



**Pan - European Corridor VIII  
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**Corridor VIII:  
border crossing issues and transnational cooperation  
in the transport sector**

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**South Eastern Europe: rapidly changing scenarios**

In the last 5 years the scenario concerning South Eastern Europe has rapidly changed. The enlargement of EU to 25 Members in 2004 caused the EU eastern boundary to move further east: most of the previously identified Pan-European Corridors became part of the TEN European transport network. A new strategy was defined in the Report by the High Level Group, chaired by Ms Loyola de Palacio (December 2005), which identified 5 trans-national axes. Corridor VIII was identified as an integral part of the South Eastern European Axis.

The accession of Bulgaria and Rumania to EU (1 January 2007), created a new scenario, strategically more important for Corridor VIII, which became the East-West land bridge between two EU Member Countries, Italy and Bulgaria, also crossing two Countries in the process of pre-accession, Albania and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In this rapidly evolving scenario particularly relevant are the regional planning frameworks defined by UNECE (Unece TEM and TER Master Plan, 2006), World Bank (TTFSE II, ongoing) and the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO). SEETO has prepared multi-annual plans, identifying priority projects for the Western Balkans. In the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "Western Balkans: Enhancing the European perspective" (Brussels, 5 March 2008), the Commission is proposing negotiating directives for a "Transport Community Treaty" with the Western Balkans.

All the initiatives to develop Corridor VIII will have to be taken in agreement and in the general framework of the above mentioned regional transportation development strategies. The general goal is to work towards a regional integrated market for road, rail, inland waterways and maritime transport in the Balkan region. The development of Corridor VIII will have a positive impact on three levels: as a national route for each of the Countries crossed, as a connection between Countries of the Balkan Region (characterized by a very limited reciprocal accessibility until the 90's) and as a transnational route, connecting the Mediterranean/Adriatic Transport Area to the Black Sea Transport Area, thus connecting the EU TEN networks (Italy) and the Motorways of the Sea, on the west, to the EU TEN networks (Bulgaria) and Traceca Corridor on the east.

**Corridor VIII general infrastructural overview and development potential**

From an infrastructural point of view Corridor VIII comprises is a multi modal transport system of ports, airports, inter-ports, roads and railways. Corridor VIII main alignment starts in the ports of Bari and Brindisi, continues to Durres and Vlore, goes through Tirana, Skopje and Sofia, then Plovdiv in



Bulgaria, and ends in the Bulgarian ports of Burgas and Varna (Black Sea), thus creating a connection between the “Adriatic Motorway Corridor”, the Adriatic branch of the “Motorways of the Sea”, and the Mediterranean Basin, on the west, with the Black Sea Pan European Transport Area and TRACECA on the east. The Corridor VIII also connects with pan European Corridors IV, IX and X.

The total length of the Road Corridor VIII is about 960 Km. Its alignment is continuous, even though it presents some local bottlenecks.

The total length of Rail Corridor VIII is approximately 1270 km. Its continuity is interrupted by two missing links at the borders between Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The ports connected to Corridor VIII are Bari/Brindisi in Italy, Durres/Vlore in Albania and Burgas/Varna in Bulgaria

In recent years, the completion of Corridor VIII has shown a great development potential as a strong factor contributing to economic integration for the bordering Countries crossed by the Corridor, thus contributing to the regional stabilization process.

### **The establishment of Corridor VIII and its Secretariat**

Corridor VIII was established by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in Bari in 2002 by Italy, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.

Decisions related to promoting and developing Corridor VIII are taken by a Steering Committee chaired by Italy, comprising delegates from Member countries' Ministries. Italy, in its role of the initiative's "Leading Country", has funded the activities of Corridor VIII Secretariat. The Secretariat started its activities on October 2004, hosted by Fiera del Levante Servizi as implementing Agency, funded through the law 84/2001, provided by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, and under the technical/operational supervision of the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

After the signing of the MoU in 2002, the Countries more directly connected to Corridor VIII alignment (Italy, Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria), have taken many joint initiatives aimed towards a full development of the Corridor VIII, among which: Joint Declaration (Sofia, September 2003) for the accelerated realization of the interconnections of the railway networks along Corridor VIII, Ohrid Declaration (18<sup>th</sup> November 2004), Joint Declaration (Tirana 31 March, 2004) and Plovdiv Declaration, 8<sup>th</sup> March. 2006), signed by The Ministers of Transport of Corridor VIII Countries.

