

**ROUND TABLE «MOBI TRANSPORT CORRIDORS AND BICYCLE ROADS»
MODERN BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE - SUCCESSFUL CARPATHIAN REGION
15TH APRIL 2021**

PRESS RELEASE

On April 15, 2021, the border regions took part in constructive discussions and insightful presentations within the round table focused on "Transport corridors and bicycle roads" implemented under the Hungary - Slovakia - Romania - Ukraine ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020 and initiated by the Kosice Self-Governing Region, Slovakia.

The event was supported by the International Association of Regional Development Institutions "IARDI" (UA), the Zakarpattia Regional Council (UA), Maramureş County Council (RO) and Satu Mare County Council (RO) and Self-Government of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg region (HU) with direct participation of the heads of border regions: Rastislav Trnka, Oleksiy Petrov, and Oszkár Seszták. Presentations of experts on transport, and road and bicycle infrastructure discussed current challenges, needs, opportunities and visions of development in border regions. Thanks to the partner support and cooperation, the event brought an active discussion on these important issues.

Rastislav Trnka, President of the Kosice Self-Governing Region, Slovakia



opened the event by welcoming the heads of regions, expert speakers and all participants and thanked them for accepting the invitation to the meeting initiated by Košice Self-Governing Region. Mr Trnka emphasized the importance and even necessity of common actions and mutual cooperation in developing border infrastructure and supporting cross-border mobility: "Development of efficient connection between our regions is an extremely important task that we can achieve only through a joint effort, cooperation and synchronized actions at the cross-border level". Košice region is focusing

on improving the quality of regional roads and bridges and actively supports accelerating the construction of the highway connection with the Ukrainian border. At the same time, one of its main objectives is to develop an extensive network of bicycle roads connecting numerous locations within the region, but also linking them with the neighbouring regions and countries, and thus supporting sustainable mobility as well as tourism. One of the outcomes of the MOBI project within a few months will be a feasibility study on a biking road connecting Michalovce and Vysne Nemecke creating a connection with Ukraine for cyclists. He expressed the belief that the round table will contribute to reaching the common goal in the project – to provide the citizens with new solutions and visions in cross-border mobility in the border regions.

Oleksiy Petrov, Head of the Zakarpattia Regional Council, Ukraine



thanked the main organizers for initiation and raising this important topic for discussion and informed about the last week's arrival of a small aircraft to Uzhhorod airport within the framework of the MOBI project. He emphasized that Zakarpattia has the largest forest cover in Ukraine, a lot of ecosystems, thus the usage of internal combustion engines is prohibited at the legislative level. This fact contributes to the development of the cycling infrastructure in the region. An important issue that has not been resolved for decades is the lack of cycle paths at international border crossings, with Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

Zakarpattia oblast is now focusing on the reconstruction of the already existing border checkpoints and the construction of new ones that would include pedestrian and bicycle crossings. He concluded that it is important to develop border infrastructure in order to enhance mobility of goods and people, and boosting business and tourism.



Oszkár Seszták, President of the General Assembly of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Hungary

noted that the region is implementing several infrastructural projects of great importance but he also stressed that development does not stop in the county. The logistical conditions of Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg region are outstanding thanks to its position bordering Slovakia, Ukraine as well as Romania. Kisvárdá – Záhony is the key logistic corridor in the country. In the proximity of Ukrainian border, the construction of one of the largest and most modern logistic terminals connecting Asia with Europe started earlier

this year. One of the county's priorities is also developing and improving intermunicipal connection for bicycle transport into unified network to provide safer conditions for cyclists as well as increase tourist attractiveness of the region. He wished the participants a fruitful debate and expressed hope that borders will be safely reopen soon so that cross-border mobility will start again.

