

Newsletter 01
Transport and mobility in CENTROPE

Editorial

As of now, the quarterly newsletter **centrope.news** will inform you about selected topics of interest for CENTROPE. The focus of this first issue is on mobility and transport. A look at current projects for road and rail, airports and Danube navigation shows that CENTROPE is truly on the move!

Our personal experience as travellers through CENTROPE has taught us that a well-developed transport and traffic infrastructure simplifies co-operation and accelerates exchange between partners. The further growing together of the Central European Region will become even more concrete and tangible in the near future – through shorter travelling times.

We wish you a pleasant read!

Your CENTROPE Working Group

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New road and rail connections

“In 2015, CENTROPE can be reached quickly and easily from anywhere in the world; within the region, too, highly developed transport links ensure rapid movement”, is the transport policy objective for the Central European Region stated in the “Vision CENTROPE 2015”. A look at the current traffic and transport projects in the region shows that this vision could soon become reality.

A Main Line for Europe. The upgrading of the railway line between St. Pölten and Vienna gives added value to the “Main Line” – the Paris-Stuttgart-Vienna-Győr-Budapest rail axis – as a transport corridor of European importance. The construction of a new four-track line from St. Pölten to Vienna is to be completed by 2012/2013. Moreover, it is planned to build a second high-level railway link between Vienna and Budapest (via Szombathely) passing through the Eisenstadt-Sopron area. Along the north-south axis, another key European transport route is to cross CENTROPE – the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor. Both the line section Brno-Vienna-Semmering and that running from Trnava to Bratislava and Szombathely are to be upgraded.

A motorway between Vienna and Brno. Soon car drivers, too, will be able to travel through CENTROPE faster than today. The section of the Austrian northern motorway A5 running between Vienna and the Czech border at Drasenhofen/Mikulov is currently being planned. However, this first public-private partnership (PPP) model in the field of road construction is creating quite a stir already now. At the moment, the awarding of the project – estimated at approx. Euro 1 billion – is under investigation; in case of a negative report, the tender process would have to be reviewed or perhaps even repeated. In any case, the planned commencement of the works in autumn 2006 will have to be postponed. The Federal Province of Lower Austria expects that the section will be opened to the public in 2010. On the South Moravian side, the expressway R52 is being extended south from Brno; according to the Road and Motorway Directorate of the Czech Republic (Ředitelství silnic a dálnic ČR), the national border will be reached, thus closing the gap, between 2010 and 2012.

In 35 minutes from Vienna to Bratislava, either way. In a nutshell, this is the objective for the future upgrading of the road links between the two cities – an objective that might come true as early as next year, as the road and rail links between the two capitals will be substantially improved starting in 2007. According to estimates by the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB), approx. 40,000 persons daily will cross the metropolitan regions of Vienna and Bratislava by 2010; the destination of 10,000 of these will be one of the two airports. Upgrading, enlargement, modernisation and investment efforts are necessary to cope with the expected traffic volume.

Motorway links. By means of the “Kittsee loop” across Burgenland and Lower Austria, the newly constructed Austrian north-eastern motorway A6 is to hook up the

eastern motorway A4 to the Kittsee border crossing and the existing Slovak motorway D2. This will ease the traffic load at the two border crossing points Berg (SK/A) and Hegyeshalom/Nickelsdorf (HU/A). The new motorway will prove particularly useful for the transport and logistics industry in the regions of Bratislava, Trnava, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Lower Austria and Vienna, which so far had had to rely on the heavily trafficked federal road. But the communities of Parndorf, Neudorf, Gattendorf and Kittsee, too, may now breathe a sigh of relief. Until now, their urban cores had suffered from a massive onslaught of traffic noise and pollution. The 22-kilometre motorway section will have four exit and access points. The total project cost is estimated at roughly Euro 154 million. All necessary official permits have been obtained; according to ASFINAG, the Austrian Motorway and Expressway Financing Company Ltd., it is expected that the section will be opened to users in late 2007.

Ring roads connect Bratislava and Vienna. North of the Danube, the Marchfeld expressway (S8) is to become the new fast link between Vienna and the Austrian-Slovak border at Marchegg. The expressway is planned to resemble a motorway, with two lanes in either direction and 130 km/h maximum speed. Construction works are to begin in 2010. Slovakia plans to continue the S8 expressway from Bratislava along the “zero ring road”. It is intended to construct one road and one rail ring system between the two capitals by 2012.

