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SLOVENIA AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN ITALY AND THE BALKANS

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Abstract

[Slovenia as a bridge between Italy and the Balkans] Slovenia and Italy could play an utmost important role in Balkans. Slovenia with its ties, knowledge of languages, culture and good will and Italy with its experience, knowledge and investment capacity. There are already many mechanisms that could be used as launch ramp for new role of Slovenia and Italy in Balkans, e.g. Coordination Committee of Ministers of Slovenia and Italy, Brdo process, Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) and others.

Key Words :

International relationships; Emuni; Slovenia and Italy in Balkans; Brdo process

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Slovenia as a bridge between Italy and the Balkans

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*Consortium rerum omnium
inter nos facit amicitia.*
L. A. Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, 48, 2

1. Introduction

Two republics, Italy and Slovenia, are not just the longstanding neighbours but also the members of a large family called the European Union. The more they (we) collaborate, the better will be their (our) mutual, European and international relations and positions. One of the great potentials for both countries are the Balkans and the Mediterranean, so the purpose of this contribution is to explore existent and fresh possibilities to strengthen our cooperation in this regard.

There are numerous different definitions of the Balkans,¹ in cultural, geographical and historical terms; for some observers, the name is even burdened with negative connotations associated with the region's history of ethnic divisiveness and political upheaval. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* which remains to be the most reliable source,² the Balkans, also called the Balkan Peninsula, are usually characterized as comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, with all or part of each of those countries located within the peninsula. Portions of Greece and Turkey are also located within the geographic region generally defined as the Balkan Peninsula, and many descriptions of the Balkans include those countries too.³

As more or less generally accepted, the Balkans are geographically bordered as follows:

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¹ The word "Balkan" is of Turkish origin and it means mountain.

² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Balkans>.

³ Ibidem.

“on the northwest by Italy, on the north by Hungary, on the north and northeast by Moldova and Ukraine, and on the south by Greece and Turkey or the Aegean Sea (depending on how the region is defined). The Balkans are washed by the Adriatic Sea in the west, the Ionian Sea in the southwest, and the Black Sea in the east. In the north, clear geographic delimitation of the Balkans becomes difficult because the Pannonian Basin of the Great Alföld (Great Hungarian Plain) extends from central Europe into parts of Croatia, Serbia, and Romania.”⁴

There are some countries which do not belong *prima facie* to the Balkans, for instance Moldova, Turkey, Greece and Slovenia. The latter

“is included as a member of the Balkans because of its long historical ties with its neighbours to the southeast and because of its former incorporation in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and federal Yugoslavia.”⁵

One of the region’s most characteristic social and political features is ethnic diversity with the prevailing South Slavs who form the majority of the population in Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. The Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Slovenes speak their own Slavic languages, while the people of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, all from the former Yugoslavia, speak dialects of Serbo-Croatian. Despite of a rather turbulent history there are some features that have remained consistent, including

“the fluidity of ethnic groups, the inability of the peoples of the region to agree and cooperate among themselves, a tendency on the part of political authority to devolve to local levels as soon as central power is weakened, the influence of foreign powers, and the difficulty of introducing into the area concepts that have evolved in a different political and social context.”⁶

Let us first travel back in the past to prove in the old Cicero’s maxim *historia est magistra vitae*, followed by the Italian-Slovenian examples of good practice. The core of this article is an attempt to provide answers to the questions how to build a bridge to the rest of the Balkans and Mediterranean and how both countries can benefit from the opportunities arising from the EU transport and maritime policy.

2. Historical ties between Italy and Slovenia

The aim of this article is definitely not to cover all the important historical facts of these territories where today Italy and Slovenia are located, but to mention only some of them, which are, at least in our opinion, of special interest.

Ljubljana basin was always an important connection area for the Apennine peninsula, Balkans and Baltic. During the Roman Empire, there were some important settlements in the territory of today’s Slovenia. Among the most interesting was Poetovio, which is the oldest city in Slovenia – Ptuj. Roman writers, especially Tacit, mentioned Poetovio⁷ on certain occasions. Allegedly, Vespasian was elected Roman Emperor by the Danubian legions in Poetovio in 69 AD. The city of Poetovio was the base-camp of *Legio XIII Gemina* in Pannonia. The name originated in the times of Emperor Trajan who granted the settlement city status and named it Colonia Ulpia

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ <http://ptuj.info/index.php/sl/ptuj/zgodovina-mesta.html>.

