

TRANSPORT POLICY DOCUMENTS – COMPOSITION AND SUBSTANCE IN THE CASE OF SMALL COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION

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ABSTRACT

Small countries, especially those in transition, are confronted with serious barriers in implementing comprehensive structure of transport policy strategic documents, as it is defined in a word-wide research and has been accomplished in some developed countries practice. Barriers include institutional incapacities, poor or missing public policies preceding or inter-related to transport policy, incompatibility of political ambition and financial capability, shortened election periods etc. Emerging issues in such circumstances are related to transport policy features (as time frame), composition (as type and number of documents) and constituents (guidelines, objectives, targets, policies, instruments, indicators ...) that are feasible to create and pursue. This paper begins with a description of documents' characteristics of interest and elements necessary to develop consistent and comparable transport policy which can be followed and monitored over the years. It continues with a short overview of transport policy strategic documents as a policy process formal output, and discussion about some national transport policy strategic documents. Attention is paid to barriers that are hard to overcome in small countries in transition (namely countries of the Western Balkans region) like those that delay, obstruct or completely neglect policy process activities or implementation of the adopted documents provisions. Bearing in mind potentials to overcome those barriers we argue about feasible structure and extent of transport policy elements formalised in the documents.

Keywords: transport policy, policy analysis, policy documents, countries in transition

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic documents on the transport development are a prerequisite for a coordinated investment activity and development of different modes of transport in a process of creation of a comprehensive and an efficient national transportation system. However, in different countries, they bear different names: (national) strategy of transport, development strategy of transport, transport policy, strategic plan, master plan etc. and have different content, even when carrying the same title. There are examples where all the contents of previous documents are encompassed by only one document at the national level and then it represents the National Transport Policy (NTP) with a development strategy and investment plan. But there may be more documents and different combinations that are possible.

Differences in structure and contents of transport policy strategic documents occur due to different approaches to strategic planning and regulatory framework in which policy is created, as well as due to economic, social, cultural and other differences in a society. The differences originate from the current situation, capacities and needs of transport infrastructure, institutions and human resources in the transport sector; the current opportunities in defining precise plans for economic and social development of the country; opportunities and interests of scientific and research institutes in the field of transportation, but primarily from the priorities of the government and relevant ministry.

Although there is a problem of inadequate/different terms used in their titles, in most cases much bigger problem is that elements of transport policy are not clearly defined, not formally adopted, missing and/or inconsistent in their interpretation. So, there are examples where all elements are defined and formally adopted (in one or more documents), but the policies and/or instruments are not consistently developed. In these cases, the policies and/or instruments are not defined for each of the objective, but are defined for individual modes of transport or otherwise (e.g. functionally – freight transport, public transport etc.). There are examples when objectives of the NTP are not clearly defined, and following strategic documents define their own objectives, policies and instruments irrespectively, in a more or less consistent way. In some countries the strategy and/or investment plan are the only transport strategic documents defined without a NTP, i.e. lacking clear objectives and general guidelines. In the case of inconsistency, the most common, especially in countries in transition, are lack and inefficiency of long-term policy and development planning, and the absence of a legal framework for strategic planning starting from the formulation of NTP. In such circumstances plans are reduced to short-term investment planning (often only through the annual budget), and they are not in connection with the development of strategic documents and NTP.

In NTP and other strategic documents, terms such as objective, policy and instrument are very often wrongly used: certain policy or instrument defined as an objective, and instrument defined as policy are the most common mistake. That has a negative impact on consistency of the strategy and creates confusion during monitoring of its realization or development of

strategies at lower levels, but it also prevents from comparing them with similar strategies and results of their application. It is not unusual that, for example, objectives defined in NTP are not mentioned in documents that follow, such as strategies for different modes of transport, or that achievements are not presented in follow-up reviews with regard to the set objectives. Even bigger confusion is created by changing the terms or introducing the new ones. In strategic documents, objectives, policies and instruments are often replaced by other inadequate terms, such as actions, priorities, themes, etc. In some studies additional terms are introduced, such as, for example, the term "policy orientation" defined as "category or clear type of policy instruments" (SAMI, 2000), which does not improve the consistency in the field of transport strategic planning.

In such conditions, for developing countries and transition economies such as the Western Balkans countries, it is very difficult to look after and find examples and models that would facilitate formulation and adoption of their own coherent and consistent transport policy strategic documents. Just to mention a few questions: How to connect their own circumstances and experiences of the others? How to use examples of "best practices" in creating their own strategic document? Should they have one or more documents? Which concept and content of transport strategic documents is most appropriate to today's circumstances?

