

The Emerging of the Single North Adriatic Port System

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1. Introduction

Current developments in Europe point toward the formation of continental transport systems and large regional ports as their nuclei. These trends influence an enhanced volume of transport, which in turn attracts numerous and all the more diversified accompanying activities, resulting in a qualitative leap for ports. The impact of these developments on the local and regional economy and beyond it has been substantial and will continue to prevail.

The dominant growth impulse of the general and spatial development of the regions and the countries Slovenia, Italy and Croatia as a whole is particularly supported by the transport infrastructure and cross-border cooperation. The latter has to be viewed upon as an objective need of the region (and attributed to its bordering position), and not as a neglect of the 'regional awareness'. It concerns mutual interest of the regions (and also countries as a whole) from each side of the border. The Littoral Region ('Primorska') lies on the border area of Slovenia, and the same feature applies to its counterpart in Italy, Trieste with its surroundings, and also to Rijeka in Croatia to an even greater extent. The combining of manufacturing and service activities will be mutually enhanced by the completion of the entire traffic system, information flows and communication mechanisms. With state borders widely open, the economic development will improve the competitiveness of, and support the cooperation between the regions, and thus contribute to an increased flow of goods, capital and services; in particular it will affect the mobility of the population.

2. The single port system - The vision and the opportunities

It is difficult to imagine that adjacent ports such as the Port of Trieste (Italy), Port of Koper (Slovenia) and Port of Rijeka (Croatia), which are in principle directed to the same traffic flows and the same customers, should each be building its own transport chain or system resp. That would be not only

against the economic logic, but also contrary to the North-European pattern of transport systems layout.

2.1. The vision

The vision based on the awareness that Trieste needs the broader coastal zone for its further development, comprising the port activities and the urban development of its suburban settlements, to accommodate shipyards, industrial and transport facilities, sprung up already before the World War I (Trieste was the first Central European port at that time) and was presented by Max Fabiani¹. Between the two world wars, Trieste suffered from crisis due to its severance from its hinterland, therefore the idea on a metropolitan area reaching from Monfalcone in the west of Trieste, to Koper and Piran in the south had died away. After the World War II, in 1952, the then Mayor of Trieste ordered to Fabiani (who was then

The fact that The Northern Adriatic Ports of Koper, Trieste and Rijeka share the same profile - universal ports with specialized terminals, leaves way to two possible scenarios: either an exhausting competitive struggle between them, or an agreement on work sharing and specialization, which should gradually result in a single port system. Such consideration will become even more topical after accession of Slovenia and later of Croatia to the EU. In the long run it is therefore sensible to consider North Adriatic Ports as a joint large continental system gravitating to the central part of the North Adriatic.

This paper sets out to help understand such a course by: (I) reviewing the current state of the development of transportation in the Mediterranean and in Europe, (II) assessing the potential benefits of such system, and (III) assessing the barriers and opportunities for its implementation.

KEY WORDS

Port of Koper, Rijeka and Trieste, prospects, transportation development, land and sea connections, NAPAN network, joint approach

aged 87) to analyse the development plan of the Trieste Area in the newly emerged circumstances. According to the plan that Fabiani drew up then, Trieste remains the main port of Central Europe, which would - in contrast to the first proposal from the year 1910, when he proposed that Trieste be connected with the suburb settlements by sea - be connected by railway as well. Fabiani did not regard the then state borders round Trieste as an insurmountable impediment to his plan. Due to his in-depth knowledge of the Central European hinterland, Fabiani insisted on the geo-political constant of Trieste as the city - emporium, to which all its developmental options should be subordinated. Some parts of Fabiani's plan were actually accomplished by the Italian government in 1954 (road and railway bypass roads, among others). At that time Fabiani did not reckon with the emergence of a new port in Koper later on (1957), however, his vision of a single metropolitan area perfectly corresponds to the vision of the single Koper - Trieste port system. Another fact supporting this development is that the role of state border as a line of separation in Europe is disappearing, both in the North Adriatic area and between this urban area of Koper and