Traiana Poetovio in 103 AD. The grandfather of the last roman emperor Romulus Augustus was also mentioned in connection to Poetovio as there is a record of his political activities in this city. Emona was another important roman settlement, which was built on the spot where nowadays is a centre of the capital of Slovenia - Ljubljana. Emona (Latin: Colonia Iulia Aemona) was a Roman civil town built on the site of an old indigenous settlement on the territory of the present Ljubljana around 14 AD.⁸ An inscription about a donation that the city received from the emperors Augustus and Tiberius evidences this fact. Emona was connected to the other settlements of Roman Empire by the river Ljubljanica. Other ancient Roman towns located in modern Slovenia include Nauportus, today's Vrhnika, Celeia, today's Celje, Neviodunum, today's Drnovo and others. Therefor the Slovene-Italian relations⁹ have their origins all the way back in the time of Roman Empire. Italian identity developed from Roman foundations. By the time, Slovene population also settled the territory that was a part of Roman Empire. Hundreds of years following were years of neighbourhood and co-existence. With the formation of national identity and the simultaneous formation of nation-states Slovenian-Italian relations were for a long time run by way of peaceful coexistence. There were rather turbulent times in relation between Italy and Slovenia, when Slovenia was a part of Habsburg Monarchy in 19th and at beginning of 20th century. Slovene-Italian national dispute began around 1880 and escalated during the Habsburg Monarchy, which was obviously not able to create the political framework for multinational society. Slovene – Italian relations could be described as a dispute between the Slovenians who endeavoured to change the existing situation and the Italians who advocated the preservation of politico – national and socio – economic situation. The situation became even more complex with proclamation of Kingdom of Italy and with inclusion of Veneto and Friuli into the state.

Dialogue between Slovenians and Italians prior to World War I. was poor. Both were overwhelmed by their national feelings and it was interesting to face the situation that Trieste was the largest Slovenian city although Slovenians living there were in the minority. At the end of World War I. two different concepts of border were developed. The first was the "ethnic" border and the second was the geographic and strategic border. The Italian demands prevailed due to compensation for sacrifices in war. The situation between 1918 and 1943 were most probably the most complicated for Slovenian-Italian relationship. One fourth of Slovenians were living outside of border of national state in that period due to London Pact of 1915 and Treaty of Rapallo from 1920. Handling the fascist regime in ethnically mixed and ethnically Slovenian areas has left deep wounds. During the World War II. Slovene Italian conflict reached its peak but on the other hand, there was Slovene and Italian cooperation against Fascism. Slovene and Italian partisans were fighting against the Fascism side by side and in even more they fought in mixed military units. After the release of Informbiro and break with the Soviet Union Yugoslavia was rewarded by west countries with economic and political concessions. The border dispute was resolved with the division of Free Territory of Trieste. Cones A and B were *de facto* divided between Italy and Yugoslavia by the London Memorandum of Understanding that was adopted in London on 5 October 1954. What marked after World War II. relations between Slovene and

⁸ http://www.culture.si/en/Roman_Emona.

⁹ Report of the Slovene –Italian Historical and Cultural Commission, http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/1302/Porocilo_mesane_zgodovinske_komisije_RS-FJK_1880-1956_ang.pdf.

Croatians was the fact that Croatian population of the disputed area was entirely assigned to Croatia (at the time still in Yugoslavia) and a significant number of Slovene population living in provinces of Trieste, Gorizia and Udine remained within the borders of Italy. A significant number of Italians remained within the borders of Yugoslavia, as well. The development of the relations between Slovenia (at the time within Yugoslavia) and Italy led to the most open border between a western type country and socialist country. The "iron curtain" was not so "ironish" there anymore and today we can brag towards the rest of the world with numerous examples of our mutual good practice.

