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EUROPEAN ADVANTAGE

Hungary paves way to greater EU access and beyond

For Canadian exporters of transportation equipment and services, Hungary may be the ideal springboard to the 455 million people of the EU and beyond.

Hungary's admission to the EU in 2004 solidified its role as a gateway between the countries of the EU and non-member states. "Several of the main European transport corridors cross Hungary, making it an ideal logistical centre," says Eva Bosze, Trade Commissioner at the Canadian Embassy in Hungary. As a result of its continuously expanding network, Hungary is now considered both a target market as well as an ideal transit area for the transportation of goods to alternate markets.

Opportunities

"On the supply side, opportunities exist for exporters who can provide components and sub-systems for cars and locomotives, rail and track equipment, and signalling equipment," says Bosze, who adds that tenders have already been launched for parts of two Budapest metro projects including tunnelling, station construction, railway tracks and automatic train operating systems. Over 200 new train carriages will also be needed. "It is anticipated that another public tender will be launched for line extensions including four more stations," she says.

For consultation firms, Bosze says opportunities exist in railway privatization, property development, engineering and management, particularly in the area of technical training. "There are similar projects in neighbouring countries like Slovenia, Croatia and Romania.

Hungary's rail network has some 8,000 kilometres of track, of which only 35% is electrified. Traditionally, the government-owned railway company, Hungarian State Railways, has controlled 98% of the market. However, as part of the EU accession agreement, Hungary has committed to opening up its railway and roadway sectors to further private investment. In 2003, the domestic value of the railway sector in Hungary stood at \$1.4 billion. The government has also announced an ambitious railway restructuring program.

The road to expansion

The Government of Hungary has recently introduced its Hungarian Transport Concept, a program that is expected to conclude in 2015. One of its main objectives is Hungary's integration into pan-European transportation corridors, focusing on motorways, trunk railroads, national public ports and inter-

modal transport systems, as well as increasing the load-bearing capacity of roads. There will also be a focus on updating border crossings and modernizing domestic roads and railways.

A 702-kilometre roadway plan, which includes infrastructure projects like the construction of an additional 430 kilometres of expressway by the end of 2006, is currently



Revellers in Budapest celebrate Hungary's membership in the EU on May 1, 2004.

underway. The focus has been on building high-quality expressways to help ease urban congestion while at the same time improving the European transport corridors that weave throughout the Hungarian roadway system.

Hungary has attracted significant foreign investment from transport operators interested in reaching the EU market through a quality regional logistics hub. This logistical potential also explains Hungary's advantages in attracting automotive parts, electronics assembly and the time-sensitive global supply chain manufacturing.

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