Soon the train connections between Vienna and Bratislava will be improved as well. The Gänserndorf-Marchegg-Devinska Nová Ves line is currently being planned as an efficient freight train link to the Slovak automotive cluster north-west of Bratislava – an addition of particular interest for industry suppliers. The modernisation of the “Marchegg Branch”, the direct link between Vienna and Bratislava via Marchegg, is likewise at the planning stage. If there are no problems with the environmental impact assessment, the line could take up operation in 2011.

With the City Airport Train to the airports of Vienna and Bratislava. It is expected that a direct rail link between the airports of Vienna and Bratislava will be available for passengers starting in 2012. By then, a high-speed section (“Götzendorf loop”) will hook up Vienna International Airport to the main eastern railway line of Austria and hence provide a non-stop connection to Bratislava Airport. The rapid and comfortable City Airport Train (CAT), too, could then run between the two airports.

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Related links

Road and Motorway Directorate of the Czech Republic (Ředitelství silnic a dálnic CR):
www.rsd.cz

Slovak Road Administration (Slovenská správa ciest): www.ssc.sk

Hungarian Motorway Portal: www.autopalya.hu

Austrian Motorway Construction (ASFINAG): www.asfinag.at

Czech Railways (České Dráhy): www.cd.cz

Railways of the Slovak Republic (ŽSR): www.zsr.sk

Hungarian State Railways (MÁV): www.mav.hu

Austrian Railways (ÖBB): www.oebb.at

City Airport Train: www.cityairporttrain.com

CENTROPE's new railway stations

They are to become more efficient and modern to meet the new challenge of serving as attractive transport nodes in the European railway network. However, railway station redesign is not solely an issue connected with transit – a fact borne out by a look at the railway station projects currently underway in Vienna, Brno and Bratislava.

A main station for Vienna. The plans for the new main station of Vienna (Vienna-Central Europe) may safely be called the most important and biggest transport policy project that will be implemented in the Austrian capital over the coming years. The construction of this new station will primarily involve the dismantling of two current terminals – the Southern and Eastern Railway Stations – and the creation of a through station that enables trains to arrive at Vienna and continue from here in all directions. From the viewpoint of traffic planning, this is absolutely essential to ensure that Vienna will make optimum use of its potential as a European traffic and transport hub. For this reason, the plans for the new main station presuppose the establishment of a highly efficient west/east railway link and its hook-up with railway lines running north and south of Vienna. Moreover, the main station will provide a new high-level node for urban public transport enabling passengers to switch between railway, commuter train, Underground, tram and bus lines in one sole station building. The master plan submitted in 2004 furthermore provides for the development of a new city quarter on the site today occupied by the Southern Railway Station's freight terminal. Flats, offices, green spaces, shops, restaurants, cafés and service providers are to add vibrancy, value and a novel urban appeal to the station premises and surrounding area. A park and several high-rises will set visual accents in the new city quarter. Construction works will already begin in 2007 with the remodelling of Südtiroler Platz; the works for the railway station proper will most probably follow in 2009. It is possible that the old station hall, too, will have been dismantled by that time. The City of Vienna expects a partial start-up of the new railway station for 2012.

Several information campaigns will accompany the refurbishment works. Two on-site exhibitions already informed passers-by about the planned construction project. "So far, there have been no large-scale protests, but projects of comparable dimensions obviously always imply some degree of conflict. However, the principal reaction to the project is a positive one", Christoph Hrnčir, project manager at the Municipal Department for District Planning and Land Use, comments. The PR push will moreover coincide with the beginning of the construction works. "We want the citizens to know what's going on at any given moment", Hrnčir adds.

Europoint Brno – more than a railway station. In Brno, too, things are going to change dramatically. The historic main station of the city will be relocated; in the future, trains will arrive at a newly designed city quarter. The new station will be able to handle a much larger number of trains, and the railway line passing by the city centre

will become part of the trans-European high-level line that runs from Berlin via Prague and Vienna to Budapest. “The main argument for the relocation of the station lies in the simplifications this will entail”, Marie Zezulková, head of the Department of Urban Strategies of the Municipality of Brno, reports. Concretely, this calls above all for the enlargement and modernisation of the railway line, which would be impossible if it continued to pass through the current station, the urban planner adds. Refurbishment works will begin in March 2007. The cost of this large-scale project is estimated at CZK 24.4 billion (approx. Euro 800 million). The outlay for the technical infrastructure will be borne by the City of Brno (CZK 3 billion, or approx. Euro 100 million). In addition to the Region of South Moravia, the Czech Republic and the EU have pledged to provide funds, while the development of the new city quarter will be entirely handled by private investors.