Doru Alexandru Lazăr, Vice President of the Maramureş County Council, Romania



emphasized the vital importance of the topic, road infrastructure, for development of the communities. Given Maramureş' position, the region aims to become a significant business partner for the participating countries. The county has already proven its quality in

industrial design, furniture production, tourism and organic farming. To reach the goal, Maramures needs to

develop infrastructure in order to create simple and fast connection with other regions – several projects on developing the road infrastructure are now in progress. One of the main objectives is to build an express road connecting Maramures with the European motorway network and enhancing business and tourism, but also developing county roads and tourist roads. “Only through close collaboration with neighbouring regions, coherent infrastructure project can be developed”. The joint mobility plan will have a major impact on the communities and balanced development of regions. He also stressed the importance to focus also on cooperation in topics such as digitalization, environmental issues or health.



Cristina Stern, Executive director of Regional development dept., Satu Mare County, Romania

noted that it is essential to remove obstacles and stimulate cross-border cooperation. Better knowledge of reality in border areas is useful in this effort. Cross-border projects have had significant impact on citizens in many areas of life – transport, security, education, energy, health or job opportunities. The project MOBI

is an instrument for developing cross-border economic cooperation and brings an added value of sharing mutual knowledge, needs and priorities in border areas. The meeting is a great opportunity to create connection between our objectives. It would not be possible to reach these goals without participation and collaboration of partners.

Nataliya Nosa, Executive Director of International Association of Regional Development Institutions, Ukraine



introduced the project MOBI to the participants of the meeting. She presented the main objective, which is creating a sustainable platform for effective cross-border mobility of people and goods by improving transport and border infrastructure and public lines connections, strengthening cooperation between self-governments and professional organisations aimed at transport and border infrastructure development. To reach the objective, it is important to balance and synchronize

activities at different sides of borders. Mutual cooperation is supported by active meetings, round tables and workshops on essential topics. Nataliya presented activities of Ukrainian, Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian partners within the project. Besides developing several feasibility studies, joint mobility plan is the outcome all the partners are working towards. As a result of the project, the mobility of goods will increase, the business will become more mobile and due to economic development and improved infrastructure, increase in number of tourists and visitors in border regions is expected.

After the opening speeches Panel discussions: “Transport corridors and bicycle roads – challenges, opportunities and perspectives of development” began.

Miroslav Fazekas, Transport department of Kosice self-governing region (SK)

Mr Fazekas provided an overview of road infrastructure in Kosice region and presented its mobility plan, which was completed in 2020. The plan consists of several parts including transport infrastructure. Mr Fazekas focused on transport models and the proposal section with 110 measures. In transport infrastructure, several objectives were identified, for instance building new and developing existing border crossings with Ukraine (e.g. making border crossing Vysne Nemecke – Uzgorod available for cyclists and pedestrians, too). Another significant issue is that the region is currently dealing with the need to build the motorway through Michalovce and Sobrance and connecting them with the Eastern neighbour. Currently, the project is covered by the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, but Košice region is putting a lot of effort in accelerating the realization of the motorway.

Zinovij Broyde, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, UEAN Corresponding Member, Adviser of the Head of Chernivtsi Regional State Administration (UA)



presented on revitalization and further development of transfrontier international, interregional and local connections and answering nowadays European Green Deal and Circulating Economy principles. The location of Chernivtsi oblast, Ukraine, practically in the geographical centre of Europe, together with heritage of important historical routes crossing the area, provide good opportunities. Nowadays,

it is important to focus attention on railway transport of goods. Development of the railroads provides a basis for developing regional and local connections. The historical network is now divided between 8 countries and we see discrepancy between transport and existing border crossing infrastructure (lack of border crossings for railway transport). Mr Broyde also briefly introduced the plans for developing contrailer terminals in accordance with the Green Deal. Development of transport and communication infrastructure on the level of trans-European corridors was supported already in 2000 but till now specific plans for realization are still missing, which might hopefully change with Ukraine upcoming presidency of the Danube strategy. All types of communications (roads, railways and airways) should work together. The network already exists, it needs only to be restored, which will make further local development more efficient.



