SOUTH EAST EUROPE TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME

3rd Call for Proposals

Terms of reference

Network of (Hub) cities for an increased access and mobility of people in the SEE region

March 2011

1. Background

It was in 2001, when the Commission in the White Paper, "*European transport policy for 2010: time to decide"*,[1] included, among its priorities the need to shift the balance and improve the links among modes of transport and secure intermodality, especially by enforcing the connection between sea, inland waterways and rail, to cope with the growing congestion of roads and to eliminate bottlenecks. In the mid-term review of 2006[2], disconnecting mobility from its negative side-effects, shifting to more environmentally friendly mode, and co-modality, i.e. the efficient use of different modes on their own and in combination, became part of the renewed agenda. Lately in 2009, the Commission has launched a reflection on the *Sustainable Future for Transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system[3].* What came out, *vis-à-vis* the impressive growth of the transport demand (between 1995 and 2007, 1.7 % per year on average for the passengers and 2.7 % per year on average for freight) point to the need for satisfying a rising demand for 'accessibility' in a context of growing sustainability concerns. The most immediate priorities appear to be the better integration of the different modes of transport as a way to improve the overall efficiency of the system and the acceleration of the development and deployment of innovative technologies[4].

The SWOT analysis which has served for the definition of the SEE Programme has highlighted that accessibility of the SEE space and the mobility of passengers and goods inside the Programme area is – in the majority of countries - still sub-standard and provides a poor level of service.

The reason for this is primarily to be identified in the lags in the quality and quantity of infrastructure, a problem which needs enormous financial investments and a relevant lapse of time to be improved effectively. However there are diverse other possible actions for substantial improvement of the accessibility, as pointed out by the EU strategies mentioned above, that can be put in place. These are directed to optimize the coordination among the existing services, now supplied by different modes of transport, creating intermodal connected systems by existing transport facilities, overcoming discontinuity across borders and finally the lack of infrastructure.

The programme has set the enhancement of multimodal transport among its objectives, taking advantage of the possibility offered also by the richness of inland waterways and the vast maritime surrounding waterfront of the Programme area and its relevant ports (in addition to the road and rail network). Multi-modal platforms should be promoted and developed as a potential for consolidation and optimisation of passenger and freight flows to

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[1] DG Transport (2001) *European transport policy for 2010: time to decide,* Brussels COM(2001) 370 final
[2] DG Transport (2006) *Keep Europe moving - Sustainable mobility for our continent* - Mid-term review of the European Commission's 2001 Transport White paper [COM(2006)314]
[3] DG Transport (2009) *A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system"* 17 June 2009 [COM(2009) 279]
[4] In line with the flagship initiative "Resource Efficient Europe", *Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,* COM(2010) 2020

and within the SEE area, with airport, ports, stations and urban centres acting as natural intermodal nodes.

Improving intermodal links could effectively help in overcoming the lack of accessibility of the Programme area related to:

- scarcity and fragmentation of infrastructure (and high costs and time necessary for restructuring/modernisation)

- lack of coordination in procedures and facilities causing impediments and long waiting time at border crossing and subsequently low interest in market operators

- increasing road congestion (as cheapest and most flexible transport mode) with strong negative territorial and environmental impact as well as reduction of the quality of life

The SEE Operational Programme does not tackle the intermodal accessibility for goods or people separately.

However, at advanced stage, they require different approaches and different instruments, thus 2 terms of reference are defined.

THEME 3.1: Network of (Hub) cities for an increased access and mobility of people in the SEE region

In the past decades, the use of private cars grows tremendously in the SEE region whereas the public transport sector declines. Essential for accessibility in public transport is a good interlinkage between long distance and short distance public transport, i.e. long distance rail services and regional respective urban public transport. This intermodality between long and short distance is regarded as one key factor for increasing the accessibility in public transport in the SEE.

This is generally understood as the combination of long distance train services with other collective transport services, i.e. bus, metro, or by tram at urban level and regional train services, bus or (short) sea services at regional level, the so called "last mile" in accessibility.

The specific situation of SEE Programme area in relation to a seamless accessibility of passengers shows a relatively poor level of services, if considered the SEE region as a single accessible area, beyond clear excellence of some limited area. As said before, the reason is primarily in the lags in the transport infrastructure itself and in the quality of transport services. Moreover, a general lack of connectivity beyond borders is the result of a transition period which has focused on nationally centred development policies as a consequence of secessionism, political fragmentation and different status regarding the accession process to the EU. The effect is a massive growth of the reliance on travelling with the own car with evident negative effects on environment, the quality of life, the accessibility of the region at a large scale.

