



JOINT DECLARATION

of Ministers responsible for Transport of the Visegrad Group (V4) on co-operation in development of railway transport

The Ministers responsible for Transport of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Poland, the Slovak Republic, countries of the Visegrad Group:

- **HAVING REGARD** to the 30th anniversary of establishing Visegrad cooperation (February 1991), the motto of the sixth Polish V4 Presidency “Back on track”, as well as 2021 being the European Year of Rail;
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** the progress made over recent years thanks to the actions taken within the framework of the V4 cooperation;
- **CONFIRMING** the key role of rail transport in promoting the sustainable growth and competitiveness of the European economy and the significance of the comprehensive and systematic development of transport connections, with particular attention to the North-South axis;
- **RECOGNIZING** that the planning and development of rail networks is a complex, costly and time-consuming long-term process/process stretching over a number of years and must be carried out in a coordinated way taking into account the respective policy priorities of each State;
- **DRAWING ATTENTION** to the development of advanced technologies which will allow for further integration of rail freight into the supply chains, such as automation, digital exchange of information or interoperable tracking systems;
- **BEARING IN MIND** the V4 transport ministers dedication to develop the railway system in Central Europe, as expressed hitherto in political statements and other declarations of the Visegrad Group, i.a. in the Joint Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries for cooperation to develop a high-speed railway network in Central Europe, signed in Budapest on 21 June 2018 and Outline of the Visegrad Cooperation Countries for Development of a Comprehensive Capacity Enhancement of the TEN-T Railway Network by Deployment of the High Speed Rails within the Region of the Visegrad Cooperation Countries signed in 2020.

hereby present the joint Visegrad Group declaration

Strengthening of further cooperation

We DECLARE the mutual good will of building, enhancing and strengthening the bilateral and multilateral cooperation on development of rail transport, i.a. continuation of the activity relating the advancement of common project of the V4 high-speed network;

We strongly SUPPORT further common activities and initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the objectives in planning, development and operation of the rail transport in our region;

We ARE READY to intensify the exchange of experience and best practices that will facilitate meeting the objectives and principles of the relevant rail transport policies.

Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and outline for the post-pandemic period

We NOTE that transport has been one of the sectors hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, with particularly negative impact on rail passenger transport. However, at the same time rail has been proven as the most resilient mode of transport especially in regard of freight;

Taking this into account, we EXPRESS our conviction that the V4 countries must actively cooperate to tackle the effects of this pandemic crisis, working together to put railways on the right track;

We will EXPLORE the possibility of coordinating V4 positions for the implementation of support instruments and financial programmes at EU level and other necessary actions for the recovery of the sector in the post-pandemic period;

Environmental issues

We UNDERLINE that rail transport is one of the most sustainable means of transport, responsible for a minimum amount of transport-caused CO2 emissions;

We PROMOTE rail as an environmentally-friendly mode of transport that contributes to the achievement of ambitious EU emission reduction goals and supports sustainable development;

We EXPRESS our interest to continue with the exchange of experience and coordinated actions, while RECOGNIZING necessity to provide appropriate financial resources for the implementation of climate policy goals, including sufficient financing of sectoral policies, such as rail transport, especially after the current pandemic situation.

Implementation of the TEN-T rail projects, development of transport corridors

We NOTE that the railway network connecting the V4 Countries' capitals is covered by several TEN-T core network corridors, whose completion is becoming a priority, including future high-speed rail projects;

We UNDERLINE that railway transport infrastructure needs continuing huge investments to finalise the TEN-T network, respectively maintain and modernise the existing network;

We ACKNOWLEDGE the need to cooperate on the development of transport connections, strengthening and enhancing transport cohesion of our macroregion, including improvement of cross-border infrastructure and rail services, eliminating missing links and on removing of bottlenecks with an effective use of funds from the European Union;

We NOTE that operation of the rail freight corridors, established on the basis of the Regulation EU 913/2010 on a European rail network for competitive freight which connect terminals, ports and major industrial centres in our region has a great potential for future and effective development of common actions among stakeholders, while the rail resilience building in the event of crises.

Development of interoperability and intermodal transport

We STRESS the need for further technical harmonisation in view of increased interoperability of national rail network, while also fostering innovation, developing new technologies and digitalization, in order to increase the rail sector's competitiveness and to better adapt to market needs;

We FIND that a field with great potential is the V4 cooperation on intermodal transport and logistics, strengthening the interconnections and investment attractiveness of the entire region;

We DECLARE our intention to actively promote links between the transport, forwarding and logistics industries in the V4 countries, as well as to explore also other possibilities of joint actions, projects and exchange of experience and good practices in the field of railway transport.

Done on 18 June, 2021 in Cracow, Poland, at the Visegrad Group Transport Ministers Meeting under the auspices of the Polish Presidency, in four original copies in English language.



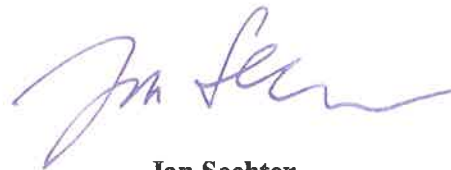
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