Apart from the mentioned differences, even in the scientific literature or in the consulting practice in this field there are no uniform definitions or interpretations of the very terms such as transport policy, strategic plan, master plan etc. This impedes not only the strategic documents development process, but also the communication between purchasers, document creators and users in the countries of the Western Balkans region.

All previous issues are discussed in this paper. Firstly, definitions of strategic planning key elements, namely objectives, policies, instruments, barriers and indicators are presented and discussed. Those elements can be composed differently and deployed in different document types that are examined in the next section. Thirdly, in order to identify the differences and common characteristics of contemporary NTP of the developed European countries, as well as the Western Balkans countries, 12 of them have been analyzed. The paper ends with a description of key contextual factors of interest for transport policy making and recommendations regarding the structure and contents of NTP for the Western Balkans countries.

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLANNING

The complexity and dynamism of the transport system with all its aspects (technical, socio-economic and environmental), and the need for vertical and horizontal coordination of policy actions (different levels of public administration and interdependence with other systems), as well as different intentions and interests of stakeholders (often opposed), points out a need for strategic transport planning. In other words, the elements of transport policy shall be

analysed and formulated in order to allow a consistent integration of different issues resulting in a plan (strategy) **which can be followed and monitored** over the years. The definition of the strategy used by *Kölbl et al.* (2008) can be used here as well:

*"A strategy can be defined as a plan for successful action based on the
rationality and interdependence of the moves of the opposing participants
..."*

Key words of the previous definition of strategy are "plan for successful action" through the specification of instruments, since strategy is most often defined as a "combination of policy instruments, as they are applied over time" (ITS Leeds, 2006), which identify the means to achieve the established goals. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the consistent specification of the key elements of strategic planning: **objectives, policies, instruments, barriers and indicators.**

Objective or *aim* *Kölbl et al.* (2008) are defining¹ as "externally ... aimed at or sought; a target, goal, or end". They emphasize that main *objective* feature is *external*, and the important consequence is that the objectives or aims should be defined not within the (transport) system but from the outside. Objectives are practically policy drivers, statements determining directions for desired improvements, but are not the specific means by which they will be accomplished (ITS Leeds, 2006). Objectives enable the existence of a criterion for assessment of the success or failure of the proposed political options. Only clearly specified objectives will make visible the required level, enable policy implementation monitoring, and evaluation of desired effects.

Policy is "a course of action adopted and pursued by a government, party, ruler, statesman ..." (*Kölbl et al.*, 2008)². In other words, policy is "... seeking to regulate society or its individual parts" (Klajn and Šipka, 2007), or "a broad approach towards the achievement of one or more objectives ... through the implementation of one or more policy instruments." (ITS Leeds, 2006). Policies function is clearly of *regulatory* or *controlling* nature which should generate the instruments and measures, and their intention is also to achieve the objectives or aims (*Kölbl et al.*, 2008). For example, policy of *improving vehicle energy efficiency* (e.g. using pricing instruments in favour of energy efficient vehicles, or instruments which support development of new fuels), can be implemented in order to achieve objectives "reduce environmental impacts" and "increase road transport operators business efficiency".

Instrument or *measure* is "a material thing ... to serve or contribute to the accomplishment of a purpose or end; a means, capacity, or quantity ... designed or used for the accomplishment of some mechanical or other physical effect" (*Kölbl et al.*, 2008)³. They also state that

¹ Cited from *Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford University Press. 2006. (<http://www.oed.com/>)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

instruments can be understood as the practical implementation of policies and regulations in transport systems. Instruments represent "policy lever" (Shires, 2003), or "specific means by which policies are implemented" (ITS Leeds, 2006). Instruments are administrative means, legal and financial, as well as technical. Public administration has available instruments of different nature, from adopting legal provisions which inhibit or enable certain behaviour, to infrastructure construction or using economic stimulations/de-stimulations.

From the above definitions of the terms objectives, policies and instruments we can conclude that the *objectives* and *policies* **show the way** (identify the **direction**), but in the case of objectives it is about the **direction of aspirations** (the desired improvements) that should be defined outside (transportation) system, and in the case of policies it is about the **direction of strategic action** (in order to regulate an area) that needs to be defined within the (transport) system. Unlike the objectives and policies, which identify the directions, the *instruments* identify the **means** (method, capacity, quantity) to be implemented for realization of the specific policy in order to achieve one or more objectives. Although a content of a statement defines whether it is an objective, policy or instrument, there are different interpretations in the literature and in the practice of strategic transport planning. For example, one of the most common misconceptions is the statement "eliminating bottlenecks" as objective (as it is in the transport policy of the EU, and in some NTP). The objective of "eliminating bottlenecks" is actually a measure and, thus, the underlying objective is not defined (Kölbl et al., 2008). Another very common mistake is with the "introduction of the user charges" which is defined and as objective and as a policy ("charging/pricing policy" is the term often used in the literature in this context), and in fact "charging" is an instrument, means for the implementation of policies such as "reduce car use and promote public transport" or "improve energy efficiency".

