EU Agency for Railways continues with EUMedRail project

Targeting Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon, the EUMedRail project aims to strengthen railway safety and interoperability in the South Mediterranean region.

One of the key tasks of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) is to promote European standards, regulation, and practices to third countries. In line with this objective, the European Commission (EC) released a grant to develop a technical assistance project on railway safety and interoperability with the Southern Mediterranean partners in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The project is based on the conditions of the Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean region, signed by the Ministers of Transport of the region in 2013 for the period 2014-2020.

Targeting Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, the EUMedRail project aims to strengthen railway safety and interoperability in the South Mediterranean from 2017 to 2020. The promotion of Safety Management System (SMS) and safety standards will improve safe railway operation and the railway sector in the region. Passengers and freight will benefit from better conditions, attracting more investment to stimulate economic growth.

The official kick-off in October 2017 was followed by a seminar on international railway legislation in cooperation with the International Union of Railways (UIC). While some of the EUMedRail beneficiaries are already members of UIC, others were interested to learn more about this international organisation, which facilitates the development of contracts for the international carriage of passengers and freight by rail across member countries. Reinforcing cooperation with international organisations, the promotion of international rail transport, and the convention concerning international carriage by rail were key elements of discussion.

Present in the Trans-European Network for Transports (TEN-T) Days, EUMedRail partners gathered to introduce their respective railway systems, and to define the areas of collaboration with ERA. The requests for capacity building workshops on accident investigation, safety management systems, the issuance of safety certificates to railway undertakings, the migration strategies to ERTMS and railway safety reporting were taken into account.

**EUMedRail Action Plan**

With a specifically tailored EUMedRail Action Plan, the project has initiated several technical assistance activities to provide technical and legal support on railway safety reforms, particularly to establish Railway Safety Authorities and improve the National Investigation Bodies. The European Safety Management System (SMS) and safety standards will improve safe railway operation and the railway sector in the region. Passengers and freight will benefit from better conditions, attracting more investment to stimulate economic growth.

The involvement of European railway administrations has been key to illustrate best practices of the safety regulatory framework. The National Safety Authorities of France and the Netherlands presented their main mission delivering safety certificates, vehicle authorisation licences to train drivers, and monitoring supervision. Railway accident investigators from Portugal, Croatia, and Romania also informed about the methodology and the practical procedures in the accident investigation process in seminars on the National Investigation Bodies.

The project continues in 2020 with topics of interest including the transport of dangerous goods, the licensing of train drivers and the improved governance, supervision and cooperation of the rail sector stakeholders. Technical visits and secondments to the Agency will be organised to facilitate the exchange of experiences, promote and support the implementation of Safety Management System.

**References:**

1. This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.