

SEETAC 3rd Annual Ministerial Meeting & Infrastructure Forum (SEEIF):

Ministerial Representatives, European Commission and International Financing Institutions met in Athens on 22 May in order to discuss how to connect the South East Europe to the EU transport system

Transport and infrastructure ministerial representatives of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine (SEETAC partner countries), European Commission (DG Enlargement and DG Mobility and Transport), European Investment Bank (EIB), regional organisations (RCC and SEETO) and transport operators (International Road Transport Union, Trainose, the Hellenic Railways Organisation and the Hellenic Regulatory Authority for Railways), gathered in Athens, on 22 May, to discuss investments coordination in transport infrastructure and better organisation of their transport planning.

The **third SEETAC Transport Ministerial Conference** was opened by Mr. Aristeides Bourdaras, Secretary General of the Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks and by Amb. Gerhard Pfanzelter, CEI Secretary General, who underlined the importance of the transport sector in the South East Europe.

“The SEETAC project represents a flagship initiative for the CEI as it aims at analysing possible integration between the Western Balkans and the EU transport systems in order to generate transport continuity and infrastructure development in the European area and beyond, thus implicitly leading to a rising competitiveness and economic development with the ultimate aim of integrating the Western Balkan countries in the European single market” said Amb. Pfanzelter.

Representatives of SEETAC Transport Ministries had the opportunity to discuss their priorities and investment programmes, the importance of planning and coordination at regional level, and to outline the difficulties of implementing reforms. The meeting also focused on the current debate on the TEN-T proposed regulation and on the EU transport policy for South East Europe.

Mr. Carlo Fortuna, SEETAC Content Manager, by presenting the SEETAC main achievements, pointed out the need to reconsider the SEE region as a key element of the EU transport system, and the importance of overcoming the vicious cycle of austerity and lack of infrastructure investment by the adoption of concrete measures, better regional coordination, and accurate selection of priority projects.

Other Participants, including the transport Deputy Minister of Albania and the Assistant Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina stressed the strategic role of the transport sector for the Western Balkan economy.

The European Commission – DG Mobility and Transport underlined the importance of the SEETAC project, as it contributes to the debate on the Ten-T revision process, provides arguments for the extension of the Ten-T to the Western Balkans and works in synergy with SEETO priority projects.

The ministerial meeting was preceded by the **Infrastructure Forum** that focused on the coordination of priorities, transport investments in the region, administrative reforms, and border-crossing bottlenecks. In particular, the participants had the opportunity to discuss coordination of planning investment priorities in the EU and its neighbouring countries with focus on the SEE area. The Forum also aimed at providing valuable inputs to the SEETAC 3rd Ministerial Meeting, in order to effectively contribute to the debate on the integration of the Western Balkans in the EU transport system.

The Transport Ministerial Conference and the Infrastructure Forum were organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks and by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in cooperation with CEI.

The SEETAC Project is co-financed by the EU through the South East Europe Cooperation Programme with a total budget of 2,38 million. The aim of the project is the establishment of an effective and coordinated South East Europe Transport Axis framework for the promotion of institutional cooperation among Pan European Corridors structures and Member States. The aim is to reach the EU's objectives of (i) transparency & information reliability; (ii) harmonised and efficient institutional framework and; (iii) rapid implementation of the transport priority projects.

The Final Conference of the SEETAC project will be organised by the Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning at the end of August.

For more information: www.seetac.eu