

## MOTORWAYS OF THE SEA – "PREPARING THE FUTURE"

The European transport system will be facing a number of challenges in the next decade. An all-out effort will have to be made in seeking financial resources for long-term investment in transport infrastructure and in preventing the road freight system from deteriorating. A more than 60 percent increase in road transport has been forecast for the European Union by 2013, and in 10 new Member States it is expected to double by 2020.<sup>1</sup> This will result in congestion, environmental degradation, accidents and the danger of loss of competitiveness for European industry, which relies on cost-effective and reliable transport systems for managing its supply chains. Moreover, road freight transport is dependent in its entirety on fossil fuels – the largest generator of carbon dioxide. A more energy-efficient transport system is therefore in the European Union's interest both in terms of enhanced environmental performance and dealing with ever-increasing congestion and degradation of road infrastructure.

The European transport policy outlined in the Transport White Paper and our transport policy as outlined in the Resolution on the Transport Policy of the Republic of Slovenia, note that in the development of intermodal transport and implementation of sustainable development policy, the key success factors are maritime transport, inland waterways and railway transport. A large number of shipping routes are intended to shift freight from roads to the sea. This can be achieved through intermodal technology – the combination of maritime and land transport enabling door-to-door service. Railway transport and maritime transport, individually, cannot provide such service. Intermodal transport operations require a great deal of time and money, making these services less competitive compared to road transport. The road transport network is, indeed, widely ramified and provides door-to-door delivery in most cases.

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<sup>1</sup> In Slovenia, 68.5 million tons of goods are transported yearly, of which 25 per cent is transit.

In Europe, maritime transport plays an important role – both in trade between Member States (short sea shipping, for example), as well as in external trade with neighbouring countries. In the expansion of the Trans-European Network (TEN), particular attention should be paid to the "motorways of the sea" that enable fast and efficient crossing of maritime borders. These obvious benefits, as well as the high added value for citizens, justify considerable contributions and involvement of the Community in their promotion.

Technological research has led to a number of innovations in logistic concepts and systems. Regrettably, many have never been implemented in practice. They have remained at the level of prototype or plan. Therefore, it is indispensable to move from theory into practice regarding new techniques and technologies of transport vehicles, equipment and devices intended for transshipment, communication and information technology, as well as management of supply chains. This can be attained through innovative projects and promoting research and development that integrates scientific achievements in the area of transport into the economy.

The biggest problem we have encountered when implementing intermodality is the shortage of nearby links between the sea and railway infrastructure in the hinterland. Despite water transportation having a prevalent role in Europe for centuries – major towns were built along rivers and ports, making for towns with vibrant trading and business lives – we can see today that road transport has adjusted best to the needs and requirements of the present market. Nevertheless, as much as 70 percent of the entire trade between the EU and the rest of the world takes place on the sea. More than two billion tons of freight<sup>2</sup> flow through European ports every year. In the past ten years, however, no increase has been recorded in freight transport between European ports with the goal of ameliorating the burdens of road transport.

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<sup>2</sup> Predominantly solid and mineral fuels, followed by industrial products.

Coastal shipping indeed cannot be an alternative if road transport remains the only mode for carrying freight deeper into the continent.

In view of this, the EU continues to implement the Marco Polo Programme that supports alternative intermodal transport. Intermodal transport calls for the fast introduction of technical measures in the area of development and administrative management of containers and other transport units, equipment and devices. By continuing the Marco Polo Programme and utilizing EU funds, it is necessary to accelerate the establishment of new logistics enterprises and implementation of new projects, since the development of intermodality cannot be left to chance and market forces exclusively.

The purpose of promoting the motorways of the sea is to link various transportation routes and accelerate transport by sea, inland waterways and rail. The motorways of the sea are important in particular because they will eliminate bottlenecks that occur in the main European road corridors, chiefly in the Alps and Pyrenees, and because there is a relatively low-cost natural infrastructure at hand – navigable seaways. In order to revitalise maritime transport and shift part of freight transport from roads to sea, the European Commission has set itself a goal to be reached by the establishment of the motorways of the sea. Such a decision, however, calls for better integration between ports, rail networks and inland waterway networks, as well as better quality of port services. We must be aware that maritime transport is not only about carrying freight from one continent to another. It is indeed a true alternative to land transport because it has a number of advantages: it is safe, reliable and more environmentally friendly; it avoids natural obstacles and eliminates bottlenecks; and it enables better combination with rail transport, to name but a few. Moreover, we need to be aware of the fact that transport by water depends heavily on the efficiency of port services and on subsequent modes of land transport, such as rail and road.

Experience shows that coastal shipping calls for efficient and integrated commercial services. When seeking a global optimum, the business activities of individual entities must be merged in order to constitute a logistics chain consisting of suppliers, buyers and transport operators (for shipping, rail and road) who are looking for a more reliable, flexible and simple modal solution. The development of modern telematic services in ports improves reliability and safety. The active involvement of various partners via electronic data exchange and information technology (IT) can improve the quality and efficiency of the intermodal transport chain.

The Resolution on the Transport Policy of the Republic of Slovenia, adopted by the Government in July last year, provides a good basis for planning sustainable development transport policy. In addition to the economic aspect, environmental and social aspects are also taken into consideration. Slovenia, too, has become fully engaged in the implementation of transport policy related to the development of intermodality, the importance of which is also validated in the organizing of this conference.