

Priorities in Transport Integration of the Republic of Croatia Into Trans-European Transport Network

Ljudevit Krpan¹, Drago Pupavac² and Robert Maršanić³

Abstract - This paper reviews the existing treatment of the Republic of Croatia within the EU transport system. Additionally, a series of activities has been proposed with the aim of providing adequate transport accessibility and thereby also the basics for the dynamical economic development of the whole Republic of Croatia with a particular emphasis on the County of Primorje and Gorski kotar and the port of Rijeka.

Keywords: Trans-European Transport Network, Transport Planning, Transport Policy, Port of Rijeka.

I. INTRODUCTION

Very specific and favourable geo-traffic position underlines Republic of Croatia as a connection among the countries of Western and Southern Europe with the countries of Southeast Europe and the Middle East as well as with the countries of the Central Danube Basin with the ports on the Adriatic. Therefore, the Republic of Croatia, the county of Primorje and Gorski kotar and particularly the port of Rijeka builds a part of their comparative advantages on the geostrategic position. The accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU made possible the recognition, valuation and integration of the most important state transport routes into the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The purpose of this paper is to prove the need for comprehensive observation and taking into consideration of the Adriatic-Ionian Region as an indivisible unique whole.

The aim of this paper is to point out the needs for high-grade transport integration of North Adriatic ports as a crucial factor for providing competitiveness in relation to North European ports.

This paper is structured in six chapters. After introduction, in the second part of the paper basic determinants of the EU transport system are presented. The third part analyzes the coverage of the Republic of Croatia by the TEN-T corridors whereas the fourth part presents activities of regional community in promoting and recognizing the need for adequate transport integration of the North Adriatic region. The fifth part is titled Basic prerequisites for high-grade transport integration of the Republic of Croatia. The sixth, last part i.e. Conclusion presents the results of the research carried out, reviews the

hypothesis made in the research and points out specific transport requirements for its realization.

II. BASIC DETERMINANTS FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Consideration of developing the key transport infrastructure of the European Union (the EU) is predefined by its strategic decisions and articulated by defining the Trans-European Transport Corridors i.e. by the Trans-European Transport Network - TEN-T. The Trans-European Transport Network was established to support build (up) of the EU transport infrastructure striving to attain goals of European competitiveness, cohesion and provision of jobs. It spreads throughout all 28 EU member countries and includes all transport branches, logistics and intelligent transport systems. It has been recognized and valued at two planning levels [7]: the core and comprehensive TEN-T network and additionally through emphasizing the most important priority projects.

The comprehensive TEN-T network is a multi-modal network of relatively high density. It is defined and dimensioned in such a way so it can enable quality integration to the core TEN-T network and thereby also economic, social and territorial development breakthroughs.

The core TEN-T network is a part of the comprehensive network that covers in strategic terms particularly important core European and global transport routes. [8]

While considering the EU development, the European Commission identified and separately emphasized 30 priority projects from the transport sector that are of interest for the EU.⁴ Selection of projects mirrors the strategic orientation development of an environmentally acceptable and sustainable transport system as a contribution to the fight against climate changes.

In taking into consideration the key EU transport network, the decision by the European Commission is very important i.e. the decision to consider the possibility to expand the TEN-T network to the area of the Western Balkans: this primarily in the part of continuing the motorway connection from Dubrovnik towards Albania and Greece. The motorway connection Belgrade-Niš-Bar is additionally planned and it will present the shortest transport connection towards the centre of Serbia so that its realization would additionally diminish the significance and role of North

¹ Ljudevit Krpan, PhD., Administrative Department for Regional Development, Infrastructure and Project Management of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Adamićeva 10, Rijeka, 51000, Croatia, e-mail: ljudevit.krpan@pgz.hr.

² Drago Pupavac, PhD, Polytechnic of Rijeka, Trpimirova 5, Rijeka 51000, Croatia, e-mail: drago.pupavac@ri.t-com.hr.

³ Robert Mršanić, PhD, Rijeka promet L.td., Fiumara 13, Rijeka 51000, Croatia, e-mail: robert.marsanic@ri.t-com.hr.

⁴ Out of these 18 railways, 3 railways and motorways combined, 2 inland waterway projects, and one refers to the Motorways of the Sea.