3. The Italian-Slovenian examples of good practice

3.1. Cross border cooperation

According to the Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia,¹⁰ it is vital for Slovenia to maintain broad relations, a dynamic political dialogue and all-round cooperation with neighbouring countries, i.e. Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. The key topics last year were cross-border cooperation, the economy, transport and energy infrastructure, and national minorities. The cooperation was significantly strengthened at the provincial level, which is reflected in the renewed or newly established institutional cooperation between Slovenia and Austrian Carinthia and Styria in the form of joint committees, the visit of the President of Friuli-Venezia Giulia to Slovenia, and the 40-year-long operation of the Permanent Mixed Slovenian-Bavarian Commission. Slovenia was also active within the Quadrilaterale (Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein), and participated in drafting the EU macro-regional strategy for the Alps and the EU strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region. Slovenia's cooperation in the Danube macro-region was similarly intensive.

Furthermore, the Western Balkan countries were also at the forefront of the EU agenda, including the enlargement decisions adopted at the European Council in December 2014, and the Slovenian initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slovenia also responded to last year's catastrophic floods in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina by co-organizing a donor conference, which collected 1.8 billion euros worth in aid and relief assistance funds. Slovenia headed a number of development projects; particularly related to the environment, water management, infrastructure and public administration. The Brdo Process fostered some new initiatives, which must be realized in the form of concrete transport, infrastructure and energy projects in the region. The greatest progress was achieved in resolving succession issues: around 160 Slovenian works of art were returned (to be exhibited in the National Gallery), the digitalization project of common archives was launched on Slovenia's initiative, and some of the former Yugoslavia's bank deposits were divided among the successor states.¹¹

¹⁰http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zakonodaja_in_dokumenti/Letno_porocilo_MZZ_2014.pdf.

¹¹Ibidem.

3.2. Coordination Committee of Ministers of Slovenia and Italy

Rather important role in relations between Slovenia and Italy play the Meetings of the Coordination Committee of Ministers of Slovenia and Italy. Ministries of foreign affairs of both countries coordinate the meetings, which take place alternately in both countries once per year. The very first meeting was held in Rome in 2008. Usually there are ministers of foreign affairs, infrastructure and transport, agriculture, high education and science attending the meetings. This is a good practice of straighten good relations and enhance collaboration between friendly neighbouring countries. Slovenia as a neighbouring country to Italy has always been some kind of connection of west and Balkans. What is more important is that the relations between both countries never the less of some disagreement in past have reached the highest point in history. There is mutual respect for the economic achievements, culture, language and other areas.

3.3. Brdo Process

The Brdo Process¹² that has already been recognized by international community has been initiated as engine of political and overall development in the region of the western Balkans. The process should also be a complementary political platform to the accession process of the EU. Brdo Process is not connected so much to international law as it is to international relations. As a informal initiative is very successful to for instance bring together to the same table representatives of the countries that in other circumstances wouldn't attend the same maybe more formal meeting (like for instance representatives of Serbia and Kosovo). As it is informal platform it could serve for many purposes, e.g. as the discussion platform for sensitive questions concerning the entire region; especially open regional issues. Maybe the most important role of the process could be a regular an on-going and direct channel of communication among the countries of region as well as with the European Union.

Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor and Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor launched Brdo Process on 20 March 2010. First meeting was held in format of the heads of governments and foreign ministers. The main objective agreed was facilitation of political dialogue and increase of confidence among the countries in west Balkans. The fact is that currently there is no comparable international platform that could serve as a regular and informal communication in particular.

The first meeting was held in Brdo pri Kranju in Slovenia, where the Prime Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro met together with the EU representative Commissioner Füle.

Four meetings at the ministerial level followed the initial meeting, some were held in Slovenia and others in Zagreb. At one these meetings of the Ministers of Justice, the US Attorney General Eric H. Holder was present. It was for the first time that all the Ministers of Justice from the region (including Serbia and Kosovo) were sitting at the same table, together discussing the common future and together addressing sensitive issues in the area of Justice and Home Affairs. The meetings were prepared very carefully in order not to create further tensions among participating states.

