

**First meeting of the joint Task Force on facilitation of border crossing of the
UNECE Trans-European Railway (TER) Project and
Central European Initiative (CEI)**

The joint Task Force for facilitation of border crossing procedures of the UNECE Trans-European Railway (TER) Project and the Central European Initiative (CEI) had its first meeting in Warsaw, Poland, on 27-28 October 2005, which was attended by experts from the following countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The priority objectives of the Task Force include, transferring of know-how on the implementation of the most advanced systems of border control in accordance with Schengen regulations, as well as promotion of international agreements and measures between neighbouring countries in order to accelerate the implementation of such advanced schemes.

The slow progress of the applicable procedures at railways border stations, in most of the countries concerned, is an obstacle to the development of international railway transport that need to be addressed. The participants agreed to take urgent measures for the facilitation of the railway border procedures, while at the same time ensuring full observance of the obligations assumed at international level for combating terrorist actions, illegal migration, drugs and or human beings trafficking.

The participants shared the experience on the most advanced railway border control measures adopted in some countries, such as Hungary, Slovenia, and Slovakia. They identified major border crossing obstacles and shortcomings caused by lack of adequate infrastructure or necessary equipment, application of inefficient administrative procedures and lack of well-trained, or insufficient staff.

A number of success cases of efficient border crossing performances at the external border of EU were also discussed. These cases are the railway border crossings of:

- Cierna n. Tisou (Slovakia) - Chop (Ukraine) based on the Schengen Rail Project prepared by UIC;
- Lokoshaza (Hungary) – Curtici (Romania) based on the study done by Slovenian Railways and UIC; and
- Svilengrad (Bulgaria) – Kapikule (Turkey) which should follow the guidelines from the Slovenian Railways study.

Discussions on the achievements obtained and follow up measures for the full implementation of Schengen schemes in CEI-TER countries would continue in 2006.