Adriatic ports when having in mind possibilities of Bar and Durres ports.

For considering development potentials it is important to take into consideration the fact that the TEN-T comprehensive network is perceived in the horizon until the year 2050, the core TEN-T network in the horizon until the year 2030 and the most significant 30 projects are expected to be carried out until the year 2020 with great EU financial and technical support.

III. COVERAGE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA BY TEN-T CORRIDORS

Consideration of development and new circumstances at the EU level stipulated adoption and afterwards amendments and revision of the network of core and comprehensive trans-European corridors on several occasions.

In the area of the Republic of Croatia only two core TEN-T corridors have been recognized, specifically the corridor that refers to transport connection of Rijeka with Hungary (former Vb Pan-European corridor) and the corridor that refers to transport exploitation of the potential of the Danube (former VII Pan-European corridor). Since until then the Republic of Croatia was not traced in the network of TEN-T corridors, as it wasn't an EU member, it can be said that this inclusion is a step forward. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that a possibility for full transport integration of the Republic of Croatia failed to come as well as a possibility for quality transport connection along the Croatian part of the Adriatic coast by land.

Accordingly, former Pan-European corridors that recognized the need for strengthening the transport axis Ljubljana/(Graz)Maribor-Zagreb-Belgrade-... (known as the Pan-European corridor X and Xa) were not taken into consideration in full, but only the section between Ljubljana and Zagreb was recognized as a link to the branch of the Mediterranean TEN-T corridor.

What completely failed to appear is recognizing the transport axis (corridor) along the Adriatic-Ionian region. This primarily implies the non-existence of strategic connecting of the North Adriatic ports of Venice, Trieste, Koper and Rijeka with adequate mainland infrastructure. In the process, only Rijeka was left isolated. The danger is threatening that North Adriatic ports join up in a way that the role of Ravenna is strengthened with the transport of the port of Rijeka being totally blocked. Moreover, consideration of a transport corridor from North-Adriatic ports (Rijeka, Koper, Trieste and Venice) up to Greek Igoumenitsa fails to appear, which is exceptionally unfavourable both for the Republic of Croatia and other countries of the Adriatic-Ionian region.

Here it's important to recognize the fact that these corridors do not represent only a transport but also an energy axis and emphasize the Republic of Croatia as the hub of whole Southeast Europe. Omitting and neglecting i.e. non-including these in the priority core EU TEN-T network and even on the list of the most important strategic priority projects considerably weakens the geostrategic role of the Republic of Croatia and particularly the County of Primorje and Gorski kotar and the port of Rijeka.

IV. VALUATION OF THE GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF THE PORT OF RIJEKA

The development of transport infrastructure at national and supranational level is of particular interest also for regional development. With the aim of quality valuation of transport and economy significance of the County of Primorje and Gorski kotar within the framework of European regions, a range of dynamic and continuous activities has been carried out. One of the projects having a high rate of economic effect that has been actively promoted is certainly developing the port of Rijeka as the major port of the Republic of Croatia for transport of goods and its accompanying transport route, but also connecting the whole North Adriatic area to the EU transport network. This in the first place implies meeting all requirements for developing port and terminal capacities and the accompanying high-efficiency railway line towards Zagreb and Budapest, but also connection to Italian railway lines from Rijeka to Trieste. In order to provide adequate accessibility, quality roadway connection from Postojna to Rupa is essential, the construction of Rijeka bypass road Permani-Mali Svib and extension to the motorway Mali Svib-Križišće-Žuta Lokva.

The realization of the complete route would open up, apart from the potential of the port of Rijeka and strong upswing in the transport offer in the segment of transport of goods, significant tourism potentials that are brought by connecting to the network of transport infrastructure with a high level of service (high-speed railway line and motorway), particularly in the light of economic potential of Northern Italy. Efforts have been made to promote this and other most significant corridors through regional or, on the other hand, global initiatives and projects.

