

Brussels, 9 June 2006

High-speed progress on the Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Vienna-Bratislava rail link

Ministers from Germany, Austria, Slovakia and France have signed a statement of intent committing to complete the Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Vienna-Bratislava high-speed rail link as soon as possible.

Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission with special responsibility for transport, welcomed the progress and expressed the hope that *“the cooperation between the four countries crossed by this rail link will continue along the same course to achieve the rapid completion of this priority project”*.

“The three cross-border sections of this route will be completed in a shortened timeframe”, said Peter Balázs, European coordinator of this project, welcoming the news.

Vice-President Barrot emphasised that the Commission's decision to nominate coordinators was clearly paying off and the statement of intent was just one example of this. On 29 July 2005, six coordinators were nominated with the agreement of the European Parliament and the Member States concerned. Five coordinators (Mr Van Miert, Mr Davignon, Mr Telicka, Mr Balázs and Mrs de Palacio) were closely following the priority rail links, and the sixth coordinator, Mr Vinck, has been nominated to coordinate the introduction of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), the European Union's common system.

Peter Balázs, the former Hungarian Commissioner, is responsible for the “Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Vienna-Bratislava” project. He stressed that, beyond the good intentions expressed in the statement of intent, the four Member States concerned had firmly committed to completing this rail link. More than 10 billion euros have already been invested. In addition, two bilateral treaties were signed in the spring between France and Germany and between Germany and Austria, enabling the two bridges to be built across the Rhine and the Saalach, the frontiers between these countries.