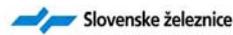




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## *THE RIGHT SONG AT THE RIGHT MOMENT*



A conference has been organised on the 8<sup>th</sup> June in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in order to present the first achievements of the project SINGER, which is supported for two years by the European Commission in the framework of the MARCO POLO programme. This important project, at the crossing of the corridor V and X as defined in the Trans-European Network (TEN), is a modal shift action to transfer traffic from road to rail. The conference was opened by Mr. Janez Susnik, the President of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia and the President of Adria Kombi.

The project SINGER is under the project management of Mr. Merlak, Director Operations of Adria Kombi. The SINGER consortium consists of well-known CT operators such as Adria Kombi (Slovenia), Cemat (Italy) Hungaria Intermodal (Hungary) and Kombiverkehr (Germany), the Slovenian Railways SZ and the International Union of combined Road-Rail transport companies (UIRR - Belgium).

The main goal pursued by the project is to create an international network of unaccompanied services with Slovenia as gateway country between West and Central/Eastern countries. The partners will set-up direct connections from the hub Ljubljana to important CT terminals in Germany (Munich), Hungary (Budapest) and Italy (Verona). Thanks to the extension of the CT network, it will allow to offer to the logistic companies a palette of completely new unaccompanied CT services. For example, it will be possible to offer lines from South-Italy directly to South-Eastern countries (Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania). The achievements reached so far are more than encouraging: the partners reached in 8 months a transfer of more than 85 Mio. tkm from road to rail. According to Mr. Merlak, it is quite clear that the partners will not only achieve but even exceed the planned 330 Mio. tkm foreseen in the project!

Based on the first achievements of the SINGER project, Mrs. Barseth, the EU project officer, expressed her overall satisfaction on these first very optimistic results in a typical modal shift action in the first MARCO POLO Programme (MP I). In her speech, she summarised the different rules necessary to apply for an action in the MP I, whose last call will be launched in mid July 2006. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> call, 17 projects were selected for funding. The MARCO POLO Programme II (MP II) will normally start on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 (subject to successful conclusion of legislative procedure). The total budget for this programme has been fixed to 400 Mio. € (4 times more than for MP I). The infrastructure investments will be more supported and all close third countries can fully participate to MP II.



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**Mr. Burkhardt, Director General of the UIRR,** underlines the important strategic aspect of the project. Indeed, since the admission of 10 new Member States in the European Union, there is an impressive drop of the Rolling Motorway traffic, which represented 85% of the traffic in the Eastern countries. By restructuring the CT market from a Rolling Motorway based-scheme to a European integrated CT network of unaccompanied services, the partners are really paving the way to a sustainable transfer from road to rail. As framework conditions for success, Mr. Burkhardt points out the necessity to push forward the rail liberalisation and to invest in the railway infrastructure (possibility to run wagons with 22,5t per axle at 120 km/h), in the transshipment yards (cranes for any kind of loading units) and in the wagons.

**Mr. Hribar, Assistant Executive Director for Freight Transportation for Slovenske železnice (SZ),** clearly stated that the SINGER project really fits into the overall key strategic elements of SZ Cargo, which has been fully supported the project by becoming a full partner. The intermodal market is indeed in full progress with a market share of 18% in 2005 against 9% in 1998. Furthermore, based on the company's strategy, the SZ is committed to excellence in the management of the international transit flows with terminal Ljubljana as kernel of the network for these flows.

The project is really of high importance because it is combining individual national CT services in a shared manageable integrated CT network. SZ is namely supporting infrastructure improvements allowing the use of longer trains and reducing the capacity congestion and requesting investments in intermodal terminals and services.

Finally, **Mr. Ban, Advisor Shipping Business Development, Port of Koper,** presented the activities and the developments of the unique port in Slovenia situated in Koper. In 2005, the total volume has reached 13 Mio. tons (including all kinds of commodities except gas). 71% of the goods are transit flows with main destinations to Austria, Italy and Hungary. The dry bulk is counting for 59% of the cargo whereas the containers – the fastest rising market - represent 14%. In order to face the expected global volume, the port will extend the existing piers and shunting yard, build the Peer III and change the port entry. With the SINGER project, the port of Koper will be able to propose more reliable and faster CT connections to their customers and will thus reinforce the Luka Koper as leading port and logistic system for Central Europe. The project SINGER will thus continue to increase the share of 60% of the transiting traffic transferred onto rail in the port of Koper.



Gateway concept of SINGER