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CONTAINER - FEEDER SERVICE RIJEKA (PLOČE) - GIOIA TAURO (MALTA)

ABSTRACT

Over the recent years the container feeder service is becoming an increasingly important element of containerisation. The changes in container flows caused by political changes in Central Europe have resulted in a drain of a significant part of this transport from the Adriatic to the North European ports. The introduction of the container train Budapest – Rijeka, for the needs of feeder service would mean a significant step towards revitalisation of the Rijeka transport route.

With adequate government support, the Croatian sea-going ship operators will form the basic factor in the development of containerisation and feeder service, and this will result in the return of the container transport to the ports of Rijeka and Ploče, thus at the same time improving the Croatian foreign trade exchange and increasing the level of exploitation at the mentioned ports, railway, agents, forwarding agents, and ships owned by line ship operators.

KEY WORDS

feeder service, combined transport, container flows

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the recent several years the fall in traffic passing through the port of Rijeka has been evident, and especially the decrease in container traffic, contrary to the adjacent port of Koper which has marked a growth in transport of all kinds of cargo.

The intention of this paper is not to comment on nor analyse such condition, which has resulted from various reasons. However, it is our wish to join the efforts and general opinions, both of the Port of Rijeka, town of Rijeka and the Croatian government, that everything possible should be done in order to increase traffic and revitalise the Rijeka traffic route.

This, for a simple reason that the mentioned route does not mean only the port of Rijeka and the traffic passing through. It includes also employment of capacities of the Croatian railways, ship operators, sea agencies, forwarding companies, control companies and all those who are in any way related to cargo transported along this route.

That is the reason for the initiative given by Transadria Rijeka, as international forwarding agent, Port of Rijeka, Croatian Railways and Lošinjska plovidba from Mali Lošinj as the ship operator, in considering the possibilities of attracting cargo to this route by opening a container feeder service from Rijeka towards the ports of Gioia Tauro, and Malta, as a regular shipping line that would transport containers from the consumer markets to the mentioned ports, for further shipment by vessels of well-known major operators to different world destinations.

2. CONTAINER TRANSPORT

Monitoring container traffic through the port of Rijeka in TEU, it is clear that in 1996 it amounted to 11267 full TEUs, out of which 8298 in transit and 2969 TEUs for Croatia in import and export.

By adding to the mentioned number 7714 manipulated empty containers, a total traffic in 1996 can be noted of 19500 containers, which is compared to 1989 and the traffic of 52500 TEU a great decrease and data that offers reason for worry.

Nor does traffic in 1997 show any signs of increase, which is a serious warning for urgent consideration of these problems and for starting necessary actions for revitalisation and increase of traffic.

3. GEO-TRAFFIC ADVANTAGES

In any case, the Rijeka traffic route (corridor Vb) has its geo-traffic advantages. By means of well worked out activities in organising railway and road transport, good service and acceptable prices of port services, as well as by regular shipping line also with acceptable and competitive prices, these advantages may return the container traffic to this route.

Therefore, opening a regular shipping container feeder service from Rijeka (Ploče) to Gioia Tauro and Malta, means connecting Rijeka with all the destinations worldwide by means of regular lines of the major world ship operators that use the mentioned ports as container collecting points.

It needs to be said that very vague answers are obtained in direct contacts with service users who use the adjacent ports and the ports of Northern Europe for their container transport at the moment, regarding moving their cargo transport to this route when it comes into function, noting that the deciding role would belong to the quality of service, price (that should be even 10% lower than the competitive route), and transit time (time needed for the cargo to reach from the origin to the destination).

In a way, these answers seem to be expected and normal since it is the service which needs to be offered first, and simultaneously or later, as a constant, this would:

- establish real and necessary contacts with the potential users of our services,
- organise efficient system of informing the market,
- design and plan efficient promotion with emphasis on the advantages of this route.

4. COMPETITIVENESS OF THE ROUTE

The competitiveness of the Rijeka traffic route needs to be restored by joint and planned activities, since this is, according to estimates, the decisive and last moment, which can be figuratively presented by facts that container import and export by Croatian shippers and receivers amounts to about 10000 TEU annually (data from "Container International", Nov. 1996), whereas only 3000 TEU out of that number are handled at the port of Rijeka. This means that the rest of about 7000 TEU use services offered by other ports.

The data of the Hungarian container traffic is very interesting, since this country was traditionally oriented towards maritime import and export of goods through the port of Rijeka. According to available data, the Republic of Hungary imports and exports annually about 40000 to 50000 TEU, out of which 30-40000 TEU through the North European ports, and about 10-12000 TEU through the Adriatic ports. Out of this, the port of Rijeka handled in 1996 only 2818 TEU.

Regarding the data that the rail distance between Budapest and Hamburg is 1112km, and only 595km to Rijeka, then there is no logic in transporting the cargo the longer way.

However, it needs to be mentioned that in 1992, a pair of container trains operated weekly on the relation Budapest – Hamburg and in 1997 this number increased to six pairs of trains weekly, and adding to this number the regular shipping lines from Hamburg, then no comments are needed.