Barrier is defined as "an obstacle which prevents a given policy instrument from being implemented, or limits the way in which it can be implemented" (May et al., 2005). A barrier is a factor, typically exogenous, that limits or delays the policy-maker's ability to implement the most desired policy (TIPP, 2005). A barrier is relevant when it imposes *constraints* on the policy options of the regulator, in other words, when it prevents the regulator from using the desired instruments and/or from setting them at the preferred level (SPECTRUM, 2004).

Terms barriers and constraints can not be used as synonyms, because they are interrelated. Project *SPECTRUM* states that there is a causal relation between the two, and that a certain barrier may lead to multiple constraints, and a certain constraint might be caused by different barriers (SPECTRUM, 2004). Barrier is a social or practical limitation of something that can be done, such as unacceptability, while a constraint is a specific restriction imposed on a policy instrument, such as maximum fare levels (TIPP, 2005)⁴. In practice, the policy maker faces constraints while making decision on instruments, and they choose the "best" one

⁴ Cited from Verhoef, E., P. Nijkamp, and P. Rietveld (2003). Second best congestion pricing: The case of an untolled alternative in urban transport. *Classics in Transport Analysis*, 8, pp.223-246.

bearing in mind the constraints. Research suggests that constraints imposed by the barriers impose substantial welfare losses compared to a situation where these constraints are removed (SPECTRUM, 2004), and accordingly removing a constraint may be much more effective than its adjustment to the transport policy. As constraints are specific, and are identified for specific instrument in the context of one policy, in this paper attention is paid to barriers.

Indicators are defined as "a means of measuring performance" (Marsden and Bonsall, 2006) and as "ways of quantifying objectives" (ITS Leeds, 2006). They are a quantitative (numbers, expressing amounts or quantities) or qualitative (words, symbols or colours, expressing attitudes or views) measure of performance that is used to demonstrate change, and which details the extent to which the policy objectives are being or have been achieved (TRANSFORUM, 2007). Although indicators are seen by many practitioners as artificially focussing transport policy on what can be counted and on which indicators can most easily be improved (Marsden and Snell, 2009) performance measurement is increasingly used in the public sector. They can be used for decision-support in all stages of policy cycle. This means that the process of measuring outcomes and performance against targets is fully integrated into the business planning cycle and that they cover all significant areas of work (Marsden and Bonsall, 2006). Practically, the indicators can be grouped into three categories: (1) indicators of policy objectives (impact indicators and outcome indicators) – general one, or specific for a certain policy objective or several policy objectives; (2) indicators for policy instruments (input indicators, process indicators and output indicators); and (3) indicators for external factors potentially influencing policy objectives.

Usually, a set of indicators is developed for the purposes of transport policy research and effective strategic planning using analysis of objectives and policy instruments, as well as relevant external factors. Indicators can be defined for NTP as a whole (global overview of policy) or for one of the fields (e.g. energy supply) or policies which determine the directions of action for the implementation of NTP objectives and guidelines (e.g. increase vehicles energy efficiency) or for instruments (e.g. taxation system in favour of energy-efficient vehicles), in one or more levels of vertical hierarchy of government administration. They are frequently called the core or the key indicators, and they are defined as "indicators for policy objectives, policy measures and contextual factors that are regarded as indispensable to get an overall picture allowing the assessment of transport policy, that can be understood easily and that are regarded and accepted as steady indicators for long-term policy planning" (TRANSFORUM, 2007).

