

Given the large information load of thematic and strategically important presentations, the international consortium of MOBI decided to distribute press releases according to thematic sessions being divided into 3 parts, respectively

Press release (part 2)

Session 2. "Railway connections in the Carpathian region"

Partnership meeting of the MOBI project

"Modern Border Infrastructure – Successful Carpathian Region" (MOBI)

On January 28, 2021, a meeting of partners and experts of the project "Modern Border Infrastructure – Successful Carpathian Region" (MOBI), implemented with the financial support of the ENI CBC Programme Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine 2014-2020, was held.

The aim of the project is: to create a sustainable platform for effective cross-border mobility of people and goods by improving transport and border infrastructure, strengthening cooperation between governments and professional organizations aimed at developing transport links in the border regions of Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. The project envisages the development of a joint Mobility Plan, which will include regional plans of each border region in the field of transport and border infrastructure, development of railway services, international air services, etc.



The meeting was initiated by the Self-Government of the Szabolcs - Szatmár - Bereg region (Hungary), and was held by combining the meeting of Ukrainian partners and experts in the conference hall and the video-conference connection from Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. The meeting was attended by the representatives of all partner organisations of the MOBI project, namely: representatives of the Self-government of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg region (Hungary), Košice self-governing region (Slovakia), Maramureş County Council (Romania), Territorial Administrative Unit of Satu

Mare County (Romania), Road service in Zakarpattia oblast (Ukraine) and International Association of Regional Development Institutions IARDI (Ukraine).

3 panel discussions were focused on the following issues: 1. Regional planning and development of transport connections, 2. Railway connections in the Carpathian region, 3. Aviation connections in the Carpathian region.

The second session was devoted to railway connections in the Carpathian region. On the issue 3 experts spoke:

- **Z. Broyde**, Director of the State Scientific and Technical Center of inter-sectoral and regional issues of environmental safety and resource (SSTC "Ekoresurs"), PhD, senior researcher, Cor.-Mem., UEAN Adviser to the Head of the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration in his speech revealed the vision supported by the European Commission, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), WBRD and the Carpathian Convention on the

Renewal railway connection via existent rail 1520 mm through Geographic Center of Europe in Carpathians between all boundary oblasts of Ukraine in area of EUSDR & neighbouring regions of Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova



development of cross-border rail connections across the Carpathian region - from trans-European to cross-border. This approach is based on the holistic development of the entire transport infrastructure and the development of the socio-economic sphere of the current 8 countries of the Carpathian region based on the experience of the Alpine region. The need for modern restoration and further development of this system of cross-border communications, as a key element of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, has become a cornerstone of the creation of Euroregions "Carpathian" and "Verkhniy Prut" continued to be reflected in the Carpathian Convention, the EUSDR and the European Commission's 2018 decisions on the extension of the EU's transport

system to the Eastern Partnership countries and the formation of the EU's rail freight corridor network (RFC). In connection with the construction of the East West Gate intermodal terminal in Fényeslitke near Chop, as well as the joint statements of the President of Ukraine with the President of Poland on 12.10.2020 and the President of the Republic of Moldova on 12.01.2021 on joint aspirations for integration in the Three Seas Initiative, the system needs the most attention for rail and road connections. Today, these connections connect through the geographical center of the European continent in Ukraine all the bordering regions of the 5 EUSDR countries (as well as key Carpathian tourist and recreational areas) from the new East-West Gate terminal to the Black Sea ports. To realize these opportunities, it is necessary to restore through the rail traffic on the existing track 1520 mm from the border with Hungary and Slovakia in Chop through Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia and Odesa regions to ensure the shortest transit of passengers and goods through Ukraine. Realizing this potential, which is important for all 12 countries of the Three Seas Initiatives, requires two tasks.

The simplest stage will be the resumption of traffic through the Ukrainian-Moldovan section of these connections from the Mamaliga station in the Chernivtsi region through Larga - Oknytsia to Mohyliv-Podilskyi and further through Zhmerynka to the east and to Odesa. This does not require additional investments at all, and the agreement in principle was reached in 2012 at the railway summits in Chisinau and Bucharest and partially implemented in the renewed train route 117/118 Kyiv-Chernivtsi.

