



Memorandum of Understanding

on

*Strategic outlook and expectations
of the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor activities*

agreed between:

Executive Board of the Alpine-Western Balkan RFC

and

General Assembly of the Alpine-Western Balkan RFC

Background

The intense coordination of the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria, the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Infrastructure of the Republic of Slovenia has resulted in the Letter of Intent proposing the establishment of the “Alpine-Western Balkan” Rail Freight Corridor (hereinafter: the Corridor) in 2017. The Letter was recognised by the European Commission as appropriate background for issuing the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) No 2018/500 of 22 March 2018 which together with the Letter presents the legal basis for establishing the Corridor.

General objectives of the RFC

Bearing in mind the historical development and cooperation of the transport sector and in particular the cooperation of the railway sector in the region connected by the Corridor, the Ministries responsible for Transport of the countries concerned consider the following strategic objectives of the Corridor in line with Article 8(1) of Regulation (EU) 913/2010 as essential:

1. Promote seamless and sustainable rail freight transport

The general aim of the Corridor is the promotion of sustainable rail freight transport to efficiently meet regions’ economic expectations and demand in a business-driven environment. The Corridor should therefore contribute as one of the crucial components for further developing a coherent, prospering and successful rail transport system in the South East European region:

- To that aim, the complex stakeholders are committed to an extensive good faith cooperation by identifying prospects, opportunities and possible barriers with the subsequent seeking of solutions primarily based on good/best practice of other Rail Freight Corridors’ approaches.
- The stakeholders will – within their scope of responsibility – consider the identified prospects, opportunities and barriers each within their respective Corridor body, to identify fields of cooperation required on corridor levels.
- The essential issues of the above-mentioned aim will at the end be a subject of a common consideration at the forum of all the stakeholders involved in the Corridor activities.



- All parties should, as much as possible, contribute to facilitating and accelerating border crossing procedures in order to provide a better transport service
- Efforts will be made to attract new flows of goods by providing quality transportation service.

2. Cooperation with the Transport Community

The essential issues identified by the stakeholders on the Corridor should be shared with the relevant bodies of the Transport Community, in particular its Technical Committee on Railways and the Permanent Secretariat. The Corridor management should take into account the new Regional Rail Strategy in the Western Balkans, in particular the relevant elements of the Joint declaration endorsed by the representatives of the Western Balkans parties at the 2nd Ministerial Council of the Transport Community on 10 December 2018.

- Effective resolution of the essential issues described above may function as a background for a further development of the network of Rail Freight Corridors in the Western Balkan region. In accordance with Article 9(3) of Regulation (EU) 913/2010, this development should take into account traffic and trade flows, but also the planned and actual deployment and modernisation of the rail network in the Balkans.
- The above-mentioned essential Corridor related issues could be seen as a frontrunner regarding the harmonisation of complex rail systems and might also be considered by the Transport Community institutional settings as an initial solution for efficient and sustainable freight transport in the region.
- The Corridor structures are committed to extensive cooperation with the Transport community on the issues of common interest
- Technical research and development of the railway sector should be monitored and developed by cooperation within Shift2Rail, where the countries on the Corridor as well as the sector are encouraged to actively contribute. The ExBo will periodically review that part of cooperation.
- The railway sector and all the stakeholders (terminalist, applicants, end users) shall commit themselves to cooperate in business-driven environment to achieve a higher level of performance of rail freight transport, alone or as a part of multimodal logistics chains, with a view to improving sustainability and contributing to combating climate change and

assuring rational use of energy. Where appropriate, the objectives, the contents and commitments by individual stakeholders for such cooperation should be documented by specific agreements ('memoranda of understanding' etc.).

3. Enhancing transnational rail freight operations

The Rail Freight Corridor structures will seek possibilities for a smooth, unhindered interoperability of Railway operations on the Corridor.

