – Kicevo – Skopje – Kriva Palanka – Gueshevo – Sofia – Plovdiv – Stara Zagora – Varna/Burgas
5. Strymonas – Kulata – Sofia – Gorna Oryahovica – Varna
6. Veles – Bitola – Florina – Amyntaio/Kalambaka – Ioannina – Igoumenitsa/Thessaloniki
7. Thessaloniki – Pehlivankoy – Istanbul – Eskisehir – Izmir
8. Ploce – Sarajevo – Vrpolje – Osijek (- Budapest)
9. Bar – Podgorica – Belgrade
10. Podgorica – Tirana – Durres
11. Bucharest – Craiova – Timisoara/Arad – Belgrade
12. Craiova – Calafat – Vidin – Sofia
13. (Kuchurgan –) Chisinau – Ungheni – Iasi – Pascani – Bucharest – Giurgiu – Russe – Gorna Oryahovica – Stara Zagora – Pythion
14. (Budapest –) Zagreb – Rijeka
15. Zagreb – (Maribor – Graz)
16. (Zagreb) – Dobrljin - Banjaluka – Dobož – Tuzla – (Belgrade)

ARTICLE 3

Commercial speed

The commercial speed on the High Performance Network (as described above in Article 2) shall be at least 130 km/h for passenger trains with a minimum design speed of 160 km/h (rising to 220 km/h on certain sections where possible) for operation with the fastest trains.

The Parties to the present Agreement shall take all necessary measures and initiatives for achieving this objective.

The commercial speed for freight trains shall be adjusted accordingly, with regard to the speed of passenger trains.

ARTICLE 4

Coordination and Implementation

A Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Parties and their National Railway Organisations shall be established on the basis of this Agreement.

The objectives of the Steering Committee will be to identify, coordinate, support, facilitate, monitor, and review the implementation of actions required to achieve the Aim of this Agreement.

The Steering Committee will nominate its first Chairman at its first meeting. The Chairmanship will rotate between the Parties as described in the Rules of Procedure.

The Steering Committee will convene once a year (or more frequently, as required).

It will adopt unanimously its own Rules of Procedure, following approval of those Rules by the Parties.

Representatives of the private sector, international financial institutions and other bodies as well as national officials could be invited to meetings of the Steering Committee as appropriate.

The Steering Committee may establish a Technical Secretariat to provide the technical and informational support that it requires.

The working language of the Steering Committee will be English.

The SERG (Southeastern Europe Railway Group) of the UIC (International Union of Railways) and other competent international organisations could be involved for the accomplishment of these objectives as well.

ARTICLE 5

Minimum technical standards

The Parties shall, through the Steering Committee, establish a set of common technical standards to which they shall ensure that the sections of the High Performance Network falling within their territory conform.

The Parties shall be assisted in meeting these technical standards by the Steering Committee to determine common technical specifications, to establish and manage a register of technical requests from the Parties to the present Agreement and items for inclusion in the timetable of essential works such as those concerning infrastructure, rolling stock, interoperability and border controls, to evaluate the costs of essential works and initiatives, to provide technical assistance to the Parties, to expedite the introduction of innovative technologies and management practices to the Network, and to provide technical and cartographical data to support the production of appraisal documents.

ARTICLE 6

Improvements to service quality

The Parties agree to identify and to execute, where appropriate through the agency of their national railway organisations and the railway undertakings operating on their territories, physical and non-physical measures to improve the general level of service quality experienced by users of the Network.

Measures and initiatives undertaken to improve service quality may involve increased service frequencies, refurbished or upgraded rolling stock and infrastructure at and around stations, simplification and improvement of the

quality of any document control procedures or customs procedures required on international journeys, and the provision of high quality pre- and after-sales customer services (for example internet-enabled ticketing, electronic consignment note, door to door delivery, etc.)