The key is to restore running from Teresva to Rakhiv (suspended since 2006) on Romanian section of track 1520 mm through Câmpulung la Tisa – Sihetu Marmăției - Valea Vișeuului (about 40 km) and Ukrainian: Dilove – Rakhiv (19, 2 km). The necessary infrastructure and repair works can be performed within the framework of the EU cross-border cooperation programs "HU-SK-RO-UA" and "RO-UA".

The implementation and funding of the EU in 2021-2027 opens up new opportunities for the implementation of this project in the new approaches of the "Next Generation" and "Fair Transition" for regions and cities under the priorities of the European Green Agreement. Involvement of Ukraine and Moldova in these processes is proposed at the EU Summits on June 18, 2020 and October 6, 2020.

Fundamental preconditions for such cooperation can be created during the Ukrainian presidency of the EUSDR in 2021-2022, and the first step towards their implementation is the consideration of this issue by the Ukrainian-Hungarian intergovernmental commission in the coming weeks.

- **Boris Ottmar**, timetable manager, Director of Regional and Suburban transport products of Slovak Railways a.s. together with his colleague Juraj Oravec presented options for the railway connections' development of the Košice self-governing region. The Košice self-governing region has 3.48 million train-kilometers (15% of the total Slovak number), 475 km. serviced transport network (16% of the total Slovak number), 50 long-distance trains (33%

Modernization of the rolling stock - ZSSK

Suburban transport KSK

- 35 modernized coaches, first coach to be delivered in 01.2022
- 17 new coaches, first coach to be delivered in 07.2022
- 9 EMUs (VS evaluation in progress), estimated delivery in 2023
- We expect them to be operated on the following routes:
 - Košice – Liptovský Mikuláš,
 - Košice – Prešov – Plaveč,
 - Košice – Čierna nad Tisou,
 - Košice – Humenné
(future electrification expected)



governing region

of the total Slovak number), 2 operating railway checkpoints across the border: Čaňa (Slovakia) – Hidasnémeti (Hungary) and Čierna nad Tisou (Slovakia) – Chop (Ukraine), as well as 2 non-functioning railway checkpoints: Slovenské Nové Mesto (Slovakia) – Sátoraljaújhely (Hungary) and Maťovské Vojkovce (Slovakia) – Uzhhorod (Ukraine). In total, there are 226 (15% of the all-Slovak number) domestic trains, 20 international trains and 103 railway stations (14% of the all-Slovak number) in the territory of the Košice self-

Specific measures to improve the current crisis situation in 2021 include the extension of the international connection Košice – Budapest by 5 pairs of trains, the extension of the international connection Bratislava – Wien by 3 pairs of trains, the extension of the Slovak Railway by 140 trains in total, attracting additional funds by renting transport of the Slovak Railway abroad, optimization of the process of commissioning new vehicles and attracting staff in regional areas, reducing the unit of subsidy for Slovak Railways by 3.74%.

Potential of future development of railway transport

Railway service Slovakia – Ukraine

- Košice – Chop – Mukachevo
 - 2 pairs of Os-trains Košice – Chop (through coaches to Kiev) daily
 - 2 pairs of RR trains daily
 - Potential offer extension to 4 trains pairs per day
- Košice – Maľovce – Uzhorod
 - Currently no direct service
 - Regional potential of cities - 400 k of inh.
 - Depends on partnership and implementation of investments at the common border



The expansion of the cross-border services to be offered depends on the agreement of the partners involved, implementation of the necessary investments at the common border (complicated customs controls etc.) and scope of the ordered transport services

The above measures are being agreed with the main shareholder – the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic. Also, at this stage there is a decision to introduce 59 new trains for Eastern Slovakia.