In 2013 Croatia joined EU and sometimes more and other times less successful dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo started. At the same year the Brdo process was rebooted at the level of Presidents of Republic. It has been decided to hold regular

¹² Courtesy of Marko Makovec, Foreign Policy Adviser to the *President* of the *Republic* of Slovenia.

informal meetings of all Presidents of the region with the EU. At that time, the process has gained momentum and Slovenia organized the Brdo Process Summit together with French President Hollande in July 2013.

The Summit of Brdo Process with President Hollande was a very important event for the region for tackling different sensitive issues and further strengthening the European perspective of the region of Western Balkans. There has been commitment from participating states for further reforms, reconciliation and closer cooperation in resolving open issues. Specifically it was pointed the importance of the rule of law and zero tolerance for corruption. In July 2014 the second summit was held in Dubrovnik in Croatia under the title of Brdo-Brijuni Process. The guest at the time was German Chancellor Angela Merkel. There has also been the French delegation headed by the Minister of State for European Affairs, Harlem Desir. Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger represented EU. There have also been foreign ministers of Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, the FYROM, and Kosovo.

The plenary part of the meeting focused on, including cooperation between its countries and EU Member States. As EU Member States, Slovenia and Croatia expressed readiness to help resolve the remaining outstanding regional and bilateral issues and implement reforms necessary to meet the requirements for EU membership.

At the meeting, besides usual issues as for instance political development of the Western Balkans and the consolidation of European perspective for the region, particular attention was devoted to floods and donor conference dealing with damage in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. FYROM and Bosnia and Herzegovina were exposed as a countries facing the greatest challenges in the region. It has been stressed the importance of education of youth and the importance of increased number of scholarships for young people from the Western Balkans. In the second part of the meeting, leaders also discussed some infrastructure topics e.g. the Adriatic-Ionian highway and the modernization of the railway line connecting Munich and Istanbul via Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. The railway modernization should also include the reconstruction of the railway lines leading to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the FYROM.

It has been stressed that the region has exceptional potential in terms of renewables, energy and human resources. There is no doubt though that all the infrastructure, energy and transport, need to be modernized. The participants proposed that energy and transport connections both with the Western Balkans and through it be included in the energy and transport policy of the new College of Commissioners. All this initiatives are meant to increase economic potential of the countries in the region and thus reducing the stress posed by social problems and lagging behind in development. Italy is entering this initiative next year as president Mattarella is joining Brdo Brijuni Summit.

3.4. Building of Infrastructure

There is a huge potential for Italy and Slovenia as a bridge to Balkans. As one of the most developed western countries Italy has well developed transport infrastructure and more important, the experience. This applies for road, railway, maritime and airport infrastructure. The process in infrastructure that has it's roots in 1990ies is privatization of highway roads. This process enabled engagement of states resources in less profitable but not less important infrastructure - the railway infrastructure. Investments into this infrastructure are important for facilitation of mobility of people and economy, ecology,

reduction of congestions and safety of participants in traffic.

What is the typical mistake made by countries of Balkans? It was made by Slovenia and is being made by other countries that started their investment cycle. Because of political convenience, investments into highways instead into railways, is promoted. The result is that road infrastructure generates more and more traffic and instead of balanced developed infrastructure, there are serious imbalances causing known problems. These are related to the lack of funds to build railway infrastructure and thus slow the development. At the end of the day, it is obvious that there is a lot of interest of private investors for building the highways and almost no interest of private investors to build railways. There for what Italy and Slovenia can offer to Balkan countries is experience.