Similar thing is happening with the port of Koper, where the company INTERCONTAINER-INTERFRIGO (ICF) introduced in 1997 six container trains weekly that travel on the relation Koper – Budapest (2 trains Koper – Budapest and 4 trains Budapest – Koper).

This is, then, one more element convincing us that the mentioned project has a future, since the conditions for traffic growth obviously exist.

In 1996, the Czech Republic realised traffic of 50000 TEU through the ports of Northern Europe, whereas the Republic of Slovakia, using the same ports, realised traffic of about 30000 TEU. The port of Rijeka handled in 1996 only 371 TEU of the Czech and Slovakian containers.

By far the greatest container traffic is realised by the Republic of Austria, about 220000 TEU in import and export. Most part of the transport is realised through the ports of Northern Europe, somewhat less through the Mediterranean ports, and only 250 TEU were handled in 1996 by the port of Rijeka.

5. OPERATION OF COMPETITIVE PORTS

Taking into consideration the container traffic through the closest neighbouring ports the following overview is obtained:

Port	Traffic in TEU in 1996	Increase in % with regard to 1995
Genoa	852 752	+ 34%
Trieste	176 939	+ 17%
Venice	160 000	+ 15%
Koper	64 622	+ 10%
Rijeka	19 500	– 25%
Total:	1 264 813 TEU	

If comparing the traffic of the port of Rijeka with the traffic of the competitive Northern Adriatic ports (Trieste, Koper, Venice), extreme domination of the Italian ports may be noted with a lesser share of the port of Koper.

The table data may be shown by diagrams (see Fig. 1 and 2).

Unfortunately, the only conclusion that can be made from the given data is that all the ports doing business with our neighbouring countries realised an increase in traffic compared to 1995, except for the port of Rijeka, or better, the Rijeka route, which marked a fall in traffic by as much as 25%.

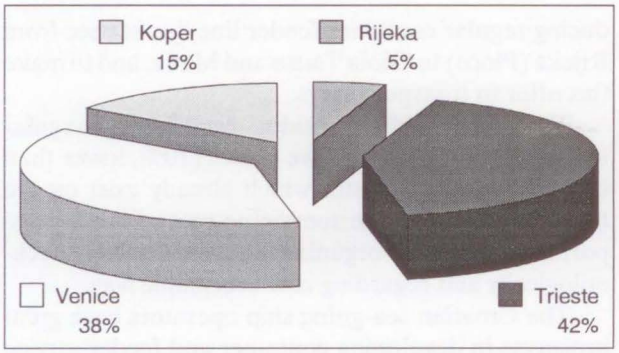

Figure 1 - Comparison of TEU transport in North Adriatic ports for 1996

(Source- Luka Rijeka)

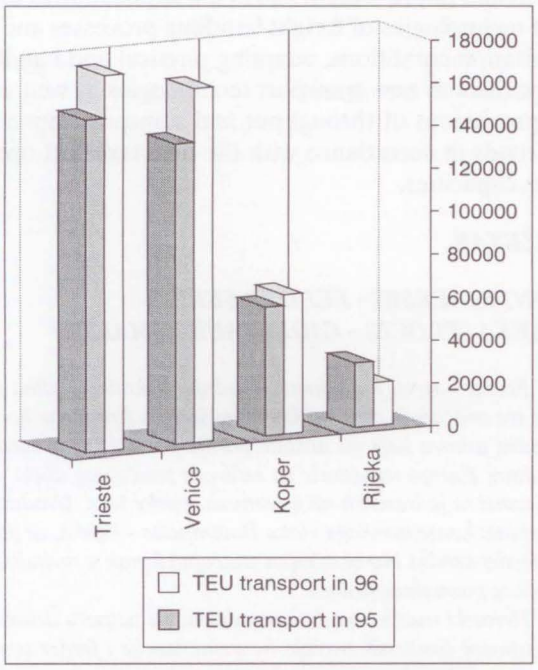

Figure 2 – Comparison of TEU transport in North Adriatic ports for the years 1995 and 1996

The reason should be looked for in the earlier extensive construction of the port system not accompanied by the appropriate construction of modern roads nor introduction of new transport technologies.

In the entirety of the Croatia port system, the greatest influence of negative development tendencies is felt in the port of Rijeka, which realises almost 2/3 of maritime traffic of all the Croatian ports.

The transit cargo passes around the Rijeka transport route and goes to other ports that are geographically further away, but provide other benefits required by the transport users.

It is therefore necessary to influence by government policy measures a fast construction of modern roads that will bridge the gap between the port handling capacities and the main connections to the hinterland.

6. ACTIVITIES FOR ESTABLISHING FEEDER SERVICE

6.1. The Rijeka Port Authorities, as organiser and contractor of feeder service, in co-operation with the Port of Rijeka company, Jadroplov, Transadria, Jadroagent and the ships of the Lošinjska Plovidba and Croatia Line (port, forwarding agent, ship operators), orders the organisation of rail container transport by CROKOMBI, combined transport operator, on the relation Budapest - Rijeka Brajdica - Budapest.

