

UNITED NATIONS



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UNECE – UNESCAP

*UN Development Account Capacity Building Project on
Interregional Transport Linkages*

**UNECE National Workshop on the Facilitation of Interregional Transport
Along the Euro-Asian Transport Links**

(Chisinau, Moldova, 6-7 November 2007)

CONCLUSIONS

Organized and sponsored by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and kindly hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Road Industry of Moldova, a **national Workshop on the facilitation of interregional transport along the Euro-Asian transport links** was held on 6th and 7th November 2007 in Chisinau, Moldova.

Mr. Botnari, Deputy Minister of Transport and Road Industry of Moldova, opened the UNECE Workshop, which was attended by more than 50 government officials and transport sector stakeholders. The government was represented by officials from Ministries of Transport, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Health, Environment and Customs Service. The transport sector was represented by executives and experts from state-owned enterprises, private firms and associations.

The Workshop aimed to assist Moldova in the development of a favourable transit environment on its territory that would facilitate international transport and trade along the Euro-Asian transport links (EATL), support ongoing national efforts to accede to and implement relevant UNECE agreements and conventions as well as to foster cooperation amongst major national stakeholders involved in transit and border-crossing operations.

The two-day Workshop allowed the participants to get a deeper insight into the major UNECE legal instruments and initiatives on transport and trade facilitation, exchange views with UNECE experts on the main issues of transport and trade facilitation at national, sub-regional and interregional levels and discuss various options for a strengthening of national coordination mechanisms for the facilitation of international transport and trade along the Euro-Asian transport links.

UNECE experts gave presentations on the progress of the joint UNECE-UNESCAP Euro-Asian Transport Linkages project; on the Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects; on key UNECE legal instruments for the facilitation of international transport; and on existing experiences with national coordination mechanisms in countries along the Euro-Asian transport links.

Experts from the Ministry of Transport and Road Industry, Customs Service, Confederation of Organisations in Road Transport Enforcement (CORTE), a German ATP-Testing and Certification agency (TÜV SÜD), Railways of Moldova, road transport companies and

associations reviewed the status of accession to and implementation of major UNECE transport agreements and conventions and reported on the national and international experiences with transport facilitation and remaining challenges.

Representatives of the road transport sector raised a number of issues and problems pertaining to international carriage of goods by road the solution of which is crucial for effective transit and international transport by road in Moldova as well as other countries along the Euro-Asian transport links.

Participants at the Workshop reached a number of conclusions, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Transport is a strategic factor for economic development and job creation. An efficient and sustainable transport system is vital for international trade and tourism, which have a major and increasing impact on economic growth and international competitiveness.
2. Inadequate transport infrastructures, bottlenecks and missing links, as well as transport legislation that varies from one country to another, different and arbitrary taxes and charges, and cumbersome and time-consuming border procedures are among the major obstacles for the development of international transport and trade along the Euro-Asian transport links.
3. Solutions to these problems require, *inter alia*, coordinated action of concerned governments in the framework of international organizations aimed at developing adequate, coherent and integrated international transport networks and an internationally harmonized regulatory framework that enables the development of efficient, uninterrupted, safe and sustainable transport services.
4. The UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport provide a common legal and technical platform for UNECE Member States, as well as for other countries along the Euro-Asian transport links, to establish interregional transport networks, simplified border procedures, rules for safe road traffic, safety and environmental regulations for the construction of vehicles, and regulations for the safe carriage of dangerous goods and perishable foodstuffs. In addition, these legal instruments are major tools for enhancing the efficiency of international transport operations, facilitating international trade and further developing and integrating national transport systems within Europe and Asia.
5. The accession to and efficient implementation of the major UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport could reduce considerably costs of transport operations among countries in the Euro-Asian region as well as between this region and other regions in the world.
6. Noting that Moldova is already Contracting Party to a number of the main UNECE transport infrastructure and facilitation agreements, it was invited to consider adhering to those major UNECE agreements and conventions to which it has not yet acceded, and ensure full implementation.
7. Considering that the UNECE sponsored TEM and TER Projects provide an intergovernmental forum for closer cooperation amongst Central, Eastern, Southeastern European and Caucasus countries for the coordinated development of coherent road, rail and combined transport infrastructures, sharing best practices and expertise, developing investment strategies (Master Plan) as well as monitoring and improving border-crossing operations, and that these Projects provide substantial contribution to international transport along the pan-European and Euro-Asian routes, Moldovan authorities were requested to consider joining these Projects and participating in their activities.
8. Non-physical obstacles to international transport along EATL are a major concern to transport

operators. These include long waiting times at borders; difficulties in obtaining visas for professional drivers; non-harmonized implementation of international conventions; trip quotas and permits; and unjustified fiscal charges that often amount to transit taxes. It is imperative that governments do their utmost to lift non-tariff barriers to international trade and transport since any penalty on road transport means an even greater penalty for the economy as a whole.

9. In particular, an improved implementation of harmonized UNECE legislation on border-crossing procedures as well as closer cooperation among competent authorities and stakeholders on the territory of Moldova and between them and their counterparts in neighbouring countries through the exchange of information on best practices, regular meetings, other trust-building measures and problem-solving initiatives could lead to a significant reduction of the existing obstacles and delays on borders.
10. The implementation from 11 April 2007 of the new EC Regulation 561 on Driving Times and Rest Regimes on digital tachograph for all vehicles operating within the EU, i.e. both EU registered and non-EU vehicles, which is linked with the amendments to the European agreement concerning the work of crews of vehicles engaged in international road transport (AETR), raises serious concerns. Noting that the implementation of the amendments to the AETR on digital tachograph will pose a number of challenges to road transport operators, Moldovan authorities were invited to take all appropriate measures aimed at preparing the road transport industry to implement the technical requirements before the new rules enter into force in 2010.
11. Participants acknowledged the concerns repeatedly expressed by professional drivers and their associations on the difficulties posed to Moldovan road transport operators by the restrictive visa practices applied by EU Member States as a result of the implementation of the Schengen agreement that considerably reduce their ability to operate efficiently in the EU market, and requested that competent authorities in these countries take necessary measures to facilitate visa procedures for professional drivers.
12. Participants noted the German experience with the implementation of the Agreement on the international carriage of perishable foodstuffs and on special equipment to be used for such carriage (ATP).
13. Participants agreed on the necessity of establishing an effective national coordination mechanism for the facilitation of international transport and trade, based on the experience of the national PRO Committee (MOLPRO) and other transport and trade facilitating initiatives. They also considered the possible structure of such a national transport and trade facilitation mechanism in Moldova and its main activities.
14. Participants also agreed to foster cooperation amongst major national stakeholders involved in transit and border-crossing operations, with a view to establish a national action plan for the facilitation of international transport and trade and recommended to the Ministry of Transport and Road Industry to take the lead in this regard and provide the Government with the blueprint for the follow up actions, based on the inputs of Workshop participants.
15. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and Road Industry of Moldova for hosting the Workshop in Chisinau, to all speakers for their valuable contributions to its success, and to the UNECE Transport Division for its initiative to organize and sponsor this event.