3. TYPES OF TRANSPORT POLICY STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Strategic transport planning in various countries differs in a way of processing, in structure and content of resulting documents. The difference can be made between the strategic transport plans and those providing the framework and serving as a basis for development of strategies and plans at all levels of public administration (from the highest level to lowest) to

those that that includes investment plans as its integral part. For the purpose of illustrating general principles three different types of strategic documents can be identified (Atkins and Mclean Hazel, 2006):

1. The **High Level Policy Framework** provides principles and guidelines only. Figure 1 illustrates the typical components of this approach (vision, policy, objectives and principles). They are reflecting high level policy goals at both national and international levels, and represent guidelines for agencies and administrations in developing their own strategies, area and/or mode based. Example of this type is Finland's strategic transport plan: *Transport 2030: Major challenges, new directions* (MoTC, 2007).
2. A **National Transport Strategy** provides an indicative balance of investment between different policy initiatives and, more importantly, provides a sound evidential base to support the choices. This approach extends beyond providing a high level policy framework as illustrated in Figure 1. For this type, justification of the strategy is important and hence an analytical underpinning is required in terms of assessment of current and future problems, appraisal of options and identifying priorities. Spain is an example of this type: *Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan (PEIT) 2005 – 2020* (MdF, 2005).
3. The **Investment Plan** is more detailed than the typical National Strategy and contains plans that specify activities and deadlines for their completion. As shown in Figure 1, investment plans can be produced at a national level and/or by institutions responsible for specific modes/regions/locations. Typically investment plans at a national level are followed by implementation plans that identify clear responsibilities for delivery. The Netherlands falls into this type: *Mobility Policy Document: Towards reliable and predictable accessibility* (V&W and VROM, 2006).

In the Western Balkans countries, strategic transport documents have appeared more and more frequently under the title of *Transport Master Plan* (TMP). The specificity of the documents under this title is that they are (almost) exclusively concerning the strategic development of the transport infrastructure. Namely, this concerns long-term plans based on the integrated approach to the development of transport regarded as a whole, based on prognostic models of a long-term demand for transport services. The anticipated flows represent a base for the feasibility calculation of the infrastructure projects ranked according to the unique list for all modes of transport. The main objective of TMP is to obtain a priority list of investment projects for transport infrastructure. TMP already exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its elaboration for Serbia is at the final stage.

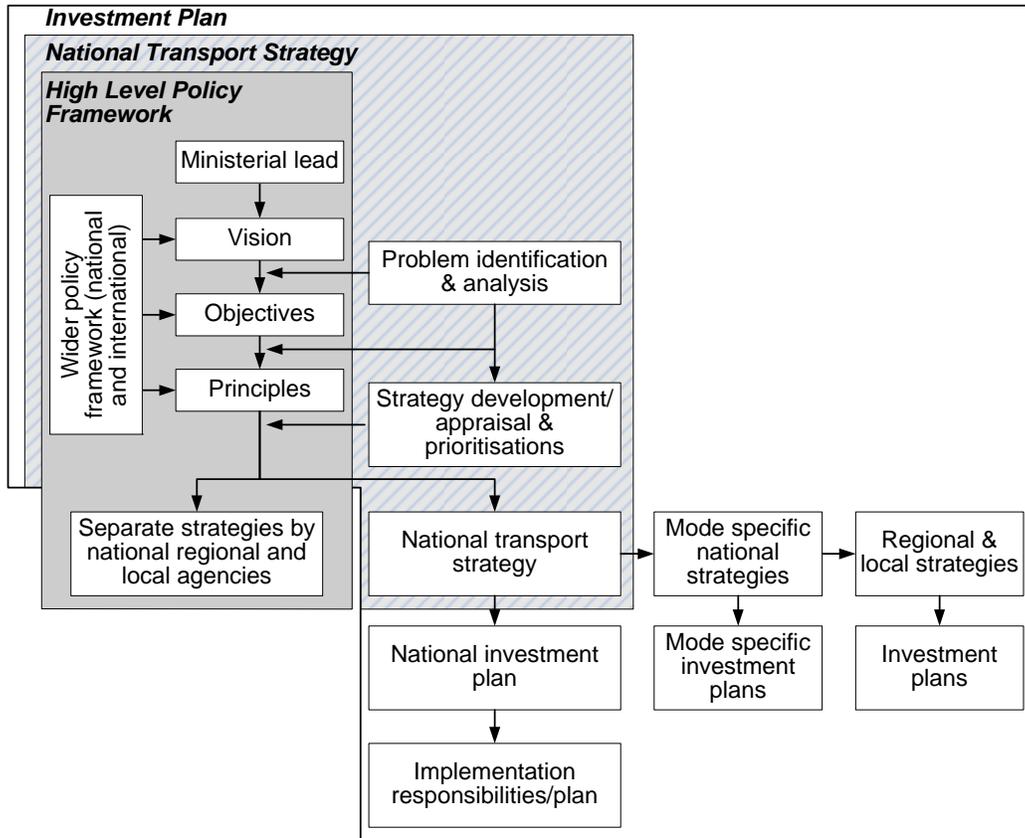


Figure 1 – Basic types of transport policy strategic documents

4. REVIEW OF NATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICIES

Although an example is given for each of the types, strategic document(s) of a country usually can not be classified in only one of the above described types. Strategic transport plans appear in many variations. As a consequence, there are a large number of significantly different documents in the practice of strategic transport planning, both in the structure and in the substance. Review of basic characteristics of the documents (title, time frame, volume, scope and content) of several European countries (Table 1) clearly illustrates those differences. Before discussing these characteristics, it is necessary to define the term of *National Transport Policy* as an umbrella document of strategic transport planning in one country, regardless of the illustrated types in which it can be classified.

