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Multi-annual program “By Railway to the 21st Century” as key factor in the development of rail transport in Poland

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Abstract

In the paper the present conditions of rail transport RT in Poland and determinants of RT development, including high-speed rail HSR, have been discussed. The Multi-annual Program (MAP) “By railway to the 21st century” as a multifunctional system of scientific, technical and educational support for the development of RT and integrated regional transportation systems, has been presented. The importance of MAP for Poland and RT sector has been discussed. The Rail Transport Consortium (RTC) established for the implementation of MAP, its objectives and effects of MAP realization in 2020 ÷ 2030+ were described. The international and national aspects of RT development (including HSR) and implementation of the MAP, have been analyzed.

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1. Introduction

Prior experience of EU-15 countries demonstrates that good functioning of national economies is not possible without efficient inter-regional railway transport RLT. European Union is presently the place where national railways are more and more integrated, consistently converted into elements of the Trans-European RLT System.

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Poland's railways is lagging behind the railway in EU-15, and the distance to make-up is estimated at 30 years. (Anuszczyk et al., 2012).

Rail transport is among the weaknesses of Poland's economy. This is a strong barrier in development of society and economy on both national and regional level. Ambitious development projects for individual cities and regions, undertaken by local government, are very often competitive but inefficient without strong communication links with other cities and regions of the country. Upgrade or revitalization works on railway lines allow increase in operation speed of trains sufficient for average-class intercity connections. In practice only large metropolitan areas receive preferential treatment. Only the development of High Speed Railway System (HSRS), still absent in Poland, shall allow reaching entirely new level of RLT. One of the gravest errors in Polish rail transport policy is **breaching the principle of sustainable development of road and railway transport**, due to prolonged domination of interests of flue-car-road sector, having overwhelming effect of adopted transport solutions and policies. Another error, resulting from the above considerations, was abandoning the HSR project.

Form the viewpoint of national development strategy and policy in transport and economy, as well as in foreign policy, HSR cannot be construed as competition to the network of highways and expressways. HSRS is a means of public transit offering the quality not available to other means of land transport. Safety and reliability of HSR, excelling all other means of transport, allow creation of reliable and timely intercity links.

Condition precedent for qualitative change in the current situation of Poland's RLT is restoration and acceleration of all works on Poland's HSR, in particular on the so-called "Y Line", complementing the upgraded CMK line. In combination with suburban railways (SR) this shall improve nationwide integration of the country's area, and in particular labour markets. (Wróbel et al., 2011). Demand for high quality rail transport in Poland is sufficiently high to justify investments. As per governmental projections concerning construction and launching of HSR by the year 2030 the volume of railway transport can increase nearly fivefold. (Raczyński, 2008).

EU plans for establishment of the uniform European Rail Transport Area strongly stimulate also the development of Poland's HSR. Modern and efficient railway network is indispensable for country's development and drawing benefits from its location as transit area. Abandoning of construction and implementation of modern rail transport shall cause marginalization of rail transport in Poland and marginalization of Poland in Europe.

2. The status of Poland's railway transport RLT

2.1. Poland's RLT and HSR from continental perspective

Formation of highly competitive trans-European RLT system means for carriers from individual Member States the need to improve both the quality and competitiveness of their transport services.

EU respects the principle of continuity in transport policy. Strategic objectives of that policy are territorial, economic and social cohesion, and improvement in global competitiveness of EU, strengthening of internal market, sustainable development of regions, improved mobility of people and goods, wellbeing and security of citizens and environmental protection (climate, reduction in CO₂, contamination, etc.). Actions taken have to conform to the assumptions of Europa 2020 strategy, developed following the failure of Lisbon Strategy. The concept of Trans-European Transport Network TEN-T, comprising 9 networks for various types of transport, including the railway mode (both high-speed and conventional railways) is the vital element of this strategy. Among others, the concept of two-tier integrated network was adopted, comprising the **core network** (on which Community efforts should be focused, in particular cross-border sections, missing links, multimodal links and major bottlenecks), to be established by 2030, and the **comprehensive (complementary) network** – to be established by 2050. The core network shall ensure connections between major European hubs, while the comprehensive network shall establish communication links of each EU region with the core network. The expression of new TEN-T policy is ca. tree-fold (up to EUR 26 billion) increase in EU expenditure on transport in years 2014-2020, with financing focus on the core network. Its development, implemented by means of 9 established transport corridors, shall stimulate construction and development of the comprehensive network (Adamiec, 2012; Eur. Com., 2005). There are two core network corridors routed through the territory of Poland: Baltic – Adriatic corridor, and North Sea – Baltic corridor.

Financial preferences of EU for RLT under the TEN-T project are estimated at ca. 25%, among others based on appropriation of TEN-T Funds for 2013, amounting to EUR 280 Mio., out of which EUR 70 Mio. was appropriated

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