If improvement of infrastructures is a long term project which needs enormous effort in terms of financial means and time to be achieved, and cannot be concretely tackled through territorial cooperation programmes only, nevertheless the mobility of passengers and their accessibility of the whole programme area can be improved by overcoming the discontinuity of transport services, offered by different transport operators, within and beyond borders. This requires optimizing the organisation of existing services towards higher synergy of transport modes at long and short distance level. Not only the public transport services, but also the private collective coach or bus operators (which nowadays cover a consistent share of the demand for travelling of the people) can be involved, in a coordinated effort towards improved accessibility for the SEE region.

A greener intermodal mobility for passengers is supported beyond the programme area to *Keep Europe Moving*, also following the advices of the DG Transport[5] recently louder in this direction ("*Why can I not yet plan or book my journey through Europe, switching from air to rail or sea, to urban or road transport – in one single go, online?[…] Come up with demonstrations of real European multimodal journey planners! Ideally enhanced by reservation and ticketing facilities, to provide seamless ticketing and travel. Millions of passengers could do their travel more easily; thousands of tons of cargo could do it – faster; more reliable; greener; with new passenger services and business opportunities.*").

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[5] Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission, responsible for Transport, at the International Transport Forum, Leipzig, 27 May 2010.

Concentrate the efforts in a well defined network of nodes or hubs, strategically located on main cities around the SEE regions organised in a network for accessibility, could result in a tangible improvement of the accessibility of the whole programme area.

2 Objectives

2.1 <u>Overall objective</u>

The overall objective of the strategic direction is the improvement of the accessibility and the mobility of passengers from, to and across the SEE programme area, **by efficient and transnationally oriented reorganisation and improvement of collective transport services along** the existing transport network of infrastructures and fleets. To do so, the project aims to improve the coordination of the existing transport services within relevant (Hub) cities of the SEE programme area (so called *first level of accessibility*) organised in a network and among them and their surrounding regions, satellite agglomerations and functional areas (including neighbouring airports and ports, also when located beyond borders) to offer seamless mobility opportunities to all passengers from transnational to regional continuity of journeys (*second level of accessibility*).

2.2 <u>Specific objectives</u>

- To increase the synergy of transport modes of existing collective transport services for the accessibility of passengers by harmonised legislation, procedures and standards at transnational level included facilitation of border crossing.

- To improve the exchange of data, the harmonisation of information, the organisation of the transport services among operators of the different countries

- To organise physical and virtual nodes of accessibility of the passengers of a selected network of major agglomerations/capital cities, and improve their capacity of acting as hubs of people mobility

- To improve existing connections and coordinate main long distance transport operators (primarily railway operators, but also bus companies, ship operators, etc) along a network of strategic (Hub) cities for passengers traffic, and foster the accessibility of first/last mile of the SEE Programme area by improvement of connections from selected (Hub) cities to their surrounding regions (by coordination and organisation of existing collective transport services targeting the different social categories)

- To improve the people awareness on reliable accessibility of the programme area and the behavioural changes towards transnational and sustainable mobility opportunities

- To pave the way for a greener seamless accessibility to and across the programme area and offer a clear orientation to future plans for development of transport infrastructure and services

3   Activities

The project activities must build on a careful assessment of the previous achievements in the field, including SEE projects approved under the 1st and 2nd call for proposals and other actions implemented through different regional development programmes. Capitalisation of previous results is of outmost importance in order not to duplicate activities and to bring added value to the project.

The activities listed under 3.1 "Compulsory activities" must be included into all proposed strategic projects for consideration.

The activities listed under 3.2 "Additional indicative activities" are optional (and intends to offer a non exhaustive list of possible complementary activities). Additional activities can be added to the minimum set of compulsory activities, however their presence does not automatically ensure higher scores in the quality check of the assessment. Additional activities to the minimum set of compulsory ones are assessed according to the contribution they bring in to the achievements of the objectives of the project, their concreteness, feasibility and adequacy, also in relation to the budget, the partnership and the timeframe foreseen

3.1 Compulsory activities

- Definition of a network of first level (Hub) cities, represented by main agglomerations/capital cities of the SEE programme area (a minimum of 5 is expected), offering optimal accessibility to the SEE Programme area to passengers

- Identification of feeder networks of services for secondary accessibility from the defined (Hub) cities railway stations and their surrounding regions, satellite agglomerations and functional areas (including neighbouring airports and ports, also when located beyond borders) involving collective public and private existing transport providers

- Implementation of platforms for harmonization of legislation, procedures and standards for transnational collective connections among the selected main cities of the Programme area and to the last mile of accessibility, with competent decision makers of the partner countries, collective transport operators and representatives of relevant target groups of citizens, users, workers (and the EU relevant associations)

- Drafting of a agreements for improvement of passengers mobility in the SEE region, based on the reorganization and harmonization of collective transport services with transnational scope (included facilitated border crossing) and pilot implementation on the established network of (Hub) cities.