National Transport Policy (NTP) is a document on transport policy which is adopted by the Government or Parliament, and which defines clear objectives and general guidelines for achievement of these goals. This is the strategic document that practically provides instructions to the public sector and regulatory bodies, enabling them to control, guide, encourage, and assist all the participants in transportation, in both public and private sectors (Gratwick, 2001). It should be general, but with clear information about directions of action so that it can be applied in different circumstances in the future and represents a landmark for

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all participants and their strategic plans. The policy instruments (laws, regulations, programmes, and actions resulting from the policy) realizing the policy should reflect and reinforce its intentions. Besides being one of the results of the strategic transport planning, the NTP is one of the elements of a state transport policy. Transport policy is also comprised by other strategic documents that follow NTP, instruments implemented for their realization, and all daily decisions and actions undertaken by the administration at various levels.

In order to identify differences and common characteristics of modern NTP, as well as to establish the elements they consist of, the umbrella strategic documents of more than 20 European countries have been reviewed. Twelve of them have been chosen to be analyzed in this paper: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia, representing the countries from the Western Balkans region, and Ireland, the Great Britain, Finland, Russia, Spain, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Hungary as good examples to illustrate differences. All the documents, except for those regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, have been passed in the last 5 years. The analyses of the basic characteristics can be briefly summarized by the following observations:

- the volume of documents varies from 40 pages (Montenegro) to 263 pages (Russia) (Table 1, column 4);
- time frame of the policy application varies from 3 years in Ireland to 23 years in Finland, while the most common last 10 or 15 years (Table 1, column 3);
- documents differ in type – from those defining the highest level policy framework and representing the principles which give guidelines for further development of transport policy at lower levels or by sectors (like, for example, in Finland), through those estimating actual and future problems, assessing options and setting the priorities (e.g. Slovakia), to those providing details on investment plans and identifying special activities and time limits (e.g. the Netherlands) (Table 1, column 5);
- all NTP have been set in the context of integration with other national sector policies and with the EU transport policy which means that they have been created on the same basis, i.e. on the common EU guidelines (White Book, etc), so that they should be mutually coherent – but they are not!
- each of the documents has defined set of objectives, subjects or priorities and they differ from each other depending on whether they have been defined as a framework, transitional objectives or targets (Table 1, column 6);
- in all cases, except Ireland, Hungary, Serbia and Croatia, the strategic documents following NTP have been defined;
- all documents contain basic information on transport system, while the level of modelling and analyses in the process of elaboration of NTP is presented only in some documents (Great Britain, Spain, Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

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Table 1 – Main characteristics of National Transport Policies

Country	Document title	Time frame	Pages	Scope	Contents (elements)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
RUS	Transport strategy of Russia for the period up to 2030 (MINTRANS, 2008)	2009-2030	263	strategy with the development priorities and tactical objectives	objectives of the strategy – the expected outcomes, the objectives of transport system development – priorities – tasks – indicators
SRB	Strategy of railway, road, inland waterways, air and intermodal transport development in Republic of Serbia (Serbian Government, 2008)	2008-2015	47	strategic framework – guidelines for decision-making for individual modes	main objectives – activities – responsible for these activities, goals and directions for action by modes
IRL	Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy (DOT, 2008)	2008-2011	75	strategic framework for actions in the short term	high level goals – objectives – strategies – performance indicators
MNE	Transport development strategy of Montenegro (MSPT, 2008)	/	40	framework, guidelines, planned funds (infrastructure rehabilitation)	strategic objectives – sub objectives – activities, indicators of strategy implementation
FIN	Transport 2030: Major challenges, new directions (MoTC, 2007)	2007-2030	44	guidelines for long-term period	objectives – elements of TP framework – strategies
GB	Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World (DfT, 2007)	2009-2019	90	framework of strategic development	goals, challenges, priorities, investment plan to 2014, planning directions and principles beyond 2014
NL	Mobility Policy Document: Towards reliable and predictable accessibility (V&W and VROM, 2006)	2005-2020	161	strategic and investment plan	essential policy elements – objectives – implementation principles – activities and/or instruments
E	Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan (PEIT) (MdF, 2005)	2005-2020	179	guidelines for sectoral policies, priorities and areas of activity	general objectives, specific objectives, priorities, activities
SK	Transport policy of the Slovak Republic until 2015 (MTPT, 2005)	2005-2015	42	framework that establishes the principles, objectives and priorities	core principles, global objectives – specific objectives – priorities – instruments by modes
H	Hungarian Transport Policy (MEAT, 2004)	2003-2015	46	strategic framework with the goals elaborated in detail	top priority objectives, strategic goals, development programmes – priorities – instruments
BIH	Transport Master Plan in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pacific Consultants International, 2001)	2001-2020	47 + ent	strategic and investment plan for transport modes	general objectives, strategies, investment plan
HR	Strategy of transport development in Republic of Croatia (Croatian Parliament, 1999)	2000-2010	140	long-term development direction	general objectives, objectives of individual modes development

