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UNECE & OSCE Consultations on next steps in the operationalization of Euro-Asian transport corridors, 26 November 2020

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The geographical location of Poland is of a great importance for its economy. It lies at the intersection of important rail and road routes in the east-west and north-south direction, in the centre of Europe, mostly in the Central European Plain. As a consequence, the oldest trade routes led through these territories. As a continuation, nowadays transport links and corridors run through Poland. The other advantages of these territories are the deep sea accessible ports – not freezing in even the coldest winters.

PKP Polish Railway Lines manages over 18,000 kilometres of railway lines, mostly of 1435 gauge. Poland has the westernmost 1520 gauge line managed by the LHS company. Its length is almost 400 kilometres.

Poland is very active in the transport corridor approach, being part of OSJD corridors, European Rail Freight Corridors and obviously supporting Euro-Asian Transport Links initiative. Each and every corridor connecting transport infrastructure elements such as sea ports, cargo terminals, rail lines enhances and develops the European-wide and Euro-Asian transport network.

The new projects have been emerging within the Rail Freight Corridor Framework. One of them is ILEA – “Rail Freight Corridors improving links to the Euro-Asian land bridges”. Its main focus is to find out how well Rail Freight Corridors match Euro-Asian transport flows and how to improve it. The project will target such issues as market needs, cooperation with international partners in Asia, including OSJD corridors, as well as bottlenecks hampering the cross-border movement of goods by rail.

The corridor approach in Poland is reflected in a large number of investments that have been implemented within the National Railway Programme. One of its aims is to develop the capabilities of railway border crossings, also in the field of customs and border control.

Below there are selected investments having an impact on the operationalization of the EATL corridors.

The first one is Terespol on Belarusian border. The station is going to be extended by ten tracks of 1520 gauge. The infrastructure will be adapted to operate heavy trains with a length of over one kilometre and a load of 25 t/axle. A complementary investment is the modernisation of the Siedlce - Terespol line with a plan of the construction of a new bridge over Bug River, including its inclusion in the track system with both gauges 1520 and 1435.



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Also the line from Czeremcha to the Belarusian border has been reconstructed, which will enable the restoration of freight traffic on the border. It will be an alternative east-west route.

There are also investments on the Ukrainian border in Medyka. There will be reconstruction of tracks, overhead contact lines and traffic control devices. After completion of works, the service of longer and heavier freight trains will be provided.

The first stage of works is underway in the area of the Polish-Russian border crossing of Skandawa – Żeleznodorożnyj.

There are also the large investments carried out in order to improve rail access to the Polish sea ports.

Rail access to seaports in Gdańsk and Gdynia will be improved. The work will result in handling more goods by rail, and more efficiently operate heavier and longer trains.

21 kilometres of new tracks have been already laid to improve rail access to the ports of Szczecin and Świnoujście. The modernisation of engineering facilities will ensure efficient and safe transport of goods to the port. The investment will provide access to the ports of longer and heavier trains. Thanks to the elimination of bottlenecks the reloading capacity of the stations in Szczecin and Świnoujście will significantly increase.

At the same time the Polish Railway Lines is planning to modernise the railway line from Rzepin (close to Polish-German border crossing) through Szczecin to Świnoujście (the so-called Nadodrżanka), which transports goods from Lower Silesia to West Pomeranian Polish sea ports. The investment involves adapting the tracks to allow longer and heavier trains at speed of up to 120 km/h and will allow the full potential of the ports of Szczecin and Świnoujście. The safety of rail traffic and transported goods will increase. The environmental conditions will be also improved.

There have been works regarding Rail Baltica carried out. They are planned to be finished by 2027. So far, over 100 kilometres of lines has been completed, which is over a quarter of the length of the Polish section of Rail Baltica. The line will allow to run freight trains with the speed of 120 km/h and axle load of 22.5 t/axle.

All these initiatives perfectly fits to UNECE EATL activities. The Polish side is willing to continue this effective cooperation, also on operationalization efforts, which is of the common interest for the whole transport system.