

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)
REGIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT COMMITTEE (RRTC)
Group of Experts on Charging Policies

**CONCLUSIONS
OF THE FIRST SESSION**

**held in Antalya (Turkey)
9 and 10 October 2001**

ATTENDANCE

1. The first session of the Group of Experts on Charging Policies, established by the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC) in accordance with the mandate provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region, and in the Joint Statement to the MoU on the implementation of Article 8, was held on 9 and 10 October 2001 in Antalya (Turkey).
2. The session was co-chaired by Mrs. Ümit Armangil, Ministry of Transport of Turkey and Mr. Martin Magold, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) secretariat.
3. The session was attended by experts of the following SECI participating States: Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia (attached is a list of participants).

A. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documentation: Informal document No.1 (2001) prepared by Turkey and the UNECE secretariat;
Informal document No. 1/1 (2001)

4. The Group of Experts adopted its agenda.

B. MANDATE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

Documentation: Informal document No. 2 (2001).

5. The Group of Experts took note of its mandate for work (Annex I).

C. REVIEW OF RESERVATIONS TO ARTICLE 8 OF THE MOU

Documentation: SECI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); Reports of the first, second, third and fourth sessions of the Regional Road Transport Committee.

6. The Group of Experts noted that the UNECE secretariat had invited the Government of Slovenia to review the reservation it had made to Article 8, paragraph 3 of the MoU. An answer to this request was still outstanding.

D. CONCLUSIONS WITH REGARD TO ROAD TRANSPORT CHARGES IN THE SECI REGION

Documentation: SECI/RRTC Road Transport Information data – Informal document No.3 (2001); ECMT Recommendations – Informal document No. 3/1 (2001); PHARE Multi-Country Transport Programme, Final Report – Executive Summary.

7. The Group of Experts had an exchange of views on the level, composition and use of road transport charges in the countries of the region, pertaining, in particular to (a) road transport user charges (time based charges), (b) tolls (distance based charges for motorways and/or ordinary roads), (c) other charges (transit, entry fees, charges for excess weight and dimensions, fees for special structures such as bridges, tunnels, etc), (d) fuel taxes and (e) vehicle taxes.

8. The Group of Experts considered these road transport charges in the light of the criteria which were stipulated in Article 8 of the MoU, particularly cost relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency, as well as in the light of the so-called “*acquis communautaire*”, including EC Directive 1999/62/EC (Annex II). The Group also considered a note received from the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), Mr. Stephen Perkins, addressing among others several criteria for determining charges in accordance with an efficient use of infrastructure.

9. The Group of Experts was informed by experts from Turkey about their proposal of a methodology regarding the calculation of cost due to the deterioration of the pavement imposed by traffic (Annex III). The Group of Experts welcomed this detailed information and invited all SECI States

participating in this work to provide similar written information (if any) to the Group of Experts at the next session with a view to establishing acceptable methodology/ies regarding the calculation of road transport charges leading to a gradual convergence of charging policies.

10. With a view to facilitating the identification of areas that may require action at the national or regional level in order to bring the existing road transport charging system of the countries in the region in line with or at least closer to the provisions of Article 8 of the MoU and the “*acquis communautaire*”, the Group of Experts developed a matrix table to be filled-in by the participating experts following the session (Annex IV). The UNECE secretariat was requested to transmit this table to all SECI participating States in order to obtain a complete picture on the compatibility of the existing road transport charges with the requirements of the MoU and the “*acquis communautaire*”.

11. On the basis of the above information, the Group of Experts decided to continue its work aiming at a gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods in the countries of the region based on a common approach for the calculation of road transport charges.

E. HOST AND VENUE OF THE SECOND SESSION

12. The Group of Experts welcomed the offer of Turkey to host its second session in early December 2001. More detailed information on the exact venue and date of the session would be communicated to all participating States in due course.

F. SECRETARIAT ASSISTANCE

13. The Group of Experts felt that the UNECE secretariat’s input was essential for the work of the Group and should therefore continue to provide secretariat support for its activities and meetings and requested all interested countries to intervene at the appropriate level, with a view to providing the necessary resources to the UNECE secretariat in this respect.

G. HOST COUNTRY

14. The Group of Experts expressed their appreciation to the Turkish Government for their expert advice on the technical issues and for the professional organization of the first session of the group of experts.

H. ADOPTION OF THE CONCLUSION

15. The Group of Experts adopted the present conclusions.

ANNEX I

Mandate for the Group of Experts on Charging Policies

The present document contains information on the mandate of the Group of Experts on charging policies. It is composed of three parts:

- Article 8 of the MoU gives the Committee the mandate of taking all appropriate steps towards rationalization and gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport. Article 8 also mentions the main principles to be taken into account, and Article 9 provides for a system of public information on existing charges and tolls as well as on future modifications.

- The Joint Statement on Charging Policies explains in more detail the principles mentioned in the MoU. It gives mandate to the Committee to set up a group of experts to study this issue. The Joint Statement also puts time frames for this work.

- The Terms of Reference for the Group of Experts on Charging Policies deal with the composition of the Group of Experts, its mission, the phased approach of the issues to be studied, the outcome of its work and reporting mechanisms. The Rules of Procedure of the RRTC also apply to the Experts Group.