Mykola Pihulyak, Regional State Administration of Transcarpathia (UA)

thanked the organisers for the opportunity to speak about cross-border cooperation in terms of spatial planning. In order to implement modern infrastructure, we need to focus on quality documentation. In Zakarpattia, regional planning is outlined in the Conception and strategy of trans-border connection. Agreements and plans about border crossing

points need to be approved at the state level and implemented at the local level, therefore mutual communication is necessary. Databases and documentation are based on the same principles in all the neighbouring countries, as shown in the specific examples, and Zakarpattia's documentation is synchronized with them. In the near future, though, the documentation will need to be updated to fit the plans for Kosice – Uzhhorod highway, before any construction starts. Another challenge is to deal with new border crossing planned by Slovakia which have not been approved by Ukrainian authorities yet. Zakarpattia has to deal also with landing lane of Uzhhorod airport as currently aircrafts landing at this airport sometimes have to enter airspace of Slovakia due to the proximity of the state border. Zakarpattia is also interested in connection with Via Carpathia network. Mr Pihulyak expressed the will to closely cooperate in the field of territorial planning with European partners and synchronizing territorial mapping, and emphasized that mutual communication is essential when planning any changes in border areas.



Roman Karpenko, Road Service in Zakarpattia Oblast (UA)

presented the current situation of road network in Zakarpattia, which nowadays counts for 926 km. Road service is now focusing on reconstruction of large parts of this network – over the last year, they managed to renovate one third of all roads in the region and for 2021 it is planned to restore 265 km of roads. As Zakarpattia borders with 4 countries, trans-border cooperation is of high priority. One of the most important projects is to continue the

planned highway from Kosice (SK) to Uzgorod and connect it with Mukachevo as well. Road service is already working on necessary steps. There are also plans for connecting Ukrainian M24 with Hungarian M3 highway, which are already approved at the state level. New border checkpoint with Romania is planned in Bila Tserkva, as well, connecting corridors on both sides of the border. Road service is working on developing bike path network along the roads in Zakarpattia, including border areas. This year it is planned to repair the cycle paths on the M06 highway from the village of Kinchesh to the village of Velyki Lazy, on the M26 highway from the Vylok border checkpoint to the village of Tysabyken. In addition, the continuation of this cycle path on the M26 road is within the infrastructure part of our "MOBI" project. In addition, a new cycle path is planned to be built on the

M08 highway from the Ukrainian-Slovak border to the city of Uzhhorod. The development of road infrastructure is one of the priorities of the Presidential

Program "Large Reconstruction", which ensures sustainable and effective cooperation with other government agencies, together with the Road Service, working to make Ukraine a powerful partner of the European Union in transport.

Dr. Robert Vass, University of Nyíregyháza, Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg County (HU)

noted that for the county bordering 3 countries, international transport has a significant impact on the life in the region. Its primary goal is to extend the motorway network to the national borders. In the near future, there is a plan to continue in M3 construction to the UA border, and build M34 (to UA) and M49 (to RO) motorways. The investments should bring faster and safer connection with borders, possibly bringing new jobs as well. Besides motorway network, railway lines in Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg county were presented. The county has good geographical conditions for this mode of transport and currently, there are 10 railways lines operating. In the past transshipment turnover in Záhony reached up to 17 million tons per year, nowadays it has dropped to 4.5 million tons, but in case of further development, its capacity can be increased to 15 million tons of goods.

PhD. Asist. Urb. Reinhold Stadler, Civitta Strategy & Consulting, Maramures County (RO)

presented the company's portfolio which currently consists of preparing the first sustainable mobility plan at the level of the county. Maramures region is not directly connected with other regions through main corridors. The closest one is the Mediterranean TEN-T Corridor connecting UA and HU with Mediterranean ports. The whole north of Romania lacks connection as the goods are mainly transported in the east-west pattern. National highway network is now prioritized and it includes one project covering Maramures region (Baia Mare – Bistrita – Suceava highway), for which feasibility study is being prepared). It is necessary to improve connections with the existing TEN-T network and develop infrastructure in cross border regions. The Next Generation Plan allows for the first time to dedicate money on large infrastructure projects in cycling. 37% of the fund should support projects contributing to the green transition. In new programming period, the cities start to focus on blue-green corridors along the rivers. These new corridors might greatly enhance the quality of life in the cities and increase their attractiveness.

