

Riga, March 31, 2005

### Comments on the TREN-TENT extension

by the Latvian Transport Development and Education Association (LaTDEA).

LaTDEA is a non-governmental organization uniting transport academic, research and industrial organizations and companies. LaTDEA fully supports the strategy of the Ministry of Transport of Latvia regarding the proposals for the project „Rail and Road Connections between the Baltic Motorways and Russia/Belarus”. At the same time we would like to point out the following railway and sea transport related issues.

#### **Important issues of railways connected into united European transport network**

- 1) Latvia like the other Baltic countries is placed into a specific situation with interface of two technically and administratively different railway business environments of the European Union and that of the former USSR united railway system. Measures should be taken to minimize impacts of these specific conditions when planning the respective railway corridors.
- 2) Railway operations in the direction to the East as well as in the directions towards the two neighbouring Baltic States does not encounter any technical barriers ( 100% interoperability). In general the administrative procedures are also adjusted, however the newly established Latvian railway operating companies have no permission to cross the borders of Russia and Belarus as these countries acknowledge only the historically formed state owned monopol railway operator. This problem should be resolved at the EU negotiations with Russian Federation and Belarus, as the new Latvian railway operators are working in compliance with EU legislation.  
It is significant however to look for further possibilities for streamlining of boarder crossing procedures on the mentioned boarders.  
It is also important to develop this direction as the current capacity of the Latvian railway infrastructure allows without significant investments to offer an effective transportation solution for the growing need of the European Union to import from Russia energy resources and other goods.
- 3) For the railway transport in the direction to the West from Latvia the problems are completely different. Although there are no administrative boarder-crossing problems, the differences of technical character are so big that they do not permit any significant traffic in this direction. Therefore the newly initiated project „ **Rail Baltica**” is of high importance for the further integration of the Baltic region into the EU.

#### **Sea Transport**

In the process of development and prioritization of the Baltic Sea Motorways it is important to take into the account the freeze-over zone and the unstable environmental conditions of the Baltic Sea. It is important to optimize the routes for heavytonnage vessels transporting dangerous goods. Distribution centers should be developed at large ports and short sea shipping is to be promoted.