

JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND and THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORT, DEVELOPMENT AND EU FUNDS

**CONCERNING THE PROJECT OF HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY NETWORK
IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND ITS FINANCING**

Having regard to the importance of the overall aim of reinforcing smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as improving mobility across the European Union and considering the need for a geographical balance between the different territories.

Having a particular regard to the necessity of improving the connectivity and accessibility of the major cities and regions of Central Europe in order to promote economic development, territorial cohesion and sectoral cooperation in areas such as tourism and employment.

To that end, the Visegrad Prime Ministers emphasized in their joint declaration in June 2018 their willingness to deepen their cooperation in order to develop and improve within Central Europe rail connections with the aim to achieve a high-speed railway connection between the capital cities.

Consequently, the Visegrad Ministers responsible for the project re-confirmed in their declaration the intent to cooperate in identifying solutions and specific measures to minimize train travel times between Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest and assess the feasibility of developing a high-speed railway network connecting these cities.

On the basis of the above, WE, THE MINISTERS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND AND THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC,

RECOGNIZE that the high-speed rail is a comfortable, safe, flexible and environmentally sustainable mode of transport, which brings along environmental performance and socio-economic benefits, enhances the capacity of the TEN-T railway network as its integral part, and thus substantially contributes to the EU's transport and cohesion policy objectives.

UNDERLINE the importance of high-speed rail services for the mobility of citizens' economic activities and protection of the environment.

STRIVE FOR finding joint solutions to modernize the transport network of the V4 countries with a particular focus on developing a high-speed railway line for both passenger and eventually freight services fully interoperable with the conventional railway network that will link the capital cities and major urban agglomerations of the V4 countries, and remove bottlenecks on a wide range of the V4 TEN-T railway network.

ACKNOWLEDGE the necessity of cooperation among Member States of Visegrad Group, especially as regards the improvements at the border crossings of the network and the common concept for the international operations on the relevant parts of the V4 TEN-T railway network.

RECALL the Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU, which stresses a strategic and coordinated rail network planning covering the whole territory of the EU and specifies parts of the railway network that are to be developed according to high-speed standards.

TAKE NOTE of the Special Report 19/2018 elaborated by the European Court of Auditors regarding high-speed rail network, and of the open approach of the Court, including as regards the long-term planning, cost efficiency of the projects and the added EU-value to the TEN-T network.

CONSIDER the Special Report as a call for a renewed coordinated focus on high-speed rail services and ACKNOWLEDGE that its recommendations provide an opportunity to reflect on how to ensure an effective, cost-efficient and competitive high-speed rail network in EU. This should be reflected in a common concept, which is to be prepared by October 2019.

RECALL the consequent Council Conclusions on the Special Report adopted by the Council on 26 November 2018, which re-confirm the potential of high-speed rail services for both passenger and eventually freight transit and its share on the overall modal shift.

RECOGNIZE that the planning and development of railway networks is a complex, costly and time-consuming process and has to be carried out in a coordinated approach taking into account respective policy priorities of each Member State.

RECKON that the Special Report and the Council Conclusions are timely in view of the extension of Connecting Europe Facility for the period 2021-2027 and of the review of the TEN-T guidelines planned to begin in 2021.

WELCOME the proposed CEF Programme to support investments in European transport, also in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, with a particular focus on existing capacity bottlenecks and cross-border sections, for a better integration can help meeting the ambitious targets to complete the TEN-T core network by the end of 2030 and the TEN-T comprehensive network by 2050.

INVITE the Commission to consider adding the project of high-speed rail network into the Annex I of the TEN-T Regulation in its forthcoming revision, since, as a major cross-border wide-ranging capacity enhancement project, it clearly demonstrates a European added value to citizens and corresponds with the priorities established in the guidelines.

DECLARE that finding solutions for the technical parameters of the high-speed rail network are vested to the joint working group with regular sessions, which is also responsible for coordination of the preparation of feasibility studies, as well as of the above-mentioned

common concept, which will serve as a basis for the financing and the coordinated preparation of the project.

INVITE the Council, the Parliament and the Commission to a constructive discussion – based on the common concept of the V4 countries for TEN-T capacity enhancement by means of high-speed railways – about the future transport project financing and transport infrastructure development aiming at reaching an agreement that will enable us to use the opportunities and financial resources of a common EU budget in the most efficient way to the benefit of EU citizens.

Bratislava, 21 May 2019

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