Claudia Breban, Executive Director Development and Projects Implementation Direction, Maramures County Council (RO)

introduced road infrastructure projects that are implemented in Maramures county. The county council manages the infrastructure of the county road network – in total 786 km. Out of that, 98 km have been rehabilitated and 132 km are under rehabilitation. County road rehabilitation is financed from European and governmental funds and implemented by Maramures County Council. As already mentioned before, Maramures's eccentric position negatively effects its competitiveness. Other challenges, especially in urban areas, include inadequate intersections, overcrowded streets, lack of sidewalks and parking lots, poor alternative transport infrastructure and lack of bypasses. Improvement of the infrastructure would support economic growth by attracting investments. The county also plans to establish fast road transport routes with connection to the borders and main urban centres in the country.

Pop Cristian Corneliu, Road and Bridges Maramures Company (RO)

started with presenting the company's main activities and as delegated administrator of the county roads in Maramures accomplishes important activities including construction, maintenance, repairs and restorations of roads after floods, landslides, road accidents, etc. As

noted by Mrs Breban, the county road network consists of 786 km of county roads, on which there are 128 bridges with an opening greater than 5 m. Besides that, the company manufactures and sells its own products such as asphalt, gravel, bituminous products, etc. The company faces some challenges in performing their activities and services, such as insufficient demand, uncertainty of economic environment and atmospheric conditions.

Martin Rybar, Office of the Chief Architect, Kosice City Council (SK)

presented the current situation and strategic plans in supporting sustainable mobility in the city area, especially cycling mobility. He stressed the idea that traffic should be adjusted to the city and not the other way around. Mr Rybar expressed the need of change in thinking as well as approach towards planning transport infrastructure. The city has its space limitations and continuous development of infrastructure to fulfill the constantly growing needs for new roads, more parking space, etc. is a vicious cycle. The city development should not be limited by individual car transport. On the contrary, the city (or region) should be able to create conditions that will put public transport and bicycles into advantage and thus encourage citizens to choose more sustainable modes of transport instead of using cars. For instance, the city now considers reducing the number of car lanes in a frequented zone and replace it by bicycle lanes. Also, positive as well as negative motivation should be applied (e.g. increasing parking fees or paying tolls for entering city centre by car). The efforts should result into more quality public space that actually improves the standard of life, healthier citizens and less pollution, which also contributes to reducing climate change impact.

Viera Stupakova, Presov bicycle group Kostitras (SK)

presented information on project Bike AcceNT (Bicycle accessibility networking territories) which is being implemented in Presov and Kosice regions in cooperation with Ukrainian partners. The main goal of the project is to improve accessibility of Slovak-Ukrainian border region for cyclists. The project includes creating preconditions for improving bike infrastructure (spatial planning and documentation) as well as raising awareness of cycling as an effective and eco-friendly mode of transport. Within the project, main gaps were identified: it is necessary to improve the quality of existing routes, improve access to water sources, increase safety, improve access to information and additional services (e.g. BikePoints), improve the cycle network in border area and enable to cyclists to cross the border at Vysne Nemecke – Uzgorod. Currently, there are over 1,660 km of existing cycle routes for recreational use with cross-border character in Eastern Slovakia, and over 1,400 km planned. Over 460 km of regional cycle routes on Slovakian territory were proposed mainly for recreational purposes, and some for traffic routes, which include: Uzgorod - Michalovce, Velky Bereznyj – Ubla – Snina, Velke Selemence – Streda n/Bodrogom. The end of the presentation showed positive examples from practice when building connecting bridges between SK-PL and SK-HU borders within Eurovelo 11 brought a significant increase in the number of cyclists.