ARTICLE 7

Elimination of delays at border crossings

The Parties undertake to eliminate excessive delays to trains at border crossings by identifying and taking measures and initiatives that will reduce the time required to complete border crossing procedures and/or by implementing improvements to railway and border crossing infrastructure which facilitate the more efficient passage of trains across borders (for instance the achievement of the data transmission systems for supplying information at borders before the arrival of trains). To this end they undertake to conclude/update railway border-crossing agreements for handling cross-border traffic in order to eliminate delays at border crossings.

In particular, they shall in two phases establish conditions for the elimination of requirements for trains to stop for customs and passport controls at border crossings by arranging for the appropriate controls to be conducted during the train journey instead. In the first phase the Parties to the present Agreement shall arrange bilaterally for trains to be required to stop at only one of their juxtaposed border crossings. In the second phase they shall arrange bilaterally to eliminate entirely all requirements for passenger trains to stop for border crossing procedures, whereas all customs and passport control procedures shall thereafter be conducted during the train journey by means of satellite or other innovative technology.

All activities and/or measures carried out in relation to this Agreement must not lead to modification of any procedures performed by authorised bodies at the internal or external borders of the EU, as defined by EU or national legislation. Furthermore, such activities/measures should not prejudice security requirements to fight against all forms of smuggling, illegal migration, trafficking of human being, weapons and drugs.

ARTICLE 8

Project Management

The Steering Committee will facilitate effective coordination of activities undertaken by the Parties within the context of the Agreement by drawing up a detailed timetable of actions to be implemented, by monitoring the implementation of the timetable, by identifying deviations from the timetable and by intervening to resolve those deviations.

ARTICLE 9

Financing

The Steering Committee shall assist the Parties (and their relevant authorities) to conduct, in relation to planned investments, full economic appraisals and the preparation of appraisal documents. Furthermore the Steering Committee shall investigate potential funding sources which may include national public funds, international sources (the EU, European Investment Bank, etc), and private finance, and will take the necessary actions to secure funding from those sources for investment in rolling stock, in innovative technologies and in the High Performance Network.

ARTICLE 10

Communications

The Steering Committee shall assist each of the Parties to produce a Promotion Plan designed to increase patronage on the High Performance Network and to generate political, public and financial support for initiatives and measures undertaken within the framework of this Agreement. To this end the Parties and the national Railway Authorities will provide the Steering Committee with the required statistical, survey, technical, financial and operational data.

ARTICLE 11

Final Provisions

The Agreement shall enter into force on the date that at least two thirds of the Parties have notified the Depository, through diplomatic channels, of the completion of their relevant internal procedures.

The Government of Bulgaria shall act as the Depository for this Agreement.

The provisions of this Agreement may be amended if any Party so requests in writing. Proposed amendments shall be discussed and finalised in the Steering Committee and thereafter concluded by the agreement of all the Parties. Any such amendments shall enter into force according to the procedure set fourth in the first paragraph of this Article.

Ministries responsible for coordinating transport activities of neighbouring states may apply to join this Agreement by submitting a request to the Steering Committee. The Committee may, by unanimous vote, accept the request to accede to the Agreement. Thereafter the date of its accession to the Agreement shall be the date of receipt, through diplomatic channels, of the notification to the Depository of the completion of the relevant internal procedures.

Done at Thessaloniki on the 4th of May 2006, in one original copy in the English language.

For the Parties to this Agreement,

Mr. Lulzim Basha

The Minister of Transport, Public Works and
Telecommunication



Mr. Branko Dokic

The Minister of Communications and Transport



Mr. Peter Vasilev Mutafchiev



The Minister of Transport

Mr. Bozidar Kalmeta



The Minister of Sea, Tourism, Transportation and Development

Mr. Xhemali Mehazi



The Minister of Transport and Communication

Mr. Michael Liapis



The Minister of Transport and Communications

Mr. Septimiu Buzasu



The State Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Constructions and Tourism

Mr. Vuk Draskovic



The Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Rados Sucur



***The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs
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Mr. Binali Yildirim



The Minister of Transport

Mr. Miron Gagauz



The Minister of Transport and Road Economy