For suburban transport, modernization of 35 coaches is planned (the first coach will be delivered in January 2022), construction of 13 new coaches (the first new coaches will be delivered in July 2022), commissioning of 9 EMU's by 2023 on the lines Košice – Liptovský Mikuláš, Košice – Prešov – Plaveč, Košice – Čierna nad Tisou, and Košice – Humenné.

Other measures include reducing the intervals between the Košice – Budapest trains to 2 hours by introducing 7 pairs of trains and joining the Košice – Budapest timetable schedule to the Intercity Sátoraljaújhely – Miskolc – Budapest interval from 2022. According to research, it is established that the current operation of 2 pairs of trains per day on the route Košice – Budapest does not meet the needs of passenger traffic, and the implementation of this measure will not only effectively connect cities with a population of 2.2 million people, but also significantly increase the potential of the economy, tourism and mobility in general. Further steps in this area are currently being agreed between partners and stakeholders.

Great opportunities are envisaged in cooperation with Ukraine: in July 2019, the connection Košice – Chop – Mukachevo was introduced by the track of European standard (1435 mm). Together with the connection Budapest

– Záhony – Chop – Mukachevo, this direction plays an important role in the transport system of the Carpathian region in general. Depending on the situation with the pandemic, the Slovak Railway plans to restore 2 pairs of trains per day on the route Košice – Chop – Mukachevo in May-June 2021 with the prospect of increasing to 4 pairs of trains per day.

The next promising direction is the introduction of the connection of Košice – Maťovské Vojkovce – Uzhhorod. In this direction, there are tracks of both European (1435 mm) and Soviet standards (1520 mm), but the track of the

Soviet standard is used only for freight. Prior to the pandemic, the option of introducing passenger traffic in this direction was considered, which was to launch the Mukachevo – Chop – Košice route on the soviet standard track, which was significantly complicated by the fact that the Soviet standard track leads only to the US Steel Concern

Actions/measures proposed for 2021

PROPOSED SYSTEM AND OPTIMIZATION MEASURES FOR GVD 2020/2021

Performance increase GVD 2020/2021	Increase in passengers annually	Increase in revenues annually	CO2 savings annually
1 341 410 train km	3,4 mil.	2,1 mil	31 219 tons

IMMEDIATE EFFECT FOR GVD 2020/2021

- Extension of international service Košice – Budapest by 5 pairs of trains
- Extension of international service Bratislava – Vienna by 3 pairs of trains
- Extension of ZSSK services for more than 140 trains
- Additional revenues for ZSSK thanks to the use of ZSSK vehicles abroad
- Feasible without increasing the number of vehicles deployed
- Optimization of the deployment of vehicles and staff in regional transport
- Reduction of the subsidy unit for ZSSK by 3.74%



Modern Border Infrastructure - Successful Carpathian region

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and 11 kilometers of European standard track from Maťovské Vojkovce to Uzhhorod required complex repairs or reassembly. Extension of this route is possible with the consent of all involved partners and stakeholders, as well as the implementation of the necessary set of measures to develop the appropriate infrastructure: the development of modern railway customs terminals and the introduction of the appropriate scale of transportation.

In general, the development of railway connection is considered as one of the keys in cooperation between Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and Ukraine.



- **Claudia Breban**, expert of Maramureș County Council Representative, talked about the current situation and future perspectives for railway transport in Maramureș County

- There are 2 main railway line operating in Maramureș County:

- Câmpulung la Tisa – Salva, from which 100 km pass directly through the territory of Maramureș County. It has 4 main stations on the line: Câmpulung la Tisa, Sighetu Marmației, Valea Vișeuului and Vișeu de Jos;

- Jibou – Baia Mare – Satu Mare, from which 41 km passes directly through the territory of Maramureș County.