A larger number of counties at the transport corridor Rijeka – state border with Hungary accessed the CETC (Central Europe Transport Corridor) initiative (that has grown into the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation EGTC-CETC), whose aim is the need for transport and energy connection of the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic Sea i.e. connecting the Szczecin port with Rijeka. This initiative has been supported by the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure. Alongside the aforementioned initiative, the Baltic – Adriatic initiative was active, whose aim was to connect ports of Gdansk/Gdynia and Trieste/Koper. On the grounds of the adopted current TEN-T network it is evident that exactly this initiative, supported by respective national governments, has prevailed and nominated the Baltic – Adriatic corridor for the network of the TEN-T corridor. Ports of Szczecin and Rijeka have been additionally nominated, in relation to the suggestion of the aforementioned initiative, however without quality integration with other ports in their respective maritime basins. By doing so, their geostrategic significance is being substantially decreased at their respective ends of the corridor (scheme 1).



Scheme 1. Network of TEN-T corridors complemented by the Adriatic-Ionian Corridor
(Source: prepared by the authors)

Through activities of the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion, the county of Primorje and Gorski kotar that presides over the Workgroup for Transport and Infrastructure, underlines and problematizes these significant strategic deficiencies. Taking part in a series of macro-regional, transnational and cross-border projects emphasized and proved the need for the complete integration of the North Adriatic ports system and securing adequate accessibility.

V. BASIC PREREQUISITES FOR HIGH-GRADE TRANSPORT INTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

The EU TEN-T network is subject to continuous expanding with the aim of improving life standard quality i.e. bringing intended economy policies into being. It is up to the Republic of Croatia to insist on nominating new priority TEN-T corridors and projects. This is particularly important due to the possibility of including strategic projects of the Republic of Croatia such as developing the port of Rijeka or building a high-efficiency railway line from Zagreb to Rijeka and Trieste with the aim of connecting to the EU railway network, but also inaugurating the Adriatic-Ionian corridor in the network of strategic European transport and energy corridors.

Current initiatives and suggestions to include the Republic of Croatia in the TEN-T Baltic-Adriatic corridors are for sure an important step towards providing adequate accessibility and thereby competitiveness in the Republic of Croatia. The development of a strong energy axis, in the form of connecting the existent LNG terminal in Świnoujście directly next to Szczecin and future LNG terminal in Omišalj on the island of Krk as well as the construction of main gas pipeline routes additionally increase energy stability of whole Eastern Europe.

One of the criteria that's being analyzed is the construction need with regard to complementary infrastructure, but also interests of other EU member states.

Without formal inclusion of the Republic of Croatia in the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, the position of the Republic of Croatia in the international transport network would not improve significantly, whereas the financing possibilities and even the construction of transport infrastructure would remain at the same level. For this reason, along with accepting the declarative need for the inclusion in the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, it is necessary to clearly articulate to what this refers i.e. to request that it implies transport connection from the direction of Vienna and Budapest, Maribor, Ljubljana towards Zagreb and Rijeka i.e. from the direction of Koper (Divača/Postojna) towards the port of Rijeka.

Except for the aforementioned, new political, legal and international conditions emphasize development of a new Adriatic longitudinal transport route as necessary, which is defined by the Strategy and Program for Spatial Planning of the Republic of Croatia and the Strategy of Transport Development of the Republic of Croatia. The construction of appropriate road and railway infrastructure and affirmation of maritime transport in this corridor would create a possibility for diverse littoralisation of economic and other activities. The route would present a new connecting corridor of West and Central Europe to its South-East. Such a transport corridor would certainly attract international transit flows of passengers and goods and particularly tourist ones. Transport valuation of the Adriatic-Ionian route solves a part of the problem of regional development of the Republic of Croatia whereby the impacts on demographic migrations of population would not be irrelevant.

For the Republic of Croatia and particularly for the County of Primorje and Gorski kotar, crucial projects that should be nominated and accepted at the EU level as priority TEN-T projects are:

- Connecting North Adriatic ports with adequate railway network of high-level of transport service,
- Finalisation of the missing part of motorways in the Republic of Slovenia from Pivka/Rasopasno to Rupa but also from Koper to Umag and to the conjunction to the Istrian ipsilon,
- Construction of the motorway Mali Svib-Križišće-Žuta Lokva,
- Planning the construction of Rijeka bypass Veprinac-Permani-Mali Svib,
- Planning of port capacities extension to the island of Krk and adequate connecting transport infrastructure by land (including a new road/railway bridge),
- Upgrading the second railway track of the railway line through the city of Rijeka,
- Preparation and construction of a new high-efficiency railway line towards Zagreb and Hungarian border and other.

