



Note for the Press ECE/TRANS/03/N06  
Geneva, 14 November 2003

## **The General Directors of Railways from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe meet in Lucerne**

On 28 and 29 October 2003, the General Directors of Railways from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe met in Lucerne, Switzerland, at the joint invitation of the UNECE Trans-European Railway (TER) Project and the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB). The meeting discussed railway issues of interest to the participating countries including modernization of infrastructure, restructuring of railways, implementation of related EU Directives, new services in passenger traffic and in promoting freight and/or combined transport.

The meeting was attended by the General Directors or their deputies from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Azerbaijan. The Community of European Railways (CER) and the International Union of Railways (UIC) were also represented.

The President of the UIC, Mr. Benedikt Weibel, Chief Executive Officer of SBB, and Mr. José Capel Ferrer, Director of the Transport Division at UNECE, welcomed the participants. Mr. Capel Ferrer recalled the challenges that UNECE Governments were facing in the field of transport and underlined the need for closer cooperation among railways to confront them successfully. He also stressed the importance of the TER Project in this context.

The main conclusions of the discussions can be summed up as follows:

- Railway companies should pursue policies that target the increase of their competitiveness and as a result, their profitability to ensure and maintain a significant segment of the transport market.
- Railway reform is directly linked to the profitability of the sector.

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- Increasing the quality of railway services remains a permanent task.
- Technical harmonization of the rolling stock, railway equipment and implementation of railway interoperability should receive more attention and should be supported by adequate allocation of funds.
- Combined transport should be further developed by setting up appropriate railway infrastructure of satisfactory quality and capacity.
- Enhanced cooperation among railway infrastructure managers, railway and combined transport operators, public authorities, etc. could ensure an increase in the competitive force of the railways.
- The elaboration of the TER Master Plan, which has started and is expected to be completed by September 2004, would assist in the identification of a consistent investment strategy of priority projects for modernization of railway infrastructure and increase the quality of railway services in the region.

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