

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Presidents,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát and Poslanecká sněmovna for the Joint Resolution on transport services and related issues, submitted on behalf of the Committees on Economic Affairs of the Visegrad 4 countries' parliaments.

The Commission is pleased that these parliaments share the view that a fully developed transport network is of vital importance for European citizens' mobility and for sustainable economic growth. This is fully in line with the policy of the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) as laid down in Regulations (EU) 1315/2013 and 1316/2013 respectively. These Regulations define the minimum requirements and parameters of the TEN-T to be achieved within the given deadlines. The TEN-T have been designed on the basis of an objective methodology in order to ensure the seamless flow of passengers and goods throughout the EU while keeping up with the latest technological trends.

The Commission shares the parliaments' view that coordination of national transport plans is needed to ensure smooth transport flows across borders within the EU. The Commission supports the commitment of the V4 countries in removing bottlenecks and missing links at cross-border sections and the Commission has already set up a number of tools to help achieve these objectives. For example, the Commission has set up nine TEN-T core network corridors that underpin the coordinated implementation of the most strategic parts of the TEN-T, covering all the Member States and transport modes as well as the horizontal priority of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). All relevant stakeholders, in particular Member States and infrastructure managers of all modes of

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transport, are involved in advancing the coordinated implementation of the TEN-T core network via respective corridor structures, such as Corridor Fora, which better enable close cooperation, coordination and alignment of national plans, priorities and timing. Moreover, Member States gave their unanimous approval to corridor work plans in 2015, the main objective of which is to provide a detailed analysis of the priorities and investments for each corridor. The Commission thanks the V4 countries for their support and involvement in such corridor activities.

The Commission takes seriously the concerns expressed by the parliaments that an efficient completion of the TEN-T may be impacted by complex regulatory and administrative arrangements which can contribute to increased costs, delays and uncertainty for infrastructure projects. In 2015, the Commission contracted a consortium to assess the permitting procedures applicable to the implementation of TEN-T projects in view of identifying barriers and delivering recommendations on how to overcome them. Best practices as well as possible options for action at EU level will also be identified.

Nevertheless, it is essential that the European acquis, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, is respected. EU co-financed operations have to be fully compliant with the EU EIA legislation. In order to be helpful, as the Czech Republic intends to use EIAs carried out under the obsolete EIA legislation (1992-2001) in its projects under the current funding period, the Commission has proposed a pragmatic solution: an adequate system of verification and updating of the old EIAs has to be in place, without having all EIAs necessarily redone. This system will allow infrastructure projects of the Member States represented in the Visegrad Group to go ahead while ensuring equal treatment of Member States.

As regards the 'protectionist measures' by certain Member States in road transport, the Commission believes that social and market rules go hand in hand. They aim at the completion of the internal transport market while at the same time ensuring adequate working conditions. Experience and findings of ex-post evaluations show, however, that these common EU rules are differently understood, applied and enforced in Member States. Uncoordinated national measures do not effectively solve the main social problems but lead to further discrepancies in enforcement and fragmentation of the internal transport market. Therefore, the Commission is planning to clarify current rules as part of the revision of a number of Regulations. Moreover, with regard to some measures which are clearly not in line with current EU legislation, the Commission has launched infringement procedures against certain Member States.

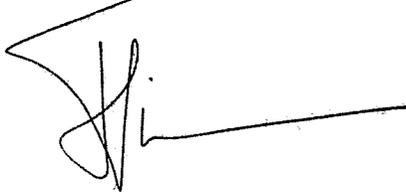
Finally, the Commission welcomes the recommendation to raise awareness and cooperation in the field of Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects, which include EU funds. It is the Commission's view that PPPs can be a useful and efficient tool to finance transport infrastructure projects with a clearly identifiable revenue stream and long-term repayment prospects. At the same time, the Commission is aware of the fact that the European PPP market is not uniform and that the public sector often lacks the capacity to enter into effective PPP arrangements in the field of transport. In order to strengthen the public sector's ability

to engage in PPP transactions, the European PPP Expertise Centre (EPEC) was created at the initiative of the Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) with the objective to share PPP experience, expertise and good practice.

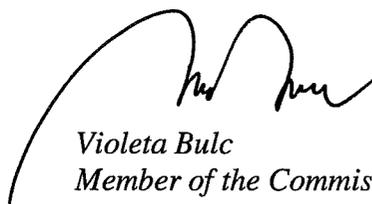
With the launch of the Investment Plan for Europe, the Commission further encourages the use of PPPs in the transport sector and has dedicated support to facilitate their development through the European Investment Advisory Hub. The main task of this Advisory Hub is to provide advice to investors, project promoters and public managing authorities on project identification and preparation, including the use of PPPs.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised in the Joint Resolution and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'FT', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'VB', with a large, sweeping arch over the letters.

*Violeta Bulc
Member of the Commission*