



The realistic prospects of upgrading international transport axes in the Balkan Area

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Abstract

The development of upgraded transport networks in the SEE (South East European) region(Balkan), connected and compatible with the corresponding EU(European Union) internal networks and those of the neighbouring countries, is an important means of improving links within the region and integrating the countries of the area into the political and economic mainstream of Europe.

However,Balkan countries seem to have many problems in developing such upgraded transport networks The quality of infrastructure in the region at present remains inadequate to support a significant increase in transport flows. While in this part of Europe, after a long period of political unrest and reform, transport flows are increasing in an impressive way and solutions are urgently needed...

The EU has gone through extensive planning exercises resulting in trans-european networks for the European Union and the accession countries. The participation of the EU derives from the EU's as well as the countries' long term vision on accession of all countries of the area to the European Union.

This paper starts with a brief review of the EU efforts to develop a common transport policy in the area. Then, it describes in detail the HLG-SEE(High Level Group-SEE) work , which may be considered as an important effort in the above mentioned planning process in recent years. The proposed methodology by the HLG to identify major transnational axes is outlined . The outcome of this exercise is given, together with the final proposals made.

Following this, the paper proceeds to an investigation of the current situation and of the future prospects of the Balkan international transport axes , on the basis of the experience gained until now, and the reality applying to this SEE area.

In concluding, the need is stressed, in the name of both the environment and safety, to address urgently the problem of the Balkan's *road network*, since the vast majority chooses road as the preferred means of transport for freight and passengers alike. This seems to be a first priority to bring fast progress in this still underdeveloped SEE area and to promote European integration.

Keywords: International transport axes; Balkan countries; South East Europe; Trans-European networks; EU High Level Group.

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