3.5. Border Disputes in Balkans

Another issue that could be addressed in this paper is the border disputes between Balkan countries. The border question was unresolved, at least in a formal way, between Italy and (Slovenia - at the time Yugoslavia) for a long time after the end of the Second World War. Nevertheless, that was not the stone of stumbling and the relations became from freezing cold to really friendly through the years. There are border disputes between Slovenia and Croatia, Croatia and Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia, Croatia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Serbia. The roots of these disputes are laying in the fact that the border within the former Yugoslavia as federal state has never been established in details. The model of solving the dispute promoted by Slovenia and Croatia is utmost important. The dispute is in the process of being solved by peaceful mechanisms offered by international law with usage of both *ex aequo et bono* (which is, unfortunately, not expressly mentioned in the Arbitration Agreement) and international law as a legal source for solving the dispute on the court of arbitration. Nevertheless, the fact that international law has the equity incorporated in rules it is undisputable that because of the historical reasons the fairness beyond the international legal rules is anticipated. This could be the model to solve the border disputes in Balkans. Moreover, maybe not only border disputes. It could be used as a model for solving all kinds of disputes of this turbulent but utmost beautiful and picturesque part of the world.

4. How to build a bridge to the (rest) of the Balkans and Mediterranean

4.1. Knowledge and Business

There are bilingual areas nowadays in both countries, Slovenia and Italy which are, from today's perspective, a real treasure. Relations between Slovenia and Italy became very strong after Slovenia gained its independency in June 1991. The assistance of Italy during the process was an assistance of friendly country. Today Slovenia with its knowledge and still very much alive ties all across the Balkans could play an important role in promotion of Italian business initiatives. The understanding of cultural and others peculiarities of Balkans nations is important for business and political agenda. Peace in this part of the world is utmost important for Slovenia and Italy. The exodus of refugees that European Union is facing now will not be resolved in any other way but with the seize of fire and the gradual return of peace to the war areas. As Balkans area every few decades face a war and as peace in this area is very fragile, Italy and Slovenia could play a role of factor of stability and a model of cooperation. Nowadays war is always accompanied by flow of refugees searching a better life and running from misery

of war. Italy and Slovenia are both exposed to the flows of refugees. Italy over sea and Slovenia through the Balkans way. It is no secret that two strongest opponents to nationalism and war are knowledge and social well-being.

4.2. Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)

The EMUNI University¹³ was established during the Slovenian presidency of the EU in the first half of 2008, further to the initiative of then Vice-President of the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia.¹⁴ It is an international association of universities with headquarters in Slovenia, representing one of the six projects of the Union of the Mediterranean. The basic mission of EMUNI is to contribute with its activities to strengthening intercultural dialogue and to the priority goals of the Barcelona process, which is in the broader sense included also in the Union for the Mediterranean.

EMUNI strives to achieve the following goals: (i) Raising quality of higher education through the implementation of study and research programs; (ii) becoming an international university, which will acknowledge cultural diversity; (iii) establishing university environment, which will have a stimulating effect on integration of different nations and cultures in the academic spheres; (iv) ensuring administrative, operational and material infrastructure, which will enable the operation of the university.¹⁵

In particular, the aim of the EMUNI University is to create specialized study programs among the Euro-Mediterranean universities covering themes and areas which are significant for the Euro-Mediterranean Area. The study programs or parts of them will be implemented at the EMUNI as well as other co-founding universities. One of the main activities is also research, which is one of the important factors of development, success and quality of the University.¹⁶

By means of fostering inter-cultural dialogue and science diplomacy through education and research, the ultimate goal of EMUNI is to advance peace and prosperity in the Euro-Med region.

The main objectives of EMUNI are the following:

- Promoting the priorities of the UfM;
- Fostering staff exchanges and students mobility across the Mediterranean;
- Promoting south-south cooperation with a special focus on co-operation between the countries of North Africa and Middle East;
- Enabling joint educational and research programs throughout the Euro-Mediterranean;
- Raising awareness on the multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious diversity of the Euro-Med.

¹³ <http://www.emuni.si>

¹⁴ Prof. Dr. Marko Pavliha.

¹⁵ <http://www.emuni.si>

¹⁶ Ibidem.

EMUNI operates through a wide network of co-operating institutions, which currently entails approximately 150 higher education and research institutions from 42 countries along the Euro-Med region. The main sources of funding are the Government of Slovenia and the EMUNI Foundation.

Together with the University of Urbino the EMUNI has created the Innovative Master Study Programme on Inter-Cultural Business Communications. Early this year EMUNI has launched its first interdisciplinary master's program in Intercultural Business offering knowledge and skills in the fields of languages, intercultural dialogue, business administration, intercultural relations, internet marketing and internationalization.