In the process, it is to bear in mind that, when nominating and negotiating on the implementation of single projects, the EU considers already established and nominated projects (like priority project 6 railway line (...)-Divača-Ljubljana-Budapest(...)) and does not allow emphasizing and competing and even calling into question the already realized project by a new project. In our case this might refer to the construction of a high-efficiency railway line Rijeka-Zagreb-Budapest. In

other words, recent decisions at the level of the Republic of Croatia haven't recognized the need for constructing a new double-track railway line (that wouldn't have features of a mountain railway line), but the reconstruction of the existing route through Gorski kotar has been prioritized. Such considerations can be justifiable only under assumption that a political decision has been made that the extension to the port of Rijeka to the island of Krk is postponed and in this context that the imposed definition for the Republic of Croatia to rely on the Slovenian railway system should be accepted, which is not an acceptable scenario for the County of Primorje and Gorski kotar. Institutions in charge and various scientific and professional members of the public should continuously impose views on this issue and fact that are real and acceptable to the state and ipso facto that would protect our transport i.e. national interests.

VI. CONCLUSION

For the purpose of homogenous regional development at the European Union level it is necessary to take appropriate measures at all levels. First of all, it is essential to consider the real significance and role of the Republic of Croatia within the European Union and this part of Europe and the world. Afterwards, on the grounds of objective indicators, to adopt real economic development strategy, on which the Strategy of development of transport system shall be based by taking into consideration the known significance and role of the Republic of Croatia within the transport system of Southeast Europe. In the process, objects of transport infrastructure, whose existence synthesizes aspiration for harmonious operation of economic and transport system, hold central position.

Considerations of the development of key EU transport infrastructure are predefined by its strategic decisions and articulated by the TEN-T network. The TEN-T comprehensive network is perceived in the horizon until the year 2050 and the major corridors in the horizon until the year 2030. An additional list is defined of the most significant 30 projects that are expected to be carried out until the year 2020 with EU financial and technical support.

The need for quality valuation of Croatian transport system imposes a need for reconsidering the fundamental European documents. Thereby it is not enough to only declaratively nominate the participation of the Republic of Croatia in a single transport corridor but clear recognition of specific projects and their inclusion in the list of EU priority projects is the most important obligation. Only in this way it will be possible for the wanted goals of development of transport infrastructure to get realized but also the goals of general economic development of the State within an acceptable timeframe. It is not enough to say that the Republic of Croatia is to be included in the Baltic-Adriatic corridor but priority is to nominate the obligation of:

- Construction of a high-efficiency railway line:
 - Divača-Pivka-Rijeka-Zagreb-Budapest-Ukraine border/Baltic
 - Ljubljana-Zagreb-Belgrade-(...)
- motorway Postojna-Rupa-Permani-Mali Svib-
- Križišće-Žuta Lokva-(...)

- motorway Maribor-Krapina-Zagreb
- extension to the port of Rijeka to the island of Krk (with upgrade of both road and railway infrastructure) and other.

Securing the inclusion of these projects in the priority projects EU list would provide their quality valuation as well as grants and financial instruments for their real implementation.

For this reason, in the future period it is essential to provide all political, economic and financial prerequisites for integral development of complete transport system that is above all bound to the TEN-T network. Bringing higher quality transport connection of European countries into being would set up a base for economic and social upswing of both EU countries and their neighbouring countries and ipso facto of the Republic of Croatia.

Active efforts to impose the Republic of Croatia within the Mediterranean corridor should not exclude from the focus the need for emphasizing the importance of realization of the Adriatic-Ionian corridor and also the previous Pan-European corridor X Zagreb-Belgrade.

With regard to often changes in national views and policies, the need for regional connection and emphasizing regional thinking and needs is evident. The County of Primorje and Gorski kotar implemented the aforementioned by working through several institutions and through active cooperation with all Croatian (and particularly Adriatic) counties and municipalities of the Republic of Slovenia (particularly with Ilirska Bistrica), but also with Italian regions (particularly Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto).

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