

Efforts of Central Eastern European countries on railway border crossing facilitation

UNECE - TER and CEI jointly organized a Workshop on railway border crossing facilitation in Portoroz, Slovenia, on 24 - 25 November 2004, in the framework of the CEI Summit Economic Forum.

Experts from TER and CEI member countries who attended the meeting had the opportunity to discuss railway border crossing problems and measures taken, as well as future action needed to bring border control in line with Schengen regulations or EU Directives.

The workshop reviewed the progress achieved in the facilitation of border controls in Central and Eastern Europe in the course of the last four years. The discussion was based on country inputs under the permanent monitoring process, conducted by the UNECE TER Project, in close cooperation with UIC and the European Commission – Justice and Internal Affairs.

From the examination of the situation in most of the railway border crossings in Central and Eastern Europe, the following problems were identified and recommendations were drawn:

Identified railway border crossings problems:

- Lack of adequate technology for the handling of arrival and departure of trains at the border (delayed disposition of locomotives – late arrival of staff – insufficient coordination and management etc.);
- Lack or insufficient legal basis for establishing rules and relations between railway administrations and all other interested institutions in the harmonization of border procedures;
- Slow implementation of measures in line with the need for more adequate information on flows, transmission of data inside and outside a country;
- Inaccuracy in completing the documents, thus causing major delays;
- Inadequate cooperation due to lack of initiative at all levels.

Recommendations:

- There is a need for the establishment of Railway Working Groups on a bilateral and/or multilateral basis;
- The communication among those involved in the border crossing operations should be further improved;
- All parties involved in border crossing operations should adopt and implement the best practices developed in the field;
- Border control procedures should be organized during the running train;
- The performance of non-railway procedures (such as customs formalities) should be transferred to origin and destination stations;

- For combined transport transportation, all customs and border control operations (including veterinary or phytosanitary should be carried out at the points of loading and unloading;
- Technical facilities on border crossing points should be improved;
- Performance indicators to monitor future progress on border crossing should be introduced.

A number of success cases of border crossing improvements were presented. Considering that the dissemination of such information could serve as model for wider implementation, the participants proposed the establishment of a Task Force within the TER Project to consolidate and present relevant information in a systematic way, in the coming years.

The participants recognized that special attention should be given in future to the impact which the enlarged EU or Schengen area regulations will have on border crossing control at the external border stations of the EU, in order to prevent bottlenecks and ensure the necessary fluidity of the passenger and freight traffic.

The TER Project will continue its work on monitoring the developments and progress achieved in facilitation of border control in Central and Eastern Europe in the coming years.

The TER Project is a sub-regional co-operation framework established in 1990 under the aegis of UNECE by the Governments of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. The TER Project is working for the development of railway and combined transport infrastructure in the region and is committed to assisting European integration and economic development through the facilitation of railway traffic in Europe.

The activities of the Project are supported by the contribution of 16 countries which have so far acceded to TER: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey. In addition, Belarus, Moldova, The former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Ukraine, have been participating in the activities of the Project as observer countries.

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