Lesya Loyko, Head of Agency for Sustainable Development of the Carpathian Region FORZA and Ivan Zinovyev, Head of the Center for Social and Business Initiatives (UA)

introduced their presentation on the concept of regional network of bicycle routes in Zakarpattia region. The document focuses on both bicycle transport and bicycle tourism at local as well as international level and provides a basis for strategic planning. It follows the principles of ecology,

economy, safety and sustainability – it is necessary to keep those in mind to provide comfortable bike roads for cyclists. Unlike in Slovakia or Poland, where infrastructure is at higher levels, the

long-distance routes are not quite functioning in Zakarpattia. Mrs Loyko introduced the concept of long-distance routes connecting Zakarpattia with neighbouring regions and countries, which currently presents a network around 780 km of bike paths in total. One of the main challenges is low support at the level of local authorities, and unequal distribution of related services and infrastructure. Mr Zinovyev continued with the planned network of bike roads in Prykarpattia, Chernivtsi and Ivano-Frankivsk regions of 1,400 km in total that should connect the areas with Zakarpattia as well cross-border regions in Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. The network should support everyday commute as well as tourism. Currently, the focus is on touristic bike roads with connection to Slovakia. Developing cycling infrastructure is good for the environment, it has a positive impact on economy and increases touristic attractiveness of the area. He expressed belief that these concepts will contribute to developing sustainable mobility plans of the regions as well as spatial planning documents at local levels.

Lyudmyla Kozlovska, expert, Zakarpattia Oblast (UA)

described the current situation at Ukrainian border checkpoints and their availability to cyclists. In the past, not much attention was paid to development of border crossing infrastructure specifically for bicycle transport. Several crossings are open to cyclists anyway and provide various levels of infrastructure. In some, border crossing is regulated by signs, but separate bike lanes are missing. The reconstruction plans for one of the biggest border crossings in Luzhanka (UA-HU) aim to fulfil all the modern standards with dedicated bicycle infrastructure. The crossing borders in Mali Selmentsi, similarly to Maly Berezhnyy (UA-SK) are currently closed because of Covid, but before they were actively used by cyclists for recreational purposes or family visits. She also expressed the necessity to reopen another border crossing with Slovakia, Uzhohrod-Vysne Nemecke, to cyclists and pedestrians, too as it is currently serving only to automobile transport. After reconstruction, this checkpoint will provide separate lanes for bicycles. Only recently started Ukrainian legislation and documents recognize cycling infrastructure as an important part of any construction processes and new standards and regulations have been implemented. In 2018, documents defining requirements for building and developing bike infrastructure were introduced and finally, requirements for minimum capacity and traffic intensity in order to provide dedicated cycling infrastructure at border crossings were cancelled. Now it is time to start thinking about making border crossing not only car friendly, but also cyclists- and pedestrians friendly.



Dr. Zsolt Horcsik, Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg County (HU)

presented the current situation as well as future perspectives of cycling in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. The network of cycling routes in Hungary is constantly growing. Before 2000, the cycling routes served for local purposes without intention to build an international network. After announcing the Ministry of National

Development's plan in 2015 to build 1,500 km of bike paths has led to the increase of bike users (from 19% to 22%). The impact of covid epidemic on the proportion of bike users might be even higher (after the covid the numbers might be higher). The main objectives of building cycling

infrastructure are to increase road safety, provide better connections with tourist attractions, helping the environment and improving the quality of life. Thanks to the long bicycle routes, the upper part of the region is

getting more attention from tourists and is becoming a prominent tourist destination. The strategy of cycling tourism development considers tourism strategies at national and international level. Besides tourism, the network serves for traffic purposes for locals. The length of routes in the county has doubled in last 10 years. Over 120 km of planned routes are already licensed. A good example of cooperation between municipalities is Medieval Church Route strengthening the local unity. One of the ways to motivate municipalities and companies to take concrete steps is rewarding them with bike-friendly awards for increasing acceptance of cycling in the area.