- There are no electrified tracks in Maramureș County.
- Line Câmpulung la Tisa - Salva consists of 3 parts:
- Vișeu de Jos – Borșa;
- Valea Vișeuului – Vișeu de Sus – Dealul Ștefăniței
- Câmpulung la Tisa – Sighetu Marmației – Valea Vișeuului – this line is of strategic importance, as there is a track that allows the connection of Sighetu Marmației (Maramureș, Romania) - Teresva (Transcarpathian region, Ukraine) and Valea Vișeuului (Maramureș) – Berlibaș (Zakarpattia oblast, Ukraine). Today, these railway border checkpoints are not functioning. In total, there are 5 tunnels, 10 viaducts and 354 bridges on the Câmpulung la Tisa - Salva line. Speed limit for passenger trains - from 50 km / h to 80 km / h. Freight traffic is not operating on the line since 2019.

There are several projects financed by the Romanian railways from its own budget, from the state budget and from funds of the Operational Program:

- The projects financed from the budget of the Romanian Railways:
- Capital repair of the Vișeu de Jos station's building;
- Modernization of railway level crossing between Bușag and Baia Mare;

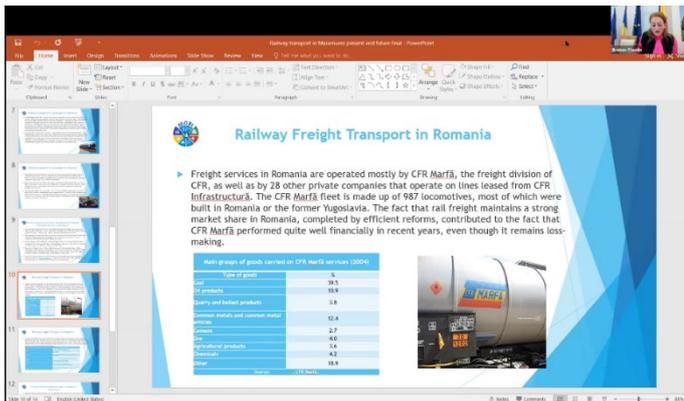
The project financed from the state budget:

- Repair and reconstruction of the tunnel Runcu on Valea Vișeuului – Petrova line;
- Capital repair of the railway tracks between Bușag and Baia Mare;
- Capital repair of the bridge over the river Lapuș in Lapușel;
- Restoration of shore defense on the Valea Vișeuului – Vișeu de Jos line;
- Modernization of 10 other railway level crossings;

The projects financed from the funds of the Operational Program, there is:

- Modernization of Baia Mare station, the main station of Maramureș county.

In the Maramureș county only Regio and InterRegio trains run. There is a direct connection to Bucharest-North, Brașov and the resorts of Prahova Valley and Cluj-Napoca. In summer there are trains with direct connection to the Black Sea coast.



For 2020-2021, the introduction of 2 trains on the route Baia Mare (Maramureş, Romania) – Püspökladány (Hungary) – Budapest (Hungary) – Wien (Austria) is already planned, which will begin immediately after overcoming the effects of the coronavirus.

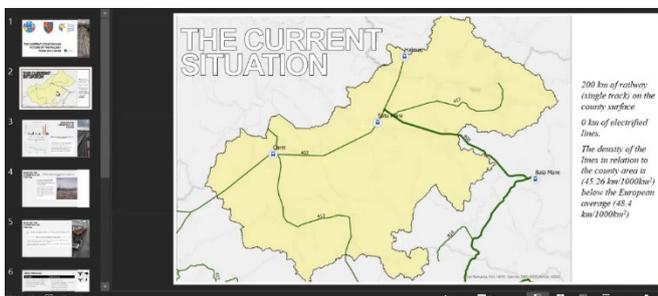
In total, 24 suburban, 14 InterRegio and 2 Regio trains arrive and depart several times a week or daily from Baia Mare station. 10 Regio trains arrive and depart several times a week or daily from Sighetu Marmatei station according to the train schedule for 2020-2021. There is a website, a call center and a platform for purchasing tickets, which provides discounts for retirees,

revolutionaries, pupils and students.