### **The Secretariat Activity for the Development of Corridor VIII**

In the years 2004-2008 of activity, the Secretariat has carried out:

- Intense **technical cooperation** with the Ministries of the Countries that subscribed to the MoU (Italy: Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey), with the International Institutions operating in the Balkans such as EC (DG TREN), IFIs (BEI, World Bank, EBRD), SEETO, UNECE and with the Secretariats of the other Pan-European Corridors.
- **Communication and promotion** of the themes about the development of Corridor VIII, including the creation of a web site.
- **Transnational Studies** conducted by activating Multinational Working Groups in the three **transport sectors: rail, road and ports-logistics**. These studies were financed by the Ministry for Economic Development (law n.84/2001) and co-financed by the Central European Initiative and participating Countries.



The following table shows summary information about the Studies carried out:

TITLE	WORKING GROUP	GENERAL COORD.	TECHNICAL SUPPORT	PERIOD
1) Corridor VIII: Pre-Feasibility Study on the Development of the Railway Axis	Italy, Albania, FYR Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey	Corridor VIII Secretariat	RFI - Italferr	2005-2006
2) Corridor VIII As A Backbone of the South-Eastern European Region: Technical Assessment of the Road Infrastructure and Transport System	Italy, Albania, FYR Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey	Corridor VIII Secretariat	ANAS SpA	2007-2008
3) Ports And Logistic System of Corridor VIII: Technical Assessment and Definition of a Coordinated Development Strategy	Italy, Albania, FYR Macedonia, Bulgaria	Corridor VIII Secretariat	Politecnico di Bari	2008

### Relevance of the Trans-National Studies on Corridor VIII

The results of these exercises appear to be particularly relevant because:

1. They have been conducted by Multinational Working Groups, composed of high level Representatives of Member Countries, guaranteeing at the same time internal technical consistency and consistency with the national transport Plans and Programs.
2. For the first time a great quantity of information and projects from different Countries were put in a coherent regional frame a list of priority projects was jointly identified.
3. The result has been a very fruitful multinational cooperation exercise

### Summary of the development and results of the Studies on Corridor VIII Transport Sectors

**THE FIRST STUDY ON THE CORRIDOR VIII RAIL AXIS** was started in July 2005. Titled “Corridor VIII: Pre-Feasibility Study on the Development of the Railway Axis”. The study has been conducted by a multinational Working Group comprising 2 high-level representatives per each participating Country (Ministries of Transport and National Railway Agencies of Albania, Bulgaria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy and Turkey). The Corridor VIII Secretariat coordinated the activity of the Railway Working Group (RWG), while technical support was provided by RFI (Italian National Rail Network Infrastructure Manager - F.S. S.p.A. Group) and Italferr (Italian National Railroad Engineering Company - F.S. S.p.A. Group), under the general supervision provided by the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

The main results of this Study are the following:

- 1) an updated Assessment of present status and ongoing projects, including data, maps, photographic documentation, Country reports and studies, international initiatives.
- 2) a framework for a Coordinated Multinational Railway Project Durres–Skopje–Sofia (DSS Rail Project), including estimation of investment costs (per rail section, Country, phases), predictable operating costs and revenues under different management options, financial resources available to the project, expected economic impact on Countries involved.
- 3) a set of jointly defined Recommendations to National Governments.