To summarize, the Euro-Mediterranean University represents a great educational and research potential for the whole region but it cannot survive without sufficient financial resources, political and trade support, academic excellency and sound management.

4.3. eRegions

As a concept, eRegion¹⁷ denotes the Information and Communication Technology-supported initiatives that transcend traditional borders and boundaries. Wide varieties of eRegion initiatives are increasingly pervasive in global contexts. Some are based on historical artefacts, for instance the ancient Silk Road and the Amber Road trading routes that have found new life in the age of Internet. Other eRegion initiatives represent yet more recent synergies amid increased desires for interaction and coordination for mutual benefit. From a perspective of the eRegion development, several overlapping EU macro regions should be considered: the Adriatic and Ionian, three Alpine regions and the Danube eRegion.

5. EU transport and maritime policy: Opportunities for both countries

There are two major EU policies, which are particularly important for Italy and Slovenia from the Mediterranean perspective and vis-à-vis the Balkans: The EU Transport White Paper 2011 and the innovative and holistic Maritime Policy Blue Paper 2007.

The main objectives of the new EU transport policy¹⁸ are preparing the European Transport Area for the future, a vision for a competitive and sustainable transport system,¹⁹ and the strategy how to implement the policy (“what needs to be done”).²⁰ The

¹⁷ <http://eregion.eu>.

¹⁸ Despite of a separate title in the former EC Treaty on the subject of transport (now Title VI of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, Articles 90 – 100), it was only after the European Court of Justice in Luxemburg condemned the inactivity of the Council of Ministers and the latter agreed to a program of legislative measures to achieve an internal market by the end of 1992, that a common transport policy “began to emerge s a cornerstone of the internal market.” See Case 13/83 *European Parliament v EC Council* (1985) ECR 1513; R. Greaves: *EC Transport Law*, Longman, Essex, 2000, pp. 3-4; compare to N. Radionov, J. Marin (Eds.): *Europsko prometno pravo*, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Pravni fakultet, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 11-13.

¹⁹ I.e. a growing transport and supporting mobility while reaching the 60% emission reduction target, an efficient core network for multimodal intercity travel and transport, a global level-playing field for long-distance travel and intercontinental freight, clean urban transport and commuting, and ten goals for a competitive and resource efficient transport system: benchmarks for achieving the 60% GHG emission reduction target.

²⁰ Single European Transport Area, innovating for the future – technology and behavior, modern infrastructure and smart funding and the external dimension.

EU has been working for years towards a model of sustainable mobility “which involves an integrated approach to optimizing the efficiency of the transport system as well as to reduce energy consumption, congestion and other negative environmental impacts;” the objective is to develop “a framework for optimal integration of different modes.”²¹

The European Commission adopted a roadmap of 40 concrete initiatives for the next decade to build a smart, green and competitive transport system that should increase mobility; remove major barriers in key areas and fuel growth and employment. The proposals are also intended to reduce dramatically the Europe's dependence on imported oil and cut carbon emissions in transport by 60% by 2050. The long-term key goals include *inter alia* the abolishment of conventionally fuelled cars in cities and a 50% shift of medium distance intercity passenger and freight journeys from road to rail and waterborne transport. One of the “hot” topics is an increasing focus on intelligent transport systems.

Slovenia is blessed with a privileged geographical location at the crossroad of most important corridors, especially the Baltic-Adriatic and the Mediterranean and Baltic-Adriatic²² core network corridors. Accordingly, it would have to focus with all its energy, considerable public and private finances and national policies on fast, cheap, safe and comfortable mobility of passengers and their rights, efficient supply of goods, logistics, transport infrastructure, safety, security, transport ethics and protection and improvement of quality of environment. It is crucial and urgent to construct the second railway track between the Port of Koper and Divača, which represents one of the major bottlenecks. Slovenia and Italy ports are surely competitors but more so Nord Adriatic ports are competitors to Nord European ports for Far East flows of goods. NAPA²³ project is a good practice of cooperation between Italian (Venice and Trieste) and Slovenian (Koper) ports that were later joined by Rieka port of Croatia. These four ports combine their energy in order to promote the Northern Adriatic route and gate to Europe. Moreover, the association anticipates cooperation in the development of maritime and hinterland connections. It also promotes visits from cruise lines, environmental protection, safety and information technology.