The total number of freight locomotives of the Romanian railways is 987, most of which were built in Romania or the former Yugoslavia. Despite the fact that freight transport has a significant place in the market, which was ensured by the successful reforms of CFR Marfă in general, this direction remains unprofitable. Freight trains in Maramureş County are being served only at Baia Mare station, so the volume of freight traffic was quite low in 2020 – 11 000 tons.

In 2020, freight trains service on the stations Săcel, Vişeu de Jos and Leordina was stopped because of significant degradation of the railway, which, in turn, limited the volumes of freight traffic. As a result, freight costs have risen and competition with road transport has become impossible. By 2020, the stations mentioned above served 30 000 tons of cargo per year. The modernization of the railway lines will allow returning the business to the use of freight transport by rail through the county of Maramureş. In addition, at the site of a total length of 21,6 km tourist route Mocăniţa – Vaser valley is under operation. On that route diesel and steam locomotives are running.

- **Ionuţ Militaru**, expert from Satu Mare County Council, informed the participants of the partnership meeting about the main features of the current situation and future of the of railway in Satu Mare County.



Today, the railways of Satu Mare County are 200 km of single-track tracks, which are completely non-electrified. The total number of railway trucks is 45.26 km per 1000 km.

In the field of freight transport, the Carei railway checkpoint (Romania-Hungary) and the Halmeu railway checkpoint (Romania-Ukraine) are of strategic importance, in particular, 18 000 tons of cargo per year pass through Halmeu. However, the permitted speed of

freight trains in Satu Mare County is low: from 17 km / h to 26 km / h, as opposed to the average speed of freight trains in the EU - 83 km / h. Currently, road haulage is more flexible, faster and more frequent.

In the field of passenger transport, the Satu Mare-Bucharest railway line covers 5 000 passengers a year, and the Satu Mare-Bucharest flight has the same figures. Every day 39 passenger trains arrive and depart from Satu Mare station, but only 1 train leaves to Bucharest. The great complexity of passenger rail transport connection is the limitation of running time: for example, on the Satu Mare – Brasov line 18 restrictions were set, and the minimum duration of the running is 12 hours.

On long-distance services, the biggest competitor for passenger rail transport are the air services. A ticket from Satu Mare to Bucharest by plane or train has the same price - 45 euros, but the duration of the flight is only 1 hour 20 minutes. The main reason for the loss of competition to the road transport is speed limits (45-63 km / h), despite of the fact locomotives can accelerate to 140 km / h.

The main advantages of the railway connection in Satu Mare County are: high density of the railway, Much lower environmental pollution, Low accident rate - high safety, No road congestion.

Promising projects are currently underway, the main purpose of which is the modernization of Satu Mare and Carei stations, as well as other railway crossing levels at the county level. Subject to the implementation of

appropriate measures for the reconstruction of the railway line, the trains will be able to run at a higher speed, and it will be possible to launch new connections. Immediately after the reduction of the duration of runnings, there will be an increase in passenger turnover and in revenues that can be redirected for the following investments: reconstruction of terminals, cars, etc.

Large investments in the railway infrastructure of Satu Mare County are needed, as single-track tracks hinder the fast and efficient movement of trains, as well as the efficient operation of railway logistics in general. First of all, it is necessary to reconstruct the track from Satu Mare to Baia Mare, which will halve the duration of the running. Another area of modernization is the Satu Mare-Carei track. These measures need to be launched as soon as possible so that by 2030 Satu Mare County becomes a region with a strong railway infrastructure

At the end of the second session of the partnership meeting, Brigitta László, Representative of the Szabolcs - Satmár - Bereg Region and Project Manager (Hungary) and **Nataliya Nosa**, Project Coordinator and Head of the International Association of IARDI (Ukraine) thanked all participants and the experts for the expert approach. During the discussions, the need to intensify activities for the restoration and further development of railway connections and to consolidate the efforts of border regions in this direction in order to create effective cross-border mobility of people and goods in the Carpathian region was identified.

Given the importance of the above topics, the international consortium has determined that the next event in the field of railway communication with thematic discussions to plan for **March - April 2021**.

Press Centre of the International Association of Regional Development Institutions IARDI