In the future, Vienna and Brno intend to co-operate more closely in the field of railway traffic. A clear political sign of this commitment was the signing of the “Railway Memorandum” by Rudi Schicker, the Executive City Councillor for Traffic and Transport of Vienna, and the Vice Mayor of the capital of South Moravia, Miroslav Hošek, in June 2006. The two cities agreed on mutual support and a co-ordinated approach to important decisions relating to the further development of railway infrastructure.

Bratislava Filiálka – an underground railway station. In the context of the creation of a new north-south railway link, Filiálka will be the name of a new underground station planned for Bratislava. The railway line will run underground for several kilometres through the municipal territory and under the Danube, thus significantly shortening transit times through Bratislava. The new station will be situated close to the city centre and boast excellent links to the public transport network of the city. Bratislava Filiálka will connect the railway line of the trans-European Corridor V – from Venice to the Ukraine – to the current Bratislava Petržalka station. It will thus be possible for travellers to reach the city centre of Bratislava directly from the new Vienna-Central Europe station. The project is to be implemented between 2010 and 2014. The Slovak Ministry of Transport hopes for substantial financial aid by the European Cohesion Fund.

Related links

Austrian Federal Railways – ÖBB: www.oebb-immobilien.at

City of Vienna, Department of Urban Development: www.stadtentwicklung.wien.at

Europoint Brno: www.europointbrno.cz

Railways of the Slovak Republic – ZSR: www.zsr.sk

Airports on the takeoff

Even today, the two biggest airports of CENTROPE handle a volume of slightly over 17 million air passengers per year, and this number is rising. Together, the airports of Vienna and Bratislava could evolve into the most important air traffic hub in Central Europe. But after the planned airport merger deal fell through in August 2006, the motto of the hour is competition – not co-operation.

In early 2006, Vienna International Airport (together with its consortium partners Raiffeisen-Zentralbank and the Slovak investment group Penta) was awarded the right to purchase majority holdings in the Slovak airports of Bratislava und Košice. The objective? The co-ordinated development of the two airports was to result in competitive advantages vis-à-vis other hubs such as Munich, Prague or Zurich. Yet it seems that the change in government in the Slovak Republic has put an end to these takeover plans: while the purchase of Košice was confirmed, the privatisation of Bratislava Airport has been stalled, at least for some time.

Rapid growth. Bratislava Airport is one of the most rapidly growing European airports: while slightly over 290,000 passengers travelled via Bratislava in 2001, their number had increased to 1.3 million by 2005. Since the privatisation of Bratislava Airport was blocked, however, all enlargement projects have been suspended as well: approx. SKK 9.37 billion (Euro 240 million) were to be invested by the consortium of co-owners over the first five years.

Orientation towards the east. In its turn, Vienna International Airport has announced a proactive investment strategy to position itself even more decisively than in the past as an international long-distance and transfer hub, above all for Eastern Europe. Already today, Vienna-Schwechat is focusing on destinations east of Vienna to a degree unrivalled by other European airports: more than 40 cities can be reached with non-stop flights. In addition, the current growth of Vienna International Airport is boosted by low-cost carriers led by Air Berlin, Niki and Germanwings, which last year transported close to two million passengers to and from Vienna. In order to cope with the growth rates predicted for the coming years, substantial additions are planned for the airport: the core of these is “Sky Link”, another terminal with (as a first stage) one pier and 17 additional docking stations that is scheduled for completion in 2008. After the takeover of Bratislava Airport has come to nought, construction works for a third runway for takeoff and landing at Vienna-Schwechat will be anticipated; the environmental impact assessment will be initiated before the end of 2006.

One good thing for CENTROPE: the plans to improve inter-accessibility between the airports of Vienna and Bratislava will be continued. Starting in 2009, the City Airport Train (CAT) will link Bratislava Airport and the city centre of Vienna in less than one hour. Until then, it is planned to offer passengers the possibility to check in for their

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flight from Vienna already in Bratislava (this service could take up operation already in late 2006) and to transport them by shuttle bus directly to Vienna International Airport.

Brno-Turany Airport is another international airport with development potential in CENTROPE. This airport, which is situated 120 km north of Vienna and 130 km north-west of Bratislava, offers services for the catchment area of South Moravia and the adjoining border regions with Austria and Slovakia: scheduled flight destinations include Munich, Prague and London, in addition to about 25 charter destinations – such as Palma de Mallorca, Corfu and Antalya – in the summer and winter seasons. Over the past ten years, the passenger volume has more than tripled from approx. 100,000 to more than 315,000 travellers annually.