In order to proceed with the implementation of the DSS Rail Project, in the Steering Committee held in Rome on the 14th December 2007 it was decided to launch two comprehensive cross-border projects:

- 1) Completion of the Rail connection between South Adriatic Ports and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including:
  - Rehabilitation of the Albanian section Durres-Lin to minimum standard
  - Construction of missing link Lin-Struga (Albania-Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cross-border)
  - Construction of an intermodal terminal in Struga (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
  - Construction of the new section Struga-Kicevo (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)



2) Completion of the Rail connection between Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, including:

- Completing the construction of the section Beliakovci-Kriva Palanka
- Construction of the cross-border missing link Kriva Palanka – Gujeshevo (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Bulgaria)
- Construction of an intermodal terminal in Radomir or Gujeshevo (Bulgaria).

**THE SECOND STUDY, ON THE CORRIDOR VIII ROAD AXIS** was started in May 2006. Title “Corridor VIII as a backbone of the South Eastern European Region: Technical assessment of the road infrastructure and transport system”.

The study was conducted by a Multinational Working Group comprising 2 high-level representatives per each participating Country (Ministries of Transport and National Road Agencies of Albania, Bulgaria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy and Turkey). The Corridor VIII Secretariat coordinated the activity of the Motorways Working Group (MWG), while technical support was provided by ANAS (Italian National Road Network Infrastructure Manager), under the general supervision provided by the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport.

The Countries participating in this Study were Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Italy. General Coordination was provided by the Secretariat, technical support was provided by ANAS S.p.A. Supervision was provided by the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure.

**Scope of the Study** was:

- 1) an assessment of the Corridor VIII road system in terms of:
  - roads conditions and characteristics;
  - implementation projects already defined or undertaken by national road agencies;
  - medium and long term implementation project foreseen by national road agencies;
  - existing national and international studies and analysis performed on the subject;
  - identification of specific urgent issues along the alignment of Corridor VIII.
- 2) a general agreement among participating countries on:
  - the definition of a common “long term completion strategy” of the road Corridor VIII
  - a jointly defined list of “short Term Priority Projects” to be implemented.

The **results** can be summarized as follows:

1. Road Corridor VIII already exists and is continuous from Adriatic Sea to Black Sea.
2. In the recent years a number of upgrading/rehabilitation projects have been implemented along the main and secondary branches of the Corridor. The geometrical standards of the existing road network are not of the level required for an international road axis, however, with the exception of a limited number of local critical points, current standards are sufficient to serve the current and the short-term future freight traffic;
3. However, a number of quick, efficient and well defined interventions should be implemented in the short term in order to improve the attractiveness of the Corridor to international freight traffic (see Table below).
4. Ports accessibility is one of key elements conditioning the efficiency and attractiveness of the whole Corridor VIII transport system.
5. Logistic and horizontal issues are the most urgent problems to be solved since they have a great impact on the total cost of transport.
6. Road planning concerning Road Corridor VIII is presently fragmented into different national planning approaches, while an overall co-ordinated strategic perspective of the east-west alignment along the Corridor is not clearly perceived by national planning authorities.



7. Through the above said analyses a list of “Short Term Priority Projects” finalized to quickly improving the main alignment of Corridor VIII as an international road has been prepared. These priority projects have been identified in coherence with national planning as made available by the members of the Working Group. Project Fiches relevant to these priority projects are included in this report.

**THE THIRD STUDY, ON CORRIDOR VIII PORTS AND LOGISTICS:** This Study, started in May 2008, concerns the ports of Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Durres and Vlore on the lower Adriatic, and Burgas and Varna on the Black Sea. The working group was composed of representatives from the Ministries, National Maritime Authorities and Port Authorities of participating Countries: Italy, Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. The study was coordinated by the Corridor VIII Secretariat, with the technical support of Polytechnic University of Bari, under the general supervision of the Italian Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport.

The scope of the study was to perform a technical assessment aimed to the analysis and definition of the present situation and future development of the port system in terms of:

- present characteristics of port infrastructures;
- development projects already defined or undertaken by Port Authorities;
- medium and long term common development strategy and priority projects jointly identified by Ministries, National Maritime Transport Agencies and Port Authorities.