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- during the preparation of these documents in which it is indicated, the competent ministry cooperated with other national authorities and institutions, as well as with regional and local administrations, except Ireland where only the participation of agencies and companies under the competence of the ministry is mentioned, while in the case of the Great Britain and Spain, besides the listed state institutions, it is also mentioned public participation, that is, the participation of trade unions, associations, companies and citizens;
- in most NTP, monitoring and adjustment have been defined by submission of an annual report, except in the case of Hungary where they are not mentioned, while in the Czech Republic the report is submitted every 2 years, in Finland at the beginning of the election period, in Serbia as mid-term review, and in Spain every 4 years according to a procedure that will be developed.

NTP and the succeeding documents should define indicators for determining the achievement of the transport policy objectives and priorities, as well as mechanisms for policy development, monitoring and evaluation. From the presented, although all NTP documents have mechanism for monitoring and reporting on implementation progress only three have explicitly defined indicators. Russian NTP has indicators for each of the objectives, Irish has key performance indicators for each strategy (although often expressed as objectives), and Montenegrin has a set of indicators for the monitoring of the overall transport policy results. In addition to the obvious lack of indicators (Table 2, white boxes), there is also a problem of inconsistent structure of objectives, instruments and indicators which makes their monitoring and evaluation even more difficult. The analysis of the structure of elements of the observed NTP shows certain inconsistencies in the definition of objectives or indicators (Table 2, boxes marked with different colours). For example, in Russian, Spanish and Hungarian NTP, the defined external (general) objectives are not related to the specific objectives and instruments, while in the Serbian NTP external objective are consistent with instruments but objectives are specified inconsistently. If this structure was analysed by different areas of action, or by bringing in strategic documents of lower levels, the inconsistency would be even more evident. Because of that, the possibility of monitoring and controlling is limited and it can lead to different interpretations of elements, which can finally result in the deviation of transport development from the defined transport policy.

Table 2 – Overview of the NTP structure consistency

Country NTP elements	RUS	SRB	IRL	MNE	FIN	GB	NL	E	SK	H
External objectives										
Objectives										
Instruments										
Indicators										

Ideally, the general objectives should be defined by the Government policy, that is, by public policies in the field of economics, by social policy and environmental policy. On the contrary, it is possible to define them on the basis of the international framework (EU transport policy) or by using NTP of other countries having similar general characteristics like GDP, transportation share in GDP, population etc. and other characteristics of transport system such as a road, rail and inland waterway network density (km/1000km²), motorization rate or number of vehicle per km², passenger km and freight tonne km etc.

On the basis of the general objectives, specific objectives are defined pointing out the expected results. After that, the directions of (policy) actions are defined making it possible to reach the desired results. General objectives, specific objectives and policies may be expressed and formally adopted by the document *Transport Policy Framework*. After that, in order to carry out the policies, operational objectives and instruments (means and ways of action) are defined by recognizing barriers and constraints in their implementation, as well as the indicators used to measure the direct results of their implementation (e.g. length of the (re)constructed roads).

In the case that operational objectives and instruments are defined and adopted by the same document together with general objectives, specific objectives and policies, the document is called *National Transport Strategy*. If the *Transport Policy Framework* represents a separate document, the operational objectives and instruments are defined, either for specific transport modes or functionally, proceeding from the objectives and policies defined by the framework and they are formalized in documents such as, for example, *Transport of Dangerous Goods in Finland: Strategy* or *Railway Promotion Strategy* (Spain). Furthermore are defined programs, plans and projects, as well as mechanisms for the realization of the defined instruments, by stating precisely necessary financial resources, terms of realization and concrete instruments (legal, informative...).

