



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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**Eastern Partnership Transport Ministerial Meeting**

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Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Eastern Partnership Transport Ministerial Meeting/Luxembourg  
**9 October 2013**

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to see you all here today. Thank you for coming to Luxembourg.

Two years ago, in Krakow, we began work to become better connected and more closely integrated through transport. We have come a long way since then. But still, this is only the beginning.

In the European Union, it is the beginning of a new era of transport policy. Finally, we can start to build the connections that are missing in the EU's transport network – joining East with West and all corners of our 28 Member States.

It is thanks to the two years of successful work made since Krakow that we can also speak of another important beginning.

We now have the chance to move our transport system further eastwards to our closest neighbours. After all, transport does not stop at borders – and that is what European transport policy is all about. It brings the peoples and economies of Europe closer together. It reduces the distances between them, physically and metaphorically.

It enables goods to be distributed efficiently and people to travel freely.

For the Eastern Partnership countries to build stronger ties with the EU, in transport and other areas, benefits all sides. It is their choice to do so – and one that they take alone, uninfluenced by others.

We welcome their choice, because the Eastern Partnership is about extending the EU's success stories to our closest neighbours so that they can also benefit.

In Europe, we have built an internal market where people, business, services and goods can move freely. It has brought great rewards and prosperity to our economy and citizens.

Closer transport integration offers all of us great potential for trade growth and wider economic cooperation. But it is being held back by missing cross-border links and the limited interoperability of traffic management systems.

That means we have to remove all the barriers and bottlenecks, both administrative and technical. It means building smooth cross-border links to join up to the EU's future core TEN-T network, which Member States have agreed will be finalised by 2030.

We want to see this network being connected to similarly good roads and railways in the neighbouring countries.

To achieve this goal, we should be working hard in two key areas:

- to create a stable and unified legal environment;
- and to prepare high-quality solid infrastructure projects.

You can rely on the EU to offer expertise and technical support in both.

Firstly, on the legal environment: I am pleased to see that the six partner countries are already making progress to converge their transport laws with those of the European Union. We are now very close to agreeing a timetable for this with most of the partnership countries.

I cannot stress how important it is to do this.

If we are to build a wider European transport area, it must be one where everyone operates under the same rules. A stable legal environment, accompanied by high safety, security, social and environmental standards, is a pre-requisite for further market integration.

Take the EU's laws which apply in these areas.

If there is no regard for fundamental EU legislation on safety, security or the environment, for example – or if border procedures are inefficient - there is little point in building a new highway or high-speed rail link.

And that, of course, puts a limit on market integration.

I hope that today's meeting will give the opportunity for ministers to discuss any problems or challenges they face in carrying out regulatory convergence.

Then, we will need more transport 'building blocks' to link us better together. More and improved infrastructure to create strong transport corridors – air, rail, road, sea, inland waterways – to facilitate the flow of goods, business and people across a vast area.

On funding:

as we all know, resources are limited. The EU will continue to offer financial support to the Partner countries under the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The European Union is already co-financing transport interconnection projects by blending EU grants with loans from international financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank.

They are essential partners to bridge the funding gap, where we can leverage the loan financing that these institutions can provide.

Projects that are strictly relevant to developing better connections with the TEN-T take priority. The map we are going to endorse today will guide investments to be made by the international financial institutions and by the EU.

Ladies and gentlemen

We are looking at all forms of travel as we gradually integrate our transport markets to embrace our neighbours to the east.

Take aviation: business, people-to-people and tourism contacts can grow stronger with more and cheaper flights between the EU and partner countries.

We have already signed comprehensive air transport agreements with Georgia and Moldova. We opened talks on a similar agreement with Azerbaijan in January 2013 and hope to finalise soon the discussions with Ukraine.

Agreements like these help us to liberalise our aviation markets and gradually integrate our neighbours as full partners within the EU's common aviation area.

They open up new opportunities for airlines and offer consumers more choice.

Ladies and gentlemen

In the European Union, we are focusing our limited resources on the most important transport projects and concepts. These have pan-European value. They connect several countries; they reduce travel time; they increase passenger safety; they help to reduce transport's impact on the environment.

These are core values in our thinking that I hope will be taken up by our partnership countries as we gradually integrate our transport networks.

The stage is now set.

As I said, we have advanced a long way since Krakow when we started to define the policy and goals of the Eastern Partnership in transport. And our efforts in the transport area will constitute an important deliverable for our Heads of State and Government when they meet next month in Vilnius.

Let us now look to the future and to the specifics – because it's now up to all of us to turn this vision into reality.

Thank you for your attention.