LETTER OF INTENT
CONCERNING
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ALPINE - WESTERN BALKAN RAIL FREIGHT–CORRIDOR
SALZBURG – VILLACH - LJUBLJANA – ZAGREB /
WELS/LINZ - GRAZ – MARIBOR - ZAGREB - VINKOVCI – TOVARNIK –HR/SRB BORDER

the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria,

the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications of the Republic of Bulgaria,

the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, 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

in the following addressed as “sides”,

taking into account the importance of the transport sector for the economic and social growth
and in particular the importance of sustainable development and efficient use of energy;
recognizing the prospective of the rail transport system as within the sustainable transport system in Central and South Eastern Europe;
recognizing the importance of advance transport infrastructure interconnections between EU Member States and their neighbouring countries, in particular the connections of EU Members States crossing the territories of neighbouring countries that are candidates for accession to the European Union;
taking into account the European Union Strategy for Danube Region of 8 December 2010 as endorsed by the European Council on 24 June 2011, in particular for Priority Area 1b: "To improve mobility and multimodality - road, rail and air links";
taking into account the Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight and recognizing its potential to promote a more effective coordination of necessary activities on freight corridors;
taking into account and supporting activities already carried out by rail infrastructure managers and allocation bodies under the auspices of RailNetEurope (hereinafter: RNE) in the context of establishing the RNE Corridor C11;
taking into account background and justification in the Annex of this letter;
have reached the following understanding:

(1) The sides will join their efforts towards an efficient Alpine - Western Balkan corridor (hereinafter: AWB) in particular

- initiate the steps for setting up its part Salzburg – Villach - Ljubljana – Zagreb / Wels/Linz - Graz – Maribor - Zagreb - Vinkovci – Tovarnik –HR/SRB border – Beograd – SRB/BG border - Sofia – Svilengrad – BG/TR border as a rail freight corridor in accordance to the Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight. The AWB rail freight corridor shall be in a first step established on the territories of the EU Member States concerned. It shall be extended to the territory of Serbia as soon as the legal basis is created in this country. The Republic of Serbia declares its will to take all necessary steps to create the legal basis for the extension of the corridor.

- support and investigate possibilities to enable that the AWB corridor will be included into the TEN-T core network and that the AWB corridor will be defined as an additional core network corridor at a future revision of the relevant European legal framework and will be fully taken into account on the extension of existing core network corridors to the Western Balkans.

(2) To ensure the realisation of these goals the sides take care of their appropriate coordination by setting up an “Alpine - Western Balkan Corridor Steering Group”, to do all necessary steps to reach the above mentioned aims.
Annex

Background/Justification

The existing transport system is facing, in particular in South Eastern Europe and wider in the functional area of the Danube Region, the challenge of adapting to future needs of the economy and society in a situation of limitations imposed by sustainable development and demands for the rational use of energy.

Traditionally, the rail freight transport system is considered to be the most acceptable one from the point of view of sustainable development and the rational use of energy, in particular because of its low dependency on fossil fuels.

Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight designates corridors that, within the framework of the European Union new strategy for jobs and growth, will be an essential factor in making progress towards sustainable mobility, and provides for measures aimed at improving the efficiency and, consequently, the competitiveness of rail freight transport.

Regarding connections between Western Balkan Regions itself and with the EU the Alpine - Western Balkan Corridor (hereafter AWBC) was underlined and proved as the most important several times, i.e.

- In Helsinki in 1997 European ministers of transport established Pan European Corridor X, which main route is in great part same as the AWBC, and which with its branches and in the connection with other Pan European Corridors, especially corridors V and VIII, setting up the network connecting the Central Europe and Eastern Balkan Countries, together with Adriatic, Black Sea and Danube ports.

- South East Europe Transport Observatory established, by the Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the Core Regional Transport Network in Western Balkan set up its comprehensive and core network corridors where the backbone of transport network represents the AWBC on the above mentioned alignment.

- Moreover, by the South Eastern European Transport Axes Cooperation Project, financed by the European Commission further analyses were assessed which indicate the importance of the cooperation on the field of development of the rail infrastructure in the region and the frontrunner of which would be the establishment of the AWBC.

- Majority of the AWBC in the EU member states is already part of the EU Core network Corridors in accordance with the Regulation 1316/2013, namely the Mediterranean and Baltic Adriatic and Orient/East-Mediterranean Corridors.

- And nevertheless experiences of the EU enlargement have shown that where there were none appropriate railway connection between EU and non EU countries in place, road transport grew significantly and this should be prevented, especially in the Alpine region.

- The WBC can substantially contribute to sustainable transport system in the process of accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU and to growing transhipment in the Adriatic and Black sea ports.

- With the aim of establishing the AWBC by the responsible ministries of the countries alongside the route of the corridor several activities were launched by the railway
infrastructure managers as well, i.e.:

- By signing a Letter of Intent, the rail infrastructure managers and allocating bodies from Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria have already established RNE Corridor C11,

- ARGE Corridor X was founded in 2001 which was later developed into Corridor X plus. This association presents formal co-operation of the infrastructure managers alongside the route,

- In 2004 the infrastructure managers and train path allocation bodies concerned established the Rail Net Europe RNE, which identified and set up a structure for a RNE Corridor XI, in 2011, after the Regulation (EU) No. 913/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning a European rail network for competitive freight was adopted,

- Besides that the concrete project called Bosphorus Express to connect Ljubljana with Istanbul was initiated by rail companies in the region. As indicated by the Attachment 2, the prospective and possible results by elimination of the bottlenecks were studied out by this project,

- Besides above activities of the infrastructure managers even an association Cargo 10 by the rail cargo undertakings was founded with the aim of fostering the recognitions of the AWBC based on Pan European Corridor X idea, by the responsible ministers of the countries concerned.