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**EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS \***

**Activities related to the development of Euro-Asian transport links**

Transmitted by the Government of Poland

**Policy background**

The new spatial order that is now created in Europe stimulates new initiatives at continental, national and regional levels. Uniting Europe has given an immense opportunity to achieve successful development, stability and prosperity. To this end, the countries east of the border of the enlarged EU must not be forgotten: Eastern Europe, CIS and the Far East. Overcoming all possible obstacles in transport and trade exchange with these countries is one of the key challenges on the way to the harmonious development of Europe and Asia.

As the area of economic and political stability spreads to the East, economic activities will move to Eastern Europe and Asia. That is why it is necessary to utilize to the highest degree the existing transport infrastructure and concentrate on modernization of railway transport. In Euro-Asian connections, this transport sector is more competitive than others, has still some unutilised potential and can provide the best transport offer. Successive investment projects will allow the maintenance of the high growth of economic activity, especially in the Eastern European countries, CIS and the Far East.

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\* The UNECE Transport Division has submitted the present document after the official documentation deadline due to resource constraints.

Poland sets real hopes on the growth of goods transit from Asia and the Far East to Europe. At present, the transport of over 250 million tonnes of freight (most of them in containers) is carried out mainly by sea – around the Asian continent, through the Indian Ocean, the Suez Channel and the Mediterranean Sea. For example, 3 million containers are shipped only in the Korean seaport of Pusan. Whereas the sea freight of goods from the Far East to Europe may last up to 30 days, not counting the shipment and waiting times, inland transport may be shortened to 16 days, taking advantage of the existing Euro-Asian rail connections.

There are many variants of optimal connections from Asia to Europe. However, it seems that the shortest and the most efficient ones are those taking advantage of the Trans Siberian railway. In Poland it is the Metallurgical Wide-gauge Line (LHS), which connects the Ukrainian railway network with the Upper – Silesian Industrial Region (GOP), where the terminal transshipment station in Sławków is situated. The Russian Federation is gradually modernizing its railway infrastructure with the expectation of the creation of connections from East Asia through the Russian Federation to Central Europe. It is assumed that, after modernization, the Trans-Siberian line will reach a capacity of 600,000 containers a year.

Modernization of the Trans-Siberian railway creates new opportunities for Central and Eastern Europe countries, which may take over some of the Euro-Asian container transport flows. However, in order to capitalize on these opportunities, it is essential to create transshipment and logistics terminals along the route.

Poland plans to create such a transshipment terminal in Sławków. It is planned to build there one of the biggest multimodal logistic centres in Europe for transshipment of containers carried from the Russian Federation to Western Europe. The Sławków terminal is located at the end of the Metallurgical Wide-gauge Line (LHS), which enables fluent transport from Asia and Eastern Europe to Poland without the need for changing rail gauges at the border. Besides, the terminal will be situated at the crossing of two strategic Trans-European transport corridors (included also in the AGC and AGTC Agreements):

- Corridor III (Berlin – Dresden – Wrocław – Katowice – Lviv - Kyiv);
- Corridor VI (Gdańsk – Toruń – Łódź/Warszawa – Katowice - Zilina/Ostrava).

#### **Recent developments along Euro-Asian transport corridors in Poland (2003 – 2004)**

1. Declaration of the Ministers responsible for transport in the countries interested in intensification of container transport by rail between Asia, the Far East and Europe (Katowice, 29 May 2003)

Establishment of the Steering Committee comprising representatives from all interested countries responsible for preparing a project of specific actions that would have to be taken for the purpose of intensifying container transport by rail between Asia and the Far East and Europe.

2. The signing of an agreement between the Ministers of Transport of China, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine on a single tariff for access to infrastructure along the Northern Euro-Asian Trunk Line (4 February 2004)

Preparations are under way for the launching, in 2004, of a new rail freight link from China to Europe in the framework of a pilot project. This rail route has a great transit capacity not yet utilized. It constitutes an alternative for the Trans-Siberian Trunk Line.

3. Decision of the Minister of Infrastructure on construction of a multimodal logistic centre in Sławków (western termination of wide rail line in Poland) within 3 years, which will be able to serve 120,000 containers per year

Economic analyses show that construction of a transshipment terminal in Sławków could provide real advantages for Poland, and for other countries interested in developing Euro-Asian transport connections, as well as for potential investors and other entities, e.g.:

- activation of carriages along the Europe – Asia transport route;
- increase of income at national, regional and local level;
- development of entrepreneurship in the region;
- creation of new jobs and decrease of local unemployment rate;
- revitalization of industry areas situated in Southern Poland and their economic re-utilization.

At present, approximately 4.7 million tonnes of goods is transported by the LHS line, of which 80% is iron ore and 20% other mass goods, e.g. stone, chemicals, wood. Only 1% of goods in this line is carried in containers (3,000 pcs a year). However, it is estimated that the transport on this line will rise (apart from the iron ore freight which will remain at the same level) by approximately 20,000 TEU in the first phase (2004–2005), 38,000 TEU in the second phase (2006-2010), and up to 150,000 TEU to 2015.

4. Memorandum of Understanding on the in preparation and implementation of the common project “Quick freight rail transport between Europe and the Far East” (Ostrava, 25 November 2003)

Poland aims to have close cooperation with other countries interested in the development of Euro-Asian transport connections. On 25 November 2003, the Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic and the Minister of Infrastructure of the Republic of Poland signed the above Memorandum.

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