6.2. CROKOMBI Zagreb with partner Hungarokombi Budapest requires from MAV (Hungarian Railways) as business railway, the price for the route HŽ-MAV, for the transport of container train of parameters Q_{max}=1000 tonnes, l_{max}=500 m according to regulations of the international tariff Tarif Nr. 9145, 00. A discount of 10% is obtained for the price expressed in EUR on the basis of conversion unit U.T.I.-1 (40' loaded container heavier than 16.5 t) according to the regulations of the given tariff for the whole train.

6.3. MAV in co-operation with HŽ offer the prices competitive on the market compared to other maritime routes (TRIESTE, KOPER, HAMBURG). After considering and accepting the price by the combi-companies – operators (and its retail price by the contractor) a special tariff contract between the railway participants and combi-companies is drawn up and signed.

6.4. CROKOMBI as a forwarding company organises at the starting station – terminal, activities related to delivery of cargo (ordering of wagons, issuing of railway consignment notes and possibly of other necessary documentation), by engaging a forwarding agent or AGIT (Agency for Integral Transport), i.e. in their own organisation.

6.5. The Port Authorities, Port of Rijeka, forwarding agents, maritime agents, organise and activate the maritime part of the transport for all services related to that transport, whereas interrelations and tariffs are regulated by special contracts.

6.6. Acquisition activities from Hungary are organised by forwarding agents with their consignees and partners in Hungary.

6.7. The number of containers is guaranteed by the contractor to the combi-company – operator. Based on this amount, the combi-company purchases train capacities from the railways participating. Minimum utilisation percentage of train parameters is contracted between the combi-

-companies and railway. The price for the whole train, of minimum utilisation capacity of 75% is calculated according to the real number of consignments if no exclusive right for using the track is required (the possibility remains of transporting other consignments – conventional ones up to the full utilisation of a train). In case of leasing the exclusive track, for the ordered train, at the agreed day of travelling, the full price of the train is paid regardless of the number of consignments loaded on the train.

6.8. HŽ in co-operation with MAV railways have developed an orientation time-table for the train adjusted to the arrivals and departures of the ship to and from the port of Rijeka.

Before starting transport by container train, i.e. delivery of a group of wagons, it is necessary to stipulate by internal organisational measures the method of ordering and delivering wagons, making out the locomotive, method of controlling the train movement, and its agreed composition.

6.9. The Port Authorities, Port of Rijeka, forwarding agents and agencies, as well as the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Communications have to co-ordinate the work of government institutions (customs, veterinary, phytopathological and sanitary control) regarding the arrival and departure of the ship, i.e. train (weekends, public and religious holidays, night-shifts, etc.) as well as the operation of other services in the port of Rijeka (Ploče).

6.10. Promotion activities, commercial name of the container train (RIJEKA EXPRESS as suggested by the HŽ), should be carried out by the Port Authorities Rijeka in co-operation with all the feeder participants and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Communications.

7. CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the fact that Rijeka is geo-traffically closer to certain consumer markets, it is obvious that the problem of traffic decrease may be assigned to the lack of ship lines from Rijeka, insufficient activities of all the subjects involved on this route, as well as of a greater governmental support (ship operator subventions), in order to start an action regarding return of the former traffic taken over by other ports due to their developed offers of higher quality.

Considering the above mentioned facts, the intention of the initially mentioned subjects (15) is to connect Rijeka with the destinations worldwide by introducing regular container feeder line, i.e. service from Rijeka (Ploče) to Gioia Tauro and Malta, and to make this offer to transport users.

This means that besides establishing regular feeder line with competitive prices (10%, lower than other competitive routes which already exist on the transport market), the remaining part of land transport should also be organised in a qualitatively, technologically and regarding cost acceptable way.

The Croatian sea-going ship operators have great prospects in developing container and feeder service only with adequate support (subvention) by the government.

Of course, the basic prerequisite of such a development and improvement lies in the application of modern technologies of freight handling processes and exploitation conditions, adapting physical and handling capacities to new transport technologies as well as in improvement of throughput and transport capacities of roads in accordance with the port terminal operation capacities.

SAŽETAK

KONTEJNERSKI - FEEDER SERVIS RIJEKA (PLOČE) - GIOIA TAURO (MALTA)

Feeder - servis kontejnera u zadnjih nekoliko godina postaje sve značajniji element kontejnerizacije. Promjene kontejnerskih tokova koje su nastale poslije političkih promjena u Srednjoj Europi rezultirale su odlivom značajnog dijela ovih prijevoza sa jadranskih na sjevernoeuropske luke. Uvođenjem u promet kontejnerskoga vlaka Budimpešta - Rijeka, za potrebe feeder servisa bio bi učinjen značajan korak u revitalizaciji riječkog prometnog pravca.

Hrvatski morski brodari uz adekvatnu potporu države bit će osnovni čimbenik razvoja kontejnerizacije i feeder servisa, što će rezultirati vraćanjem kontejnerskoga prometa u luku Rijeka i Ploče, čime se istovremeno unaprjeđuje hrvatska vanjsko - trgovinska razmjena i povećava razina korištenja spomenutih luka, željeznica, agenata, špeditera i brodova linijskih brodara.

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