

STRATEGIC MODERNIZATION OF RAILWAYS

Analytical commentary, August 2021

Summary

Strategic documents and their goals

- In the Slovak Republic during the period 2000 – 2020 ten strategic documents in the field of transport were created that were related to the modernization of railway corridors and their future development.
- Although all these strategies defined what was needed to be achieved, most of the times they did not say how to do it, when and for how much. A common feature was also the missing basic elements that such a document should contain; for example a more detailed financial implementation plan with prioritization of individual sections, quantified costs and source of financing. Follow-up issues are also the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the fulfillment of tasks, given by the strategic documents.
- Within these strategies, 34 objectives were set with the goal for completing the modernization of the three TEN-T corridors crossing Slovakia, of which, however, only 22 objectives could be evaluated.
- None of these goals have been met. After more than 20 years, the Slovak Republic is still only approaching the completion of the connection between Bratislava and Žilina.
- Strategic document from 2005 envisaged modernization of the entire corridor network by 2015. The currently valid document is Strategy 2030. According to it, the Slovak Republic should modernize the corridors by 2030. However, there is a high risk that these plans will remain only on paper as well.

Funding

- In Slovakia, there is excessive dependence on a single source - up to 85% of expenditures on the modernization of railway corridors was covered through EU funds and co-financing.
- The more fundamental problem with financing also arose in the zero interconnection of strategies to the state budget. The draft budgets did not reflect the needs defined by the strategy, while each document was duly approved by the government.
- The 2030 strategy aims to modernize railway sections in the amount of 6.3 billion EUR, while only four projects in the amount of 694 mil. EUR is financially covered. Necessary resources for the implementation of other projects, in the amount of 5.6 billion, have not yet been clearly defined.
- Between 2006 and 2008 32.8 mil. EUR was spent for pre-investment and investment preparation of sections that have not yet been implemented and currently require new permits.

Good practice in the Czech Republic

- While in the Czech Republic approximately three quarters of the corridor lines were modernized by the end of 2019, in Slovakia it was less than one quarter.
- In the Czech Republic, there is so-called The State Fund for Transport Infrastructure, by which several sources contribute to the financing, thus eliminating the dependence on EU funds in particular.