In the general framework described above, the Study has achieved the following results:

- 1) a joint updated assessment of present status of Corridor VIII ports, including port infrastructures and management, traffic data, road and rail connections, sea connections, and ongoing and planned projects;
- 2) an identification of common issues for all Corridor VIII ports, such as:
  - the rapidly evolving infrastructural scenarios for the "sea side" and the "land side" requiring new policies and new investment mixes: on the land side, the need to fully integrate the port with the land transport system (different modes, logistic chain, "last mile"), on the sea side, the need to position each port in the world transport market;
  - inside the port, the need for a better coordination between Port Management Agency and both the national public agencies (State owned public land, Customs, Police, Heath Agency) and the private agencies in the transport sector and in the services sector; managing environmental conditions; looking at new innovative port-city relations.
- 3) a general framework in which Corridor VIII ports operate, especially focusing on the new challenges posed by the trend towards globalization of maritime traffic flows, the emerging of longer and integrated logistics chain supplies and the relevance of non infrastructural barriers ( horizontal issues)

The main conclusion is that Corridor VIII Ports already has a very significant potential to serve the present and short term traffic needs along the Corridor, though they are not homogeneous in terms of dimension of terminals, development areas and current road and rail connections.

The real challenges for the development of Corridor VIII ports will be:

- the ability to increase the cooperation among Port Authorities, National Governmental Agencies operating on ports (state public domain, customs, health and security), logistics operators (shipping lines, rail and trucking companies, dry ports, agents, forwarders, stevedoring companies), national and local authorities concerning land traffic (road and rail), including services and legal aspects.
- The awareness that the development of ports system is part of a more general intermodal transport system, where road, rail and maritime transport are integral components.



### **Key results of the Studies on Corridor VIII Transport Sectors**

- 1) The RAIL CORRIDOR VIII completion, which requires significant investments especially for Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, has recently been the focus of growing interest on the part of both interested Countries and Financing Institutions. The completion is however a medium term project (12 to 15 years)
- 2) The ROAD CORRIDOR VIII already exists, and it can be made functional within 3-5 years with relatively small investments.
- 3) The PORT SYSTEM OF CORRIDOR VIII, internally differentiated in characteristics and size of the ports, is showing a good growing trend, even though it requires:
  - a significant increase in operational efficiency (Horizontal issues)
  - a significant improvement of integration with land-side and sea-side transport networks.
- 4) HORIZONTAL ISSUES, and in particular the so called “non-physical barriers to border crossing”, are strategic for the improvement of the accessibility and traffic development on Corridor VIII.
- 5) The Corridor VIII should be seen as A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT SYSTEM, where the successful development of each mode (maritime, road, rail) is strongly dependent on the integration with other modes in the framework of a general logistic chain.

### **Conclusion: some strategic factors for regional development**

- 1) The development of the Balkan Region requires a significant increase of the trans-national and cross-border cooperation, defining common criteria and procedures in analyzing the present situation, in identifying common issues and priorities, in jointly defining initiatives and projects and jointly applying for funding, in developing more binding international cooperation instruments, such as bilateral and multilateral agreements.
- 2) Improving accessibility to the Balkan Region is a key factor. However the issue should be addressed to in terms of Regional Transport Network rather than in terms of single Transport Axes. The Southern Eastern European Trans-national Axis, defined in the High Level Group Report (2005) provides the general framework for this policy. Better accessibility implies elimination of physical barriers (missing links, critical sections, etc), but mainly the elimination of non-physical barriers (cross-border procedures, insufficient regional and bilateral trade agreements, low level of services along the transport axes, efficiency of ports, etc).
- 3) More specifically, a significant improvement implies a better coordination among national institutions at cross-border points (Security-Customs-Health) and new bilateral and multilateral agreements on procedures, in the general framework of harmonization with EU acquis.
- 4) Southern Adriatic and Black Sea Ports are the west and east connections between Corridor VIII and EU TEN networks. The efficient development of these inter-modal nodes is strategic for the regional development of Southern Eastern Europe.