Related links

Bratislava Airport: www.letiskobratislava.sk

Vienna International Airport: www.viennaairport.com

Brno Airport: www.airport-brno.cz

Things are changing on the Danube

The Danube is a transport corridor of profoundly symbolic character, a common geographic factor and a high-level waterway. One look at the river section located within CENTROPE reveals bustling activity on and along the Danube: ports are enlarged into logistics centres, new scheduled links between cities are established and city partnerships are initiated.

A virtual trip along the river could begin at the debouchment of Enns River into the Danube at the border between the Federal Provinces of Upper and Lower Austria. The first stop is the Port of Enns: a modern logistics hub of European standing. Its position at the intersection of the Rhine-Main-Danube waterway with the railway route leading from Stockholm via Berlin, Prague and Enns to Trieste and Koper is a particular asset in the international competition between business locations. With the two business parks Ennsdorf and Enns, the port area is the biggest contiguous industrial zone along the upper reaches of the Danube and one of the key cargo transshipment points in Austria. Recent investments concern a new quay structure that creates optimum conditions for water/land transshipment, which this new installation is to more than double to attain more than 50,000 tonnes annually. In the future, attention will above all be paid to the establishment of new container transport links to South-eastern Europe.

From port to logistics centre. A little farther downriver, we find the Port of Vienna, Austria's biggest public port on the Danube, which will be soon transformed into the most up-to-date logistics hub in Central Europe. Construction works are to begin already this year. The City of Vienna, the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and the Port of Vienna will invest approx. Euro 122 million in this project. By setting up a top-level container terminal, the Port of Vienna is to become one of the largest and most efficient inland container terminals of Europe by 2008. The rail and road infrastructure in and around the port, too, will be upgraded in the context of this enlargement push. A new bridge across Danube Canal is to link the port area to the A4 motorway and hence will improve its accessibility.

From city centre to city centre. The ideal means for continuing our journey to the nearby Slovak capital Bratislava is the "Twin City Liner". Since June 2006, this high-speed catamaran has been providing a direct connection between Vienna and Bratislava with only 75 minutes for the one-way trip from city centre to city centre. A special advantage for day-trippers are the centrally located landing piers – Schwedenplatz in Vienna and the Danube embankment right in the heart of Bratislava. The project was implemented by Central Danube, a joint development company managed as a public-private partnership of Raiffeisen and the City of Vienna.

The idea of travelling from city centre to city centre on the Danube also met with interest on the part of experts of the Győr Water Authority. It is planned to set up a passenger link resembling the Twin City Liner between Vienna and Győr. This project still needs to be worked out in greater detail.

A bit further east: the Danube Port of Bratislava, a key facility for the Slovak economy as a whole. The volume of cargo transport on the Danube is expected to increase as a result of EU accession. To be able to keep up with the growing competition in the field of port services, the Slovak Shipping and Ports Company (SpaP) wants to develop an international logistics centre to offer a comprehensive service range extending from cargo transshipment, transport and storage to the provision of information for businesspeople.

At midpoint along the waterway. At the debouchment of the Moson Danube near the geographic midpoint along the Danube-Rhine-Main waterway, we find the Port of Győr-Gönyű. The distance from Győr-Gönyű to Rotterdam is almost the same as to Sulina on the Black Sea. With its excellent links to the European rail and road network, the Port of Győr is an important traffic hub and cargo transshipment point for the entire region. The port, which was established in 1992, has already been enlarged several times, partly with the financial support of the EU. The current enlargement phase is to transform it into another leading logistics centre able to offer a comprehensive range of services in the fields of cargo transport, storage and customs clearance.

A city network for the Danube region. The INTERREG project “Donauhanse” was called into life to ensure better co-operation between cities along the Danube. Roughly 20 cities are project partners – from Ulm in Bavaria and Vienna, Győr and Bratislava to Odessa in the Ukraine. This city network is to strengthen the economic prosperity of cities along the Danube and to integrate the river more closely into urban development trends. The Danube ports, too, are to improve their co-operation through this network.. Moreover, the range of tourist services on and along the river as well as the development of the urban embankment zones are to be optimised as well. It may therefore be expected that the future will continue to bring many exciting and vibrant novelties along the Danube.

Related links

Port of Enns: www.ennshafen.at

Port of Vienna: www.wienerhafen.com

Twin City Liner: www.twincityliner.com

Port of Bratislava: www.spap.sk

Port of Győr: www.portofgyor.hu

Donauhanse project: www.donauhanse.net

Ecology in motion

It is a well-known fact that mobility often entails hazards for the environment. However, the project “Environmentally Sustainable Transport and Tourism in Sensitive Areas” implemented in the region Neusiedlersee/Fertő-tó shows clearly that good accessibility does not necessarily exclude respect for nature.

