

## **Second Annual Meeting of Ministers on the Development of the South East Europe Core Regional Transport Network**

**“Common problems – Shared solutions”  
1 December 2006 - Brussels**

### **Declaration on Railway**

The creation of a common European Railway Area is a cornerstone of EU transport policy. The progressive extension of its core principles to the states of the west Balkans is a prerequisite for a business oriented, sound development of the railways in that area and for close cooperation with the EU.

Only when access conditions, including the charges for the use of the rail, are transparent and published well in advance, will railway undertakings be aware of the conditions they have to satisfy in order to run trains. Therefore EU law already requires EU infrastructure managers to consult users and publish comprehensive information well before the beginning of each timetable period in the form of a network statement.

The signatories acknowledge the importance of such network statements also for the west Balkan region as an essential element for permitting access to their railway networks and rail terminals. They realise that the existing high level of technical interoperability between their networks should be maintained and developed in a harmonised way.

Since infrastructure managers in the west Balkans do not yet have network statements, considerable economies can be reaped if documents as comprehensive as network statements are developed jointly rather than in isolation for each infrastructure manager.

A single network statement, or at least network statements presented in a single format, will significantly facilitate their understanding by the users, in particular for international railway undertakings, and reduce cost.

EU infrastructure managers have assembled and published best practice information on network statements in conformity with EU legislation. Railways in the region should draw full benefit from the experience available.

A common network statement can be the starting point for a regional cooperation of regulatory bodies, both among themselves as well as with their infrastructure managers in the process of checking the conformity, and updating the network statement on a permanent basis.

A common network statement will help safeguard and enhance the legal and technical interoperability of the different rail networks; it can provide an early warning system where a loss of interoperability is at stake.

Ministers therefore invite rail infrastructure managers in the respective countries and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to join together and start a programme for developing a common network statement for the west Balkans in conformity with the EU rail *acquis* and the formats developed among infrastructure managers in the EU. If a common network statement is not feasible immediately, they will at least apply a single format. They should collaborate with their rail regulators and consult with the users. Progress should be reported to the Working Group on Railways and Intermodality. A complete set of network statements in a common format should be available and published by end of 2008.

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Done in Brussels on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006



Vice-President of the European Commission  
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Mr Jacques BARROT



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