**(1) ARTICLES 8 AND 9 OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
(MOU) ON THE FACILITATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ROAD
TRANSPORT OF GOODS IN THE SECI REGION**

Article 8
CHARGING POLICIES

1. The Parties agree to take all appropriate steps towards rationalization and gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods by taking account of the principles of cost-relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency.
2. The Parties shall ensure that tolls and any other forms of user charges may not be imposed at the same time for the use of the same road section. Such charges imposed on carriers shall be based on internationally recognized standard elements for the calculation of costs of road transport as well as on units (tonne-km). The respective charges shall be payable in local currency or in an international currency.
3. No charges for excess weight and/or excess dimensions shall be imposed on goods road vehicles complying with the regulations of the European Community (EC) on maximum permissible weights and dimensions in international road transport as long as they use those sections of the international E-Roads which shall be identified in accordance with Article 6 in a Protocol to this MoU to be prepared by the Committee as provided for under Article 12.

Article 9
INFORMATION SYSTEM ON CHARGES RELATED TO ROAD TRANSPORT

The Parties endeavour to provide complete, accurate and up-to-date information on all charges related to the use of their national road network by foreign operators, including advance information of any modification before their coming into force. The Parties invite the UN/ECE secretariat, in cooperation with the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and other non-governmental organizations, to publish this information for dissemination to all interested users.

* * *

(2) JOINT STATEMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 8 OF THE MOU ADOPTED BY THE REGIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT COMMITTEE ON 5 OCTOBER 2000

The Parties, with a view to implementing Article 8 of the Memorandum of Understanding, aiming at a gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods as well as to adopt the European Union standards and relevant resolutions of the ECMT through the implementation of the principles of cost-relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency, without excluding any of these principles agreed on the following:

1. Cost relatedness (tolls/user charges)

Tolls are based on the distance travelled and user charges are based on the duration of the use of the infrastructure. They shall be differentiated in relation to the cost caused by road vehicles.

The Parties shall ensure that either tolls or user charges be levied upon carriers by the end of 2002. Tolls and user charges shall not be levied simultaneously for the same road section. Additional tolls or user charges for certain elements of infrastructure (bridges, tunnels, etc.) may be maintained.

The Parties shall take adequate measures to permit the payment of tolls or user charges at any time with different means of payment.

The tolls or user charges shall be related to the cost of constructing, improving, maintaining and operating the infrastructure concerned.

Each Party shall identify elements in line with their policies concerning tolls or user charges. This process may be facilitated by a special study for the determination of basic and commonly accepted components of charging systems.

2. Non-discrimination

The Parties shall take all appropriate steps to abolish all tolls or user charges levied on a discriminatory basis by the end of 2002, all national and international carriers being subject to the same level of tolls or user charges.

3. Transparency

The Parties shall ensure the availability of the information regarding their national charging system as well as the elements of their basis with a view to arriving at a gradual convergence of charging policies. The UN/ECE secretariat is requested to update the relevant international Information System on charges, when necessary.

4. Reporting Mechanism

The above mentioned issues should be studied by an ad hoc group of experts to be established by the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC) by mid-2001. The ECMT should be invited to assist in the work of the group of experts. The group of experts may meet, whenever necessary, upon request of the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC).

The group of experts, considering the results of its study, should also evaluate the level of implementation of the above principles and prepare a report for consideration and adoption by the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC). This task should be finalized by the end of the year 2002.

* * *

(3) TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON CHARGING POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE REGIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT COMMITTEE ON 12 JUNE 2001

The Terms of reference have been established in accordance with the Joint Statement (adopted by the Regional Road Transport Committee at its third session, Heraklion, Greece, 4-6 October 2000) on the implementation of Article 8 (Charging Policies) of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region signed by the Ministers responsible for Transport on 28 April 1999 in Athens.

1. The Group of Experts shall be composed of experts designated by SECI participating States having signed the MoU. Experts from the European Commission, the ECMT and the UNECE as well as other experts, as invited by the Chair, may participate at the meetings of the Expert Group.
2. The Group of Experts shall study possibilities for a gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods in SECI participating States as well as for the adoption of relevant European Union standards and resolutions of the ECMT.
3. In order to achieve this objective, the Group of Experts shall:
 - (a) analyse all tolls (distance related) and road user charges (time related) applied in the SECI participating States, including special charges, such as for road vehicles with excess weight and dimensions, etc. Special rates for charges based on bilateral road transport agreements shall also be studied;
 - (b) study the determination of basic and commonly accepted components of charging systems and their compliance with the agreed-upon principles of cost-relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency;
 - (c) prepare proposals for harmonized charging policies for international road transport of goods in the SECI participating States in line with relevant European Union standards and the relevant resolutions of the ECMT based on the principles of cost-relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency, without excluding any of these principles;
 - (d) propose mechanisms and possible deadlines for implementation of such charging policies in SECI participating States.

4. The Group of Experts shall report on its activities to the Regional Road Transport Committee. A final report on the results of its work shall be transmitted to the Committee for consideration and adoption by the end of the year 2002.
5. The Group of Experts will be convened, as required, by the Party hosting the meetings of the Regional Road Transport Committee.
6. The Rules of Procedure of the Regional Road Transport Committee apply also to the Expert Group.

* * *

ANNEX IV

Draft check list for compliance of road transport charges with the principles contained in Article 8 of the MoU and in the Joint Statement on the implementation of Article 8

	TYPE	AMOUNT ¹ (units)	COMPLIANCE WITH:				
			Cost - relatedness ²	Non - discrimination	Transparency	Non simultaneous application (for tolls and user charges)	Payment: – currency (local, international) – means of payment – any time
USER CHARGE							
TOLL							
OTHER CHARGES							
FUEL TAXES	-Petrol leaded -Petrol unleaded - Diesel						
VEHICLE TAX							

¹ Special rates or exemptions from charges/tolls/other charges/fuel taxes based on bilateral road transport agreements should be given in a separate note below this table.

² Coverage of: road construction, maintenance and operating costs, as well as of external costs. Road construction, maintenance and operating costs are often referred to as internal costs, while external costs include environmental and social costs.