

"Un mare di Svizzera": Lugano 14 March 2018

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Positive signals emerged from the International Seminar hosted by the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority in Lugano on 14 March at the LAC Conference Centre: the time is ripe for a change of direction along the North-South axis of one of Europe's busiest freight routes, with a marked shift towards the Ports of Genoa and Savona.

- The Ports of Genoa and Savona are set to accommodate trains up to 750 m in length, and will therefore be in a position to guarantee competitive rail freight rates which will contribute to redressing the balance between Northern and Southern European.
- A key element of the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority strategy includes a public/private investment programme of over 2 billion euros (including the new breakwater in Genoa) designed to upgrade port facilities and freight rail services.
- Official launch of the high-speed/high-capacity rail link project between Lugano and Milan.
- The Ceneri Base Tunnel is to open in December 2020, the Terzo Valico (third railway line across the Apennines) to be completed in 2021, and the new Milano-Lugano rail link to connect the two cities in 22 minutes.
- A Cooperation Agreement is to be signed between Genoa and Lugano.

Paolo Emilio Signorini, President of the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority, focused on these factors as integral to the achievement of an overall efficient and competitive port logistics platform, serving not only Northern Italy but also Switzerland and Southern Europe overall.

The President of the Ports of Genoa declared that "To date, we already have the capability to increase the competitiveness of the port by continuing in our firm commitment to enhance the efficiency of the port terminal services provided and to upgrade existing rail links, but, as has been reiterated in the course of today's proceedings, this must run alongside the completion of the new infrastructure planned along the Mediterranean-Rhine axis."

Paolo Signorini highlighted two elements as the key to the future success of Genoa and Savona. On the one hand, investments in new port infrastructure, which will cater for the requirements of the ultra-large container ships and will phase in the relocation and construction of a new breakwater, are to focus on the western bay of the port for a total investment programme of over 2 billion euros. On the other hand, a complete overhaul of a range of major rail infrastructure is allied to a highly efficient governance of the new infrastructure.

One of the keynote speakers at the event, Pawel Wojciechowski, the Coordinator of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, underlined the strategic importance of this freight route, one of the busiest in Europe, and reiterated that the completion of the projects which constitute the multimodal corridor is considered a key priority on the part of the EU.

The following factors emerged from the forum as the driving force behind the revolution underway:

- An acceleration of the engineering and construction works of the Terzo Valico rail link between Genoa and Milan, scheduled for completion by 2021, will boost the provision of rail freight services and thereby contribute significantly to improving the modal split to/from the Port of Genoa from road to rail. In addition, the passenger transit time will be reduced to 45 minutes in a process which is set to improve integration between the cities of Genoa and Milan.
- The opening of the Monte Ceneri Base Tunnel, scheduled for December 2020, between Lugano and Gotthard which will cut the transit time between Lugano and Zurich to one hour and 45 minutes.
- Implementation of the high-speed rail link between Lugano and Milan will reduce the journey time to 22 minutes.

Within this framework, the Mayors of Genoa and Lugano, Marco Bucci and Marco Borradori, announced their intent to forge closer ties across a Cooperation Agreement between the two cities, and the designation of Genoa as host city in April 2019 of the Bilateral Forum between Italy and Switzerland which will also focus on a future rail transit time of just over one hour between Genoa and Lugano.

The President of the Liguria Region, Giovanni Toti, in his closing remarks to the conference, underlined that “the Ligurian port range ranks as the premier port range in Italy and, therefore, is a great asset to Europe overall.” The Ligurian ports are an essential tool in the economic development of the whole of Europe.