PILLAR 2 Connecting the Region (Transport sub-group)

TITLE OF THE SESSION: Interoperable rail infrastructure and services to increase connectivity in the Adriatic-Ionian Region

Date, time: 16 May 2024 - h.10:15 (CEST) (60 minutes)

Chair (moderator)

Ms. Jasminka Kirkova and Mr. Pierluigi Coppola, EUSAIR Pillar 2 Coordinator

Key note address (15-20 minutes)

- **Mr.Arunas Jurevicius**, *European Commission DG MOVE*
  Main points of presentation: *EU investment to expand the infrastructure in the Western Balkans (e.g. the new WB-Eastern Corridor, but also costal accessibily and intermodality with the ports of the Adriatic Sea); needs and actions to align EU and candidate-EU regulations; expections from Macroregional Strategies (e.g. EUSAIR) and European Territorial Cooperation*

Panellists: presentation (10 minutes for each)

- **Mr. Dejan Lasica,** *Transport Community Treaty Secretariat*, **Republic of Serbia.** Main points of presentation: main criticalities and inefficiencies in supplying Rail services between cities of the Region ; what are the ongoing investment in infrastructure and other actions undertaken (e.g. regulatory ones), for both passenger and freight.
- **Mr. Franc Zepic,** *Danube strategy*, **Slovenia.** *Challenges of multimodal connectivity and rail interoperability in EUSDR* - Main points of presentation: how rail network interoperability is dealt with in EUSDR
- **Mr. Paolo Dileno,** *Central Europe Initiative*, **Italy.** Main points of presentation : opportunities for a passenger rail services along Corridor X

Discussion with the audience (Q&A) (10 minutes)

Scope and objective

Transport plays a fundamental role in the enlargement of the European Union. The integration of transport networks reduces trade barriers and facilitates the movement of people, goods and services, thus promoting competitiveness and stimulating economic growth and prosperity for all parties involved.

*The EUSAIR Master Plan of Transport in contributing to upgrading the revised EUSAIR Action Plan has identified in **railways networks interoperability** a priority action to be pursued in the 2023-2027 period. The interoperability of railways networks implies - first and foremost - the harmonization of regulations and standards of rail transport to guarantee safe and efficient services for passengers and goods, notably for border crossings. In fact, a interoperable and interconnected transport network enhances seamless cross-border movements by reducing overall travel times and trade barriers, and responds to the growing demands of commerce and travel.*

The recent creation of the Western Balkans European Transport Corridor has paved the way upgrading rail connections in the Western Balkans. However, despite the tangible benefits offered by this initiative, their implementation remains a formidable challenge, whose success requires significant investments by the EU to improve connectivity and accessibility and, considerable efforts by IPA Countries to aligning regulations to EU standards.

The transport session at the 9th EUSAIR Forum intends to stimulate a debate around some issues of concern, primarily of technical and temporal nature.

Topics for discussion

1. what is the financial investment and the overall effort needed to create an interoperable railway network in the Adriatic-Ionian Region and to enable the provision of seamless and safe cross-border rail services (passenger and freight);
2. how it is possible to harmonize the standards of transport infrastructures and, even before that, what resources are available to upgrade the base network;
3. the challenging objectives for TEN-T include the completion of the Core network and Corridors by 2030, and the extended Core network by 2040 which is not too far away considering the complexity and duration of the implementation of transport infrastructure projects: what is the framework of priorities for the AI Region?
4. Are there any rail services that could be already activated on the existing infrastructure ? what are the barriers ?

Interactive approach with public (for example slido, mentimeter etc):

No interactive approach is foreseen
If Yes, what kind of questions

Key messages to be communicated before or during the session via social media

- an interoperable and integrated rail network in the AI region would promote connectivity and sustainable transport for passenger and freight, however the investment to upgrade the existing infrastructure is huge and a priority plan is needed
- IPA Countries should align regulations for Rail Transport to EU standards
- a study on potential demand could help to prioritize investiment in the framework of the TEN-T extension to the Western Balkans
- pilot actions could help to identify barriers to integrated rail transport notably for seamless and efficient border crossing times

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION

To be provided immediately after the session by Chair or Pillar Coordinators to eusair.point.svrk@gov.si for preparation of Pillar Forum reports on the website.

PANELISTS LIST

Name and SURNAME	Email	Institution	Phone contact	Travel to be paid by...
Pierluigi COPPOLA	pierluigi.coppola@mit.gov.it	Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport of Italy		Facility Point IT PP (regione FVG)
Jasminka KIRKOVA	kirkova@mtc.gov.mk	Ministry of Transport of Republic of North Macedonia		Facility Point MKD PP
Arunas JUREVICIUS	arunas.jurevicius@ec.europa.eu	European Commission – DG MOVE		
Dejan LASICA	dlasica@transport-community.org	Transport Community Treaty Secretariat		
Franc ZEPIC	franc.zepic@gov.si	Ministry of Infrastructure, Directorate for Railways of Slovenia		
Paolo DILENO	dileno@cei.int	Central Europe Initiative		EUSAIR Presidency

Please send this form till 22 March 2024 to HR Presidency: Croatian.EUSAIR.Presidency@mvep.hr and EUSAIR Facility Point in copy: eusair.point.svrk@gov.si   If the form is being updated afterwards, please resend it.

Please mind, only T&A for 2 pannelists could be covered by the Presidency.