The procedure of strategic planning is an iterative process and it is not necessary to start from the objectives, although they are usually defined first, but is important to achieve consistency and coherency in a horizontal sense (existence of connections between objectives, policies, instruments and indicators), as well as in a vertical sense (layering of domains and area of action).

5. TRANSPORT POLICY IN WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES

5.1. Key contextual factors for transport policy making

Western Balkans countries, regarded as a term and as a unique region, have been defined in the process of negotiation for their accession to the EU. These countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Not only that they form an entity from the geographical, cultural and historical point of view, but their process of

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European integrations is being carried out almost simultaneously and under the same conditions for all listed countries. They all belong to small countries, according to their surface and population, as well as according to GDP per capita (Table 3).

Table 3 – Main features of Western Balkans countries

Country	Surface (km ²)	Population in 000	Population density	GDP per capita (\$)	Accession to the EU – status
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
AL	28.748	3.639	126,3	4.241	2009 applied for membership
BIH	51.209	4.613	90,2	4.625	Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in process of ratification
HR	56.594	4.489	81,0	15.663	Candidate country – negotiations started in 2005
MK	25.713	2.114	82,8	4.565	Candidate country since 2005
MNE	13.813	672	50,0	7.817	SAA in process of ratification
SRB	88.361	7.334	107,5	6.782	SAA signed, Interim Agreement entered into force 2009

In the same time, in the Western Balkans countries NTP is created and implemented in a common specific context. There are several facts pointing to the specificity of this region. Firstly, all the Western Balkans countries, except for Albania, where republics of one federal state, Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, with specific internal and foreign politics defined as "neither east nor west". (The means of production were owned by workers). Secondly, during the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, many resources were destroyed or reduced (industry, services, knowledge, important migrations of the population, etc). Thirdly, even before the disintegration, the society was involved in transitional changes that were not finished yet in many segments of the society. Such context points out the importance of studying the situation in which transport policy is passed and implemented and which has common characteristics for all the countries in the Western Balkans region. Besides that, they are at the similar level of development and have similar institutional capacities which results with important barriers and constraints.

All that should be kept in mind while setting the NTP. The following points present only the most important characteristics regarding the setting, institutions and employees.

1. Direct consequence of the above mentioned specificities of the region are frequent elections that were preventing introduction of a long term policy and planning of transport sector development. The example of Serbia is very characteristic. During the period from 2000 to 2008, there were 5 parliamentary and 6 presidential elections which were almost always held in different times. (On the average, every year there were some elections at the state level.) Due to such a shorten election periods, politicians and their governments have become uninterested in creation and realization of strategic documents. In the same time, even if such documents exist, in the conditions of frequent elections, politicians either tend to change them easily or they do not respect them.

2. The world economic crisis and its uncertain duration, as well as a lack of unique proposed measures for overcoming its consequences in Western Balkans transitional countries, create even more unfavourable environment for governments' strategic actions in transport sector. In such conditions, it is extremely difficult to define a valid and consistent long term policy.
3. Unfinished transition of the society and economy disables the creation of valid external objectives for transport sector. In the same time, all countries of this region are in the process of European integrations which are carried out with more or less interruptions due to different political reasons.
4. Restructuring of national institutions and their human resources is in progress. At the moment, no country has capacities to implement adopted NTP, neither it is capable of developing mechanisms for its implementation in the shorter period of time. Human resources lack appropriate knowledge in this field and they have difficulties in adapting to new demands.
5. NTP adopted in Western Balkans countries, regardless whether they are short, medium or long term, are unreal and they do not comply with financial resources that can be provided. NTP or action plans resulting from NTP exceed the possibilities of a country to borrow from international financial institutions.
6. Legal framework for planning does not exist or it is not finished. Besides that, it is continuously subject to turbulences due to the harmonisation with *Acquis communautaire* so that certain institutions of transport sector are not even aware of the regulations that have been passed and they do not govern using those regulations. Also, there is a lack of legal competences regarding the application of different instruments or, the existing laws make it difficult. The distribution of competences between different competent institutions is unclear and inconsistent.

