

*Distinguished organizers, dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

First of all, on behalf of the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Communication of Romania and Mr. Ionel SCRIOSTEANU, Secretary of State, I would like to thank you for the invitation to this prestigious gathering. I am highly honored for the opportunity to present some of the key-aspects, which are relevant, from Romania's perspective, for the EATL Phase III operationalization project.

At the same time, as the current Covid-19 crisis continues to impact each of our countries and lives in profound ways, please receive our best wishes for your personal health and well-being, and that of your families, friends and colleagues.

In the recent years, Romania has intensified its political dialogue with the states of Caucasus and Asia. My country is interested in developing and diversifying the entire spectrum of cooperation in the region, which is widely supported by the upward dynamics of the bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation formats provided by the EU, UN and OSCE.

From an economic point of view, Romania is an important trading partner for some Caucasus and Asian countries, and it also has the potential to become a gateway to European market, for goods, especially for energy resources coming from Caucasus and Asia.

In this regard, I want to emphasize the importance of the signing at Bucharest, on March 4, 2019, of the Joint Declaration of the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Romania, Georgia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, for the initiation and support of the key strategic project named *The Freight Transport Route between the Black and Caspian Seas in quadrilateral partnership*. **This will be a fundamental route for the political and economic cooperation between our countries, with relevant impact on the EATL project and overall connectivity between Europe and Asia.**

The Bucharest Declaration establishes and facilitates the implementation of the practical measures to be taken for the creation, in quadrilateral partnership, of an international inter-modal (maritime/river and road/rail) freight route that will connect Central and Northern Europe by transiting the South Caucasus and Central Asia toward the Asia-Pacific region. This will be achieved with the use of the geographical contiguity, along with the facilities offered by the ports Constantza, Poti, Baku and Turkmenbashi, and the direct connection between the Constantza port and the Danube river.

The Freight Transport Route between the Black and Caspian Seas in quadrilateral partnership project remains of major interest for Romania, as it uses the operating capacity of the Romanian seaports, in particular the port of Constantza, as the main **"gateway to Europe"**.

The Constantza port has a crucial geographical position: it is situated on the Rhine - Danube Corridor that connects the North Sea with the Black Sea. It also plays a major role within the TEN-T network, being located right at the crossroads of commercial routes connecting the markets of the landlocked states of Central and Eastern Europe with the Caucasus and Asia Regions. Simultaneously, Constantza port represents an important transport node of the TRACECA Corridor.

The hinterland of Constantza port covers Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine.

The 10 gates of Constantza Port are well connected to the TEN-T network of road infrastructure, through a total road network of 100 km. There is a permanent strive for enhancing the road network and traffic. Thousands of trucks benefit from the facilities offered by the Constantza Port, which ensures a fast and flexible transportation for all types of goods through the "door to door" transport system.

The railway network in Constantza Port is interconnected to the TEN-T network of railway infrastructure through a total railway network of 300 km. Each port terminal has direct access to the rail system, ensuring a safe and efficient transport of goods.

The Constantza port is connected to the Danube River, which connects the two European trade hubs: Rotterdam and Constantza, creating an inland waterway from the North Sea to the Black Sea. The length of this waterway is 2,414 km from Sulina, where the Danube flows into the Black Sea, to Kelheim, where it continues through the Main-Rhine Canal, crossing Europe to the North Sea. The Romanian territory sums up a total Danubian waterway length of 1,075 km, the longest of all riparian countries.

As a member state of the EU, Romania is actively involved in the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, pursuing the Europe 2020 objectives in the transport, telecommunications and energy fields.

In the field of maritime and inland waterways transport, Romania has granted a particular interest in the **implementation of the VTMIS (Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System)** and **RIS (River Information System)**, which are projects of high European added value.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As it is well known, on the territory of Romania, the EATL Routes overlap the TEN-T Network, along with the Rhine-Danube and Orient-East-Mediterranean Railway Freight Corridors.

Given this fact, the investments within the Constantza Port are correlated and integrated with the investments made throughout the entire TEN-T road and rail network crossing Romania. They are specifically aimed at **eliminating the missing-links** and **maximizing the capitalization** of the Danube - Main - Rhine European corridor, by attracting new traffic flows on this corridor.

Thus, massive modernization works are under way in order to bring the railway transport to the TEN-T standards.

Romania observes as well, the recommendations of the European Commission on improving the Green Lanes for maintaining the economy functional during the COVID-19 pandemic.

That means Romania keeps her national borders open for the railway freight traffic, whereas the railway personnel is not subject to quarantine when entering Romania. In addition, starting 20th November 2020, Romania applies the Agreement on Freight Train Transfer Inspections (ATTI), which exempt the ATTI members and their rail transport operators, from border inspections, under specific conditions (related to interoperable locomotives and gauge).

In this context, in the next financial exercise, the investments in transport sector will continue the investments started in 2014-2020. Their main objective is the finalization of the TEN-T network corridors transiting Romania, namely Rhine-Danube and Orient-East MED. This will be achieved through the elimination of the missing links, and the connection to the TEN-T network, in parallel with the modernization of the railway network by electrification, ERTMS and rolling stock equipment of the new built and rehabilitated sectors. Thus, the investments in the transport sectors will contribute to the creation of the premises for local and regional development and improvement of the Europe-Asia freight flows.

The Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Communication supports the initiatives and actions at intergovernmental, bilateral and multilateral level that can contribute to the EATL operationalization, where the development of the transit transport on Romania's territory plays an important role, and will bring major mutual benefits at local, national and regional level within the EATL project.

Thank you for your attention!