- Implementation of pilot physical (spatial) and virtual (Hub) cities systems, by coordinated deployment of tailored ICT and physical solutions, where information (e.g. common timetable accessible via the internet) and services (e.g. ticketing

solutions) are offered to the passengers of all different social categories to reach the last destination of their journey

3.2 Additional indicative activities.

- Census of the private collective transport providers offering alternative solutions to access and move across the SEE Programme area, above all when public services fails to cover the demand; agreements for their involvement in a comprehensive map of accessibility under satisfaction of common transnational criteria of quality

- Implementation of spatial planning measures and services in (Hub) cities for improved accessibility to hubs in railway stations as well as improved design of interchanges and services offered to the passengers in transit

- Exchange of data and agreements on common ticketing solutions and facilitation of electronic ticketing and compatibility with local fares

- Campaigns for awareness raising and behavioural changes, towards greener and sustainable modes of transport, targeted to the different target groups

- Training and education patterns for operators of the transport companies and employees at hubs, to welcome and inform passengers on the pilot network

4   Outputs

- Set of shared standards and procedures (included border crossing procedures) and schemes to harmonise legislation for the participating countries in order to allow a transnational accessibility to the passengers by organisation and coordination of the existing collective transport services

- A pilot network of main agglomeration/capital cities with increased capacity to act as nodes of transnational SEE accessibility, as well as connected to pilot surrounding regions, satellite agglomerations and functional areas (including neighbouring airports and ports, also when located beyond borders)

- Operating physical and virtual hub systems for existing transport services, around the railway stations of participating (Hub) cities, and standardised quality in interchanges (at transnational level)

- Database of operating collective (public and private) transport services and connections within the project area with easy online access for the public and plans for maintenance and update also after project's life.

- Harmonised timetables and services for the potential users at transnational level as a basis for the improvement of the accessibility to and across the SEE area

5. Beneficiaries

5.1 Eligible Partnership

Maximum 3 (three) financing partners per country and per project concept can be involved (due to the high number of countries involved in the Programme, developing too large partnerships might hamper a smooth management, leading to strong deficiencies of the implementation).
At least 8 (eight) Partner States shall be included (in terms of location of Partners – both financing and ASP).

5.2 Further Recommendations

A strong partnership consists of a variety of stakeholders with different perspectives, capacities, and roles to play in the strategic project and includes partners with the specific competences to carry on the foreseen tasks per each region involved, towards the best transnational impact. A good partnership is balanced with regard to participation per country, distribution of the budget and responsibility and does include neither silent partners, nor all-purposes partners. A good partnership includes only partners which ensure a clear benefit for the country/region they represent, not only a financial benefit for the partner itself. Each proposed partnership must contain a lead partner, who will manage and coordinate the activities. The lead partner must have some demonstrated capacity (previous projects, etc.) to lead and manage large, international projects of this character.

Project partners should consist of the following types of institutions and authorities:

- National and regional authorities and other institution with clear competences of development of passenger transport and connections with neighbouring countries (included custom procedures)

- Municipalities that could be clearly identified as nodes of a transnational accessibility for the passengers, both from the geographic location, the dimension and services and opportunities they offer (university pole attracting students for the neighbouring countries, employment opportunities, tourist node, proximity with airports and ports…)

- Railway companies and authorities of the countries involved in the project

- Collective transport providers at national, regional and local level which have role in ensuring the needed network of connections within the project pilot network

- Port Authorities

- Institutes for research and innovation on transport able to support the adaptation of tools and ensure theoretical advice towards the specific project objective

In addition, ideally, the proposed partnership specific to this theme:

- should consist of maximum 20 partners, able to ensure high political commitment.

- at least 5 of the project partners should be main cities/agglomerations of the SEE Programme area representing main nodes for transnational accessibility

- the railway companies (bus companies if the transport service is not provided by rail) connecting the main agglomeration of the network shall be involved

- no more than 2 partners are Institutes for research and innovation on transport or institutions with similar competences and offer scientific support to the whole partnership for the adaptation of the available tools to the specific network

- passengers association representing the targeted social categories (commuters, elderly people, people with disabilities, representatives of the SME's associations) shall be involved (preferably as observers)

- European relevant networks or associations for the improvement of passenger's mobility and intermodal solutions for passengers shall be involved (preferably as ASP)