5.2. Recommendations regarding the structure and contents of NTP

Overview and analyses of NTP in European countries given in the previous chapter point out different problems that are occurring during its elaboration and implementation. These problems concern, first of all, non-existence of indicators, then, inconsistent organization of complex structure including objectives, instruments and indicators and, finally, a certain inconsistency in the very definition. Briefly, even in stable countries with developed institutions and mechanisms for the implementation of transport policy, there is an inconsistent NTP and its realization. Inconsistency appears in spite of the fact that all NTP are starting from the same guidelines for all the EU countries defined in the White Book. Due to all those facts, the possibility of monitoring and control is limited and there are different interpretations of elements creating deviations of transport development from the defined transport policy. Such inconsistencies are mostly result of an excessively ambitious concept of documents in regard to the reality and dynamics of circumstances' changes, as well

because of an unrealistic observation of possibilities that offer institutions in charge for the implementation of NTP.

The experiences of stable EU countries show that in small countries, especially if they are in the process of transition and/or European integration, NTP shall be created with a different approach. All experiences regarding inconsistencies of the EU countries should be taken into account, particularly all circumstantial characteristics, real possibilities of state administration in small countries, actual characteristics of institutional capacities in transport sector and its development possibilities. Very often, it is not reasonable to require the same scope of all NTP elements and in the same way as it was defined in literature or according to the practice in developed and larger countries.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, and on the bases of the key characteristics, the form and contents of NTP for small countries in transition should be defined according to the following recommendations:

- NTP time frame should be shorter, that is, time periods of elaboration and innovation of NTP should be more frequent. According to the previous experiences, the most realistic time frame is a 3 years period;
- NTP should be in accordance with a capacity of state institutions, including human resources participating in its realization and it should also contain analyses in that respect;
- Coherent and simple structure of documents focused, first of all, on actions and agencies/bodies in charge for their implementation;
- NTP should be based on the existing and anticipated international and national transport flows due to poorly defined external objectives, more precisely, unfinished transition and restructuring of the economic sector;
- Uniform rank list of projects for all modes of transport with a cost-benefit analysis for the period of the next three years should be defined;
- NTP should also include institutional and other capacities building programme in transport sector;
- Regarding a lack of financial resources, a relevant financing analysis should be provided with the concrete suggestions for different projects;
- NTP should determine legal instruments and the concrete timetable for the elaboration of laws which are in compliance with SAA or negotiation process of the accession to the EU and capacities of institutions in that respect.

When a country doesn't have experience and tradition in strategic transport planning, and if there are no external objectives assigned (neither they can exist without an economy development strategy), it is hard to apply given recommendations. Therefore, the demands for transport strategic documents are reduced to the infrastructure investment plans. Under those conditions, the best way is to use Transport Master Plan, as a way of strategic planning, as well as the form of strategic document.

On the other hand, as a consequence of the situation where there is no umbrella document and where the investments are financed by international financial institutions (IFI), all infrastructure projects are subject to a feasibility check controlled by IFI. For these jobs IFI engage credible consulting companies, while domestic public and knowledge resources are usually minimally involved. This concerns situations and demands for necessary acceleration of investments. Strengthening economic and institutional capacities of a country creates possibilities for external setting of general objectives, as a prerequisite for creation and adoption of an indispensable umbrella document. These elements should be included in the next period of planning and elaboration of NTP. Therefore, the planning cycle should be shorter, more exactly, shorter time frame of NTP would be better in this situation. The order of elements specifications, as well as implementation, should be flexible and variable allowing adding and definition in stages towards comprehensiveness over time.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Western Balkans countries are in the process of intense integration to the EU. Construction of a comprehensive and compatible transport system is one of the most important issues of that process. That transport system cannot be realized without strategic documents regarding development of transport and their consistent application. It has turned out that such documents are not easy to produce due to a number of external prerequisites (objectives set from the outside, strategy of economic development, etc). On the other hand, the lack of standards for the elaboration of such strategic documents and different interpretations of elements of strategic planning make this process even more difficult, particularly for the countries which are in transition, like Western Balkans countries.

Bearing in mind similar context of Western Balkans countries regarding their conditions and starting positions for creation of a strategic transport plan, and that they belong to the same group of countries regarding their size, as well as the overview of strategies presented, the question is how to choose the best practice in order to create their coherent strategic documents on the development of transport systems.

According to the given overview that presents interpretation of terms and strategies, the approach in elaboration of the strategic documents is not uniform and there are inconsistencies in development of all parts of a comprehensive national transport policy, even in developed countries. This paper points out some of those inconsistencies, defines the key elements of the strategic planning, as well as the recommendations for creation of a comprehensive strategy in Western Balkans countries, emphasizing particularly the importance of relations existing between objectives, policies, instruments and indicators.

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