The most significant aspects of the new European maritime policy are blue growth, marine knowledge, maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management, sea basin strategies (*sic!*), integrated maritime surveillance and maritime security. The projects of particular importance are, for instance, a European maritime transport space without barriers, a European strategy for marine research, national integrated policies to be developed by member states, a roadmap towards maritime spatial planning by member states, elimination of pirate fishing and destructive high seas bottom trawling and a strategy to mitigate the effects of climate change on coastal regions.

There are six sea regions within EU, each of them being unique and it merits a tailor-made strategy: The Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, North Sea, the Atlantic and the Arctic Ocean. The holistic maritime policy promotes growth and development strategies that exploit the strengths and address the weaknesses of each

²¹ See a very comprehensive paper by E. Eftestøl-Wilhelmsson, A. Bask, M. Rajahonka: *Intermodal Transport Research: A Law and Logistics Literature Review with EU Focus*, European Transport Law, Vol. XLIX No. 6, 2014, pp. 609-674.

²² <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/doc/ten-t-country-fiches/merged-files/si.pdf>.

²³ <http://www.portsofnapa.com/>.

large sea region, for instance, the Arctic's climate change, the Atlantic's renewable energy potential, problems of sea and ocean pollution, maritime safety, etc.²⁴

It is important to note that the European Commission launched the new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region on 17 June 2014. As explained on the Commission website,²⁵ the strategy mainly revolves around the opportunities of the maritime economy (i.e. the blue growth), land-sea transport, energy connectivity, the marine environment protection and promotion of sustainable tourism. The starting point was the 2012 Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, which has been incorporated into the aforementioned strategy.²⁶

The Commission emphasizes the fact that this is the first EU macro-regional strategy with such a large proportion of non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) cooperating with EU countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia). A pair of countries – one EU country and one non-EU country-coordinated the development of each element of the Action Plan in the following manner:²⁷

“1. Greece and Montenegro on "Blue Growth": this pillar intends to drive innovative maritime and marine growth in the Region, by promoting sustainable economic development and jobs, and business opportunities in the Blue economy.

2. Italy and Serbia on "Connecting the Region" (transport and energy networks): this pillar aims to improve transport and energy connectivity in the Region and with the rest of Europe.

3. Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on "Environmental Quality": this pillar addresses environmental quality through better cooperation at the level of the Region

4. Croatia and Albania on "Sustainable Tourism": this pillar aims to develop the full potential of the Region in terms of innovative, sustainable, responsible and quality tourism.”

Moreover, the capacity building as well as research, innovation and small and medium size business are cross-cutting aspects. Climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk management are considered to be the horizontal principles relevant to all four pillars.²⁸

6. Conclusion

Italy and Slovenia are both strongly interested in Balkans to be a region of prosperity, peace and cultural exchange instead of region of war and overwhelming nationalist and

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins/index_en.htm.

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins/adriatic_ionian/index_en.htm.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem.

religious passion. Both countries are exposed to flows of refugees. What is an imminent danger to the region can be also an opportunity. People that have access to knowledge and have the opportunity to reach for well-being will not be as prone to nationalist sentiments. There is a big potential for both countries and Slovenia could play a role of bridge between Italy as one of the most developed countries of the world with Balkans as one of the most interesting parts of the world. Balkans have a huge potential for development of economy, infrastructure, culture and coexistence. In a world where there is a tension between the Muslim and the Christian world, the Muslim people are living in the heart of Europe for many centuries. In addition, if the model of coexistence could work in Balkans it could work anywhere in the world. It is without doubt the strategic interest of Italy to have a peaceful neighbouring region. Slovenia with its experience, knowledge and ties could play a crucial role in helping Italy to play its role. Together we are much more than just a sum of two.

Cultura giuridica e diritto vivente

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