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CENTRAL PROJECTS



Hans Schuschnig

Demonstrating the positive transport-related economic and environmental effects

Hans Schuschnig from the Regional Government of Carinthia - Department for Economic Law and Infrastructure and Lead Partner of the project BATCO talks about what's happening with the project, what the partners want to achieve and what it means for the region.

ce: *The partners behind BATCo intend to make their voice heard during the revision of TEN-T policy. What steps are planned in this respect? What steps have been taken already?*

Schuschnig: Actually BATCo has the advantage of being able to build on efforts made since 2004 – when signatories agreed to the first cooperation contracts regarding the development and implementation of the “Baltic-Adriatic Axis”. The project is also part of an existing network that is much larger than the BATCo partnership. Therefore, since 2004, the public and European decision makers have been made familiar with the term “Baltic-Adriatic Axis,” or its predecessor “Baltic-Adriatic Corridor.” In 2009 the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) and the Austrian Federal Railway (ÖBB), in cooperation with the regional governments of Carinthia, Lower Austria, Styria and Vienna, elaborated and disseminated a brochure entitled “The Baltic- Adriatic Corridor - Austria’s measures in creating a continuous high-performance rail connection between the Baltic and the Adriatic.”

The project should also benefit from its close cooperation with CENTRAL EUROPE’s first-call project SoNorA, which has just presented its TEN-T recommendations, at the TEN-T days in Saragossa, with the support of BATCo and SCANDRIA. The Saragossa gathering also featured the presentation of an executive summary of a study, elaborated under the leadership of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, entitled “The Baltic-Adriatic Axis: Element of the future European TEN-T Core Network.”

To make its voice heard in the course of the TEN-T revision, BATCo will support the “Baltic-Adriatic Axis.” This means BATCo will support and contribute to the efforts made and activities performed by initiatives and stakeholders outside the BATCo partnership – as these initiatives are much more advanced. A concrete action to be carried out by the BATCo partnership in 2010 is the elaboration and dissemination of a “Letter of Support,” which should be signed by a large number of organisations, institutions and enterprises along the Baltic-Adriatic Axis in order to demonstrate the enormous support of the different beneficiaries of this transport axis.

ce: *The project focuses on environmental and economic concerns. What would you like to have achieved after finalising the project?*

Schuschnig: One of the major objectives is to include the Baltic-Adriatic Axis, which is one of the most important north-south railway transport routes in Europe and the eastern-most crossing of the Alps, into the future TEN-T core network. We expect that activities carried out in BATCo will lead to improved accessibility within and between the regions and countries along the Baltic-Adriatic Axis, while providing a better railway and seaway connection to the booming Asian markets. Because environmental progress is strongly linked to economic prosperity, we also look for-

capacity to make environmental gains will be gone. Actually there is nothing that constricts environmental progress and therefore promotes pollution more than poverty.

Due to the connection between economic prosperity and environmental progress, BATCo tackles both economic as well as environmental concerns.

However, for the private sector, environmental concerns play a subordinate role in comparison to cost/time efficiency. The private freight transport sector is especially cost and time oriented – one of the major disadvantages for rail-transport compared to road transport as rail connections are still too inflexible, too expensive and too unreliable.

ce: *“Green transport” is an important issue at the moment. Where do you see the main possibilities?*

Schuschnig: Actually, from our point of view, green transport is an important topic to be considered in future transport policies on the regional, national, and particularly, the European level. In transport, supply creates demand, which means that, for example, the improvement of the road network infrastructure causes an increase of road freight transport as well as individual transport. That is why policy and decision makers on all governmental levels must elaborate and implement strategies for altering the future growth of traffic to the benefit of sustainable transport. As mentioned before, there is a strong connection between environmental progress and economic prosperity, and this will definitely hinder the implementation of considerations made regarding “green transport.” In this regard, it is once again the policy making level that must promote the modal shift in freight as well as in passenger transport. There should be less support for the road network, for example, through the implementation of night driving prohibitions for trucks and city tolls for cars. When it comes to moving both passengers and freight, “green transport” will be a success only if the necessary infrastructure is provided, connections get more customer-friendly and environmentally friendly modes of transport get more cost/time efficient.

BATCo will promote “green transport,” in many ways, including by identifying green transport potentials along the Baltic-Adriatic Axis and by providing a green transport decision support model to be used by decision makers.

ce: *Where do you see the main advantages in cooperation with other regions? And why is this cooperation a good idea?*

Schuschnig: For BATCo, which is a transnational cooperative initiative involving regions in the five countries along the Baltic-Adriatic Axis, cooperation is of the utmost importance. This is particularly true when it comes to involvement of regional and national decision makers as well as the regional transport and business sectors. It would be impossible to elaborate and implement most of the activities carried out in BATCo without the support of partners on location. Moreover, where actions have a regional focus, the language barrier would make it infeasible to inform the relevant stakeholders without native speakers on the spot. Cooperation allows for exchange of experiences and know-how in different countries and regions, as well as the exchange of lessons learned. ■



PHOTOS: BATCO

ward to demonstrating the positive transport-related economic and environmental effects of the Baltic-Adriatic Axis to the relevant public and private stakeholders and beneficiaries, as well as presenting the possibilities for increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the business sector and the regions along the Baltic-Adriatic Axis. And, by establishing a Business Cooperation Alliance and supporting cooperation on transnational logistics, we will prepare the framework for building up a sustainable network for future cooperation.

ce: *What are the main connections between economic prosperity and environmental progress? Are there any situations in which these issues are mutually exclusive?*

Schuschnig: Basically, from our point of view, environmental progress goes hand-in-hand with economic prosperity, as in fact there is no environmental progress without economic prosperity. If competitiveness in Europe gets lost, or if less-developed regions, especially in the “New Europe,” are not built up to the level of the well-developed regions, the