The triangle between Hungary, Slovakia and Austria is characterised, not only by the intersection of many national and international traffic routes, but also by the close proximity of large-scale urban agglomerations and valuable nature conservation zones. The ecologically sensitive World Heritage property Neusiedlersee/Fertő-tó thus calls for a cautious approach to traffic and infrastructure. A cross-border project has now tasked experts from the three countries with the development of customised transport and traffic solutions for the region. These include the creation of a mobility centre as well as the implementation of innovative solutions for public transport or the fostering of eco-tourism.

Demand-oriented mobility. Burgenland is particularly proud of the mobility centre inaugurated in mid-October 2006 right at the heart of the provincial capital Eisenstadt. This facility is to become the nerve centre of all mobility-related issues. In addition to providing individual timetable information, mobility manager Roman Michalek also wants to act as a contact point for local communities. One objective is e.g. the development of alternative transport concepts for large-scale events that may be expected to trigger major traffic jams, such as the Mörbisch Lake Festival. Locals as well as tourists already find alternatives to private-car use in a number of lake communities such as Breitenbrunn, Mörbisch and Purbach, where local buses offer demand-oriented service (trial run since April 2006). For roughly one Euro per trip, commuters are taken to the railway station, tourists to the nearest lido, and elderly citizens to the doctor – always door-to-door and according to users’ individual time schedules. This environmentally friendly bus system has met with great interest, and not only on the part of the local population: the mayors of the project partner communities in Hungary and Slovakia, too, were convinced of the usefulness of these municipal buses in the context of a themed excursion. However, the implementation of this project by the partners will yet take some time – the Hungarian sister project is currently still on hold.

Classes of schoolchildren and interested eco-tourists can now explore particularly sensitive zones of Lake Neusiedl in “ecologically correct” fashion – by solar-powered boat. The catamaran is operated with solar energy; after the end of the trial run, it will serve the National Park Centres in Illmitz and Sarród.



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Related links

www.sensiblegebiete.at

Projekt News: CENTROPE is on the fast track

CENTROPE business plan. Co-operation within CENTROPE has entered a new phase. At the political CENTROPE conference held in March 2006, the mayors and governors of all partner regions presented the first common master concept for the development of the Central European Region – the “Vision CENTROPE 2015”. To render the strategies and measures proposed in the document more concrete and further their implementation, the project “CENTROPE 2006 plus” (again funded through the EU programme INTERREG IIIA) was launched in early July 2006. The objective: a detailed “business plan” is to be prepared before the end of 2007 to facilitate the implementation of the next co-operation steps.

Sister structures. The project initiated by the Austrian Federal Provinces of Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland will co-operate closely with its Slovak sister structure “CENTROPE”, which was launched in October 2006, likewise for an eighteen-month period. The project team headquartered in Bratislava will co-ordinate the positions and activities of the Slovak CENTROPE partner cities and regions Bratislava and Trnava. Similar measures are underway in the other partner regions as well. A further important step along the way towards the co-operation structure planned for the Central European Region: co-ordination points in all four partner states are to be set up by 2008 to provide a solid foundation for close and productive working together.

Rubrik „CENTROPE-Tips“

Travelling CENTROPE is getting easier and easier: timetable information, route planners and visitor tips via the internet, EURegio trains and the Night-Liner – be ready to get on board!

Borderless service

Travellers riding EURegio trains can cross borders without long waiting-times. An excellent example of rail transport within the EU is the Vienna-Bratislava service, with 89 daily trains connecting the two cities in slightly under one hour for the one-way trip. Night-owls will be interested in the Vienna-Bratislava “Night-Liner”. On Saturdays and Sundays, this train leaves Vienna-Meidling station at 00:17 a.m. for Bratislava, while the departure from Bratislava for Vienna is at 00:50 a.m.

Door-to-door service. In addition to suggesting the best links between Bratislava and Vienna, the timetable information of the integrated transport association for the east of Austria (Verkehrsverbund Ostregion, VOR) also permits planning inner-city trips with precise routing to the desired address (at www.regiotours.net). Moreover, the website offers information on cultural events, shopping and tourism in the two capitals. The service is available in all four CENTROPE languages.

Train tickets double as public transport tickets. As of December 2006, a current co-operation project between the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and the public transport system of Bratislava will offer visitors to the Slovak capital the novel advantage of “EURegio tariffs”: train tickets double as public transport tickets in Bratislava. This saves time otherwise spent queuing at ticket counters or operating ticket machines. A corresponding service for Vienna (core zone 100) will come into force on 1 May 2007; similar services are being planned for South Moravia and West Hungary.