- The Corridor structures and in particular the Infrastructure Managers (within the scope of General Assembly) and responsible ministries (within the scope of Executive Board) will assess the TEN-T Guidelines as well as related Technical Specifications of Interoperability (TSI) requirements as the reference for continuously leading the Corridor's infrastructure towards common European standards.
- Following the actual characteristics of the Corridor infrastructure based on the above-mentioned regulations, infrastructural and operational possibilities should be identified through comparison and where possible harmonisation of the national implementations plans.
- Following the Operation and Traffic Management TSI requirements the Corridor's appropriate stakeholders, in particular the GA with support of ExBo should dedicate additional efforts to cleaning and harmonising the national rules.
- Solutions for any of the above mentioned issues should be, when possible, elaborated in variants with assessment on possibilities and costs.
- The IMs shall take into account the elaborated outcomes within the scope of multiannual contracts with their respective Ministry pursuant to Article 30(2) of Directive 2012/34/EU.
- Outstanding issues on that particular field should also be shared with Transport Community structures.

4. Involving and engaging stakeholders

The Executive Board expects Infrastructure Managers – GA and the Railway Undertakings/Authorized Applicants – and RAG to commit themselves to assessing complex borders crossing issues along the Corridor and to prepare a separate view on possible solutions to the ExBo.

The report on Corridor Border Crossings issues to the ExBo should consist of:

- Infrastructure barriers and possible solutions in variants with implementation possibilities and costs summed up with final effects – material and financial,
- Operational barriers and possible solutions in variants with implementation possibilities and costs summed up with final effects – material and financial,
- Legal barriers and possible solutions in variants with implementation possibilities and costs summed up with final effects – material and financial,
- Barriers related to the allocation of infrastructure capacity and to traffic management, including in the event of disturbances;
- Co-affected barriers of two or more of the above mentioned barriers, merged, and possible solutions in variants with implementation possibilities and costs summed up with final effects – material and financial,

Following the consideration of the report within the ExBo members the ExBo might together with the EC, suggest a wider approach including also the Transport Community structure. The report should be submitted as part of the implementation plan pursuant to Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 913/2010.

The complex activities should result at least in the commonly agreed strategy of achieving uninterrupted, smooth border crossings on the corridor without unnecessary stops. That also includes the prospective controls performed by the state authorities (checks performed in terminals, trust-based handover, recognitions of checks performed by the neighbouring country authority, etc.)

5. Monitoring

At any case, the ExBo will consider the railway sector as a part of the business-driven economy, underlining the managerial responsibility and independence in business cases.

The ExBo asks the GA to include the results of the analyses outlined in this document in the implementation plan pursuant to Article 9(1c) of Regulation (EU) 913/2010. The ExBo will meet the GA on regular basis to exchange the views on the above-mentioned information and reports.

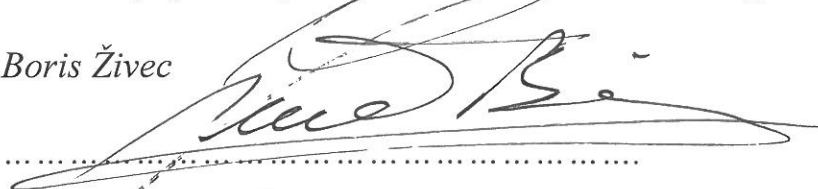
The ExBo decisions may be based on information flows and cooperation structures mentioned above. In particular, the ExBo may adopt a decision on the 'general objectives' of the Corridor in line with Article 8(1) of the Regulation based on the results of the analyses requested in this document.

The ExBo expects the report on the implementation of the Strategic outlook by the GA to be submitted annually and will evaluate the level of implementation together with the GA and PMO on the regular common meeting.

Signatories

On behalf of the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor Executive Board

Boris Živec



(Place) Ljubljana, 04.02.2021

On behalf of the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor General Assembly

Harald Hotz



(Place) Vienna, 28.01.2021