Attila Deák, Member of the Executive Board of the Hungarian Cycling Tourism Association, Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg County (HU)

noted there have been significant changes in cycling tourism in the county since 2016, when Upper Tisza region was defined as an important tourist destination. More attention has been reflected in tourism development, whilst cycling tourism has been regarded as an essential part. In the last 10 years, it has been significantly intensified. Nowadays, around 300km of asphalt bike roads can be found in the Upper Tisza region, one of the most complex networks in Hungary. A great deal of these roads was originally built for flood protection. One of the most important tasks was to improve signing and navigation implemented in 2020. Currently, they are dealing with the lack of bike-friendly services (tourist centres and resting points). Thanks to HU and EU funds, many new info centres with resting places will be ready this year, often close to historic monuments or connected with water tourism attractions. Instead of building new infrastructure, existing infrastructure should be adjusted to local needs (by reconstructing existing buildings). Extra services, such as bike rentals and assisting service will be available. Infrastructure development goes hand in hand with product development (theme routes, guided tours cycling camps). Cycling is also a great way to motivate children and catch their attention in exploring the region.

Andronic Radu, Expert of Satu Mare County Council (RO)

presented the current situation of cycling mobility in Satu Mare county. Mr Radu pointed out that cycling as a mode of transport is thanks to its specifics in line with EU strategies and directives and also that its success is strongly connected to infrastructure development. Cycling is crucial in all regional mobility strategies. Towns and cities have their investment plans regarding cycling infrastructure, but infrastructure is missing in rural areas (except cross-border related projects). Cycling in Satu Mare city itself has 12% modal share, but there is still coherent infrastructure missing and traffic collisions are also a problem. Often times, bike lanes are used by cars or pedestrians. Other urban areas in the county face similar challenges with very low development of dedicated infrastructure. Guidelines for future cycling infrastructure were presented as urban municipalities are currently working on new mobility plans with cycling being in focus. In Satu Mare, the plan is to encourage cycling mobility not only by building a coherent network of bike roads but also by promoting bike sharing, providing more bike parking space and supporting intermodality (in

combination with buses or trains). One of the future projects in this area is also creating cycling infrastructure promoting natural and historical heritage in the county financed by EU.

In conclusions session, Michaela Lițe, representative of Maramureș County Council (RO),



was impressed by the presentations which were interesting and inspirational. Maramures County Council was happy to announce they finally have consultants helping them with CBC mobility plan. The county council looks forward to useful and beneficial cooperation.



Brigitta Laszló, Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg County (HU)

also evaluated the meeting very positively and appreciated lots of interesting information presented. She thanked the presenters and interpreters especially from Hungary. The project is going very well so far and she looks forward to the next meeting.

Stern Felicia Cristina, Territorial Administrative Unit Satu Mare (RO)

thanked for the opportunity to take part in the round table which brought a chance to improve everybody's knowledge on transport corridors and bicycle roads. The guests, partners and experts presented information that gave an added value to the project. The presentations confirmed the need to cooperate and implement cross-border projects that result in increasing living standards of citizens of border regions.

Nataliya Nosa, Executive director of International Association of Regional Development Institutions, IARDI (UA)

thanked to all speakers of the round table for their professional presentations of great informative value. It is a big challenge for project partners now to collect all the information and bring a synchronized approach on all sides of the borders. We learnt about strategies at microregional level and it is important to unite our mobility plans with understanding current as well as future financial instruments available. The upcoming event will be focused especially on these instruments under the new programme period. The event is initiated by Zakarpattia Region and is organised in cooperation with Association of European Border Regions, with support of partners of the MOBI project from Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. The conference will be held on 14th-15th June 2021 with participation of ministries and institutions at national levels.

Monika Sivulic, Regional development department of Kosice Self-Government Region, thanked all the presenters and guests for participating in the round table and to the partners for cooperation in organizing the event. The participants had the opportunity to hear and share lots of interesting insights and inspirational presentations. Kosice self-governing region expressed the belief that all the received information will be utilized in practice and implemented in the efforts to fulfil the common goal of the MOBI project.

Press point of MOBI project: www.mobi.iardi.org