



**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
TRANSPORT DIVISION**

**First Workshop on the UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport
and on related infrastructure and border crossing developments
in the Southeast Europe**

(Thessaloniki, 19-20 December 2005)

CONCLUSIONS

Organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Transport Division, and kindly hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece, a **First Workshop on the UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport and on related infrastructure and border crossing developments in the Southeast Europe** was held on 19 and 20 December 2005, in Thessaloniki, Greece. Designated experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Thessaloniki Port Authority and the Corridor X Secretariat attended the Workshop.

The aim of this workshop was to assist southeastern European UNECE member countries to further integrate their transport systems with those of other UNECE members and promote inter-country and sub-regional cooperation. This intensive two-days workshop has allowed the participants to get a deeper insight into the major transport legislation developed under the auspices of the UNECE and valuable information on the latest developments on transport infrastructure and border crossing in the Southeast Europe.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe gave presentations on the major UNECE Agreements and Conventions in the field of transport, on the latest state of play with regard to the Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects and their Master Plan as well as the UNECE-UNESCAP Euro-Asian Transport Linkages Project. Furthermore, the latest developments of the work of the “High Level Group on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries and regions” were presented by the representative of Greece in that Group, while the representative of the Technical Secretariat of the pan-European Corridor X reported on the progress of the Corridor.

The National Focal Points of the participating countries reviewed the status of accession to and implementation of the UNECE Agreements and Conventions and reported on the main transport infrastructure and border crossing developments and plans in their countries.

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

1. Transport is a most basic, and one of strategic factors for economic development and job creation. An efficient transport system is vital for international trade and tourism, which have a major and increasing impact on growth and competitiveness of businesses and economies.
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 in the Southeast Europe.

3. The solution of these problems requires, inter alia, coordinated action of concerned Governments in the framework of international organizations aimed at developing adequate, coherent and integrated priority international transport networks, projects prioritization and an internationally harmonized regulatory framework that enables the development of efficient and low cost, uninterrupted, safe and sustainable transport services.
4. The UNECE Agreements and Conventions in the field of transport provide a common legal and technical platform for southeastern European countries, as well as for other UNECE member countries, to establish pan-European 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 Agreements and Conventions are major tools for enhancing the efficiency of international transport operations and further developing and integrating national transport systems within Europe.
5. Accession to and more consistent implementation of the major UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport could bring about measurable advantages in transport operations among the participating countries as well as between their region and other regions of Europe.
6. Noting that southeastern European countries are already Contracting Parties to most of the main UNECE infrastructure and facilitation agreements, participating countries were invited to consider adhering to those UNECE Agreements and Conventions to which they have not yet acceded, and ensure full implementation.
7. Implementation of harmonized UNECE legislation on border crossing procedures, in particular, and closer cooperation among competent authorities of neighbouring countries through exchange of information on best practices, regular meetings, building trust and development of a problem solving approach, could lead to reduction of existing obstacles and delays on borders.
8. Participating countries were invited to become actively involved in the UNECE transport activities, in particular in the work of the Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary organs.
9. Taking into account that TEM and TER Projects play an important role in coordinated development of transport infrastructure and in the dissemination of knowledge, expertise and know-how, as well as that the implementation of the TEM and TER Master Plan is of great interest to southeastern European countries, those of them not yet members to the TEM and TER Projects, were invited to consider joining these Projects and benefit from their experience and activities.
10. Designated National Focal Points were invited to submit their country reports on the issues examined in the workshop and ensure closer and more regular contact and collaboration with the UNECE Transport Division.
11. Organization of such sub-regional workshops in southeastern Europe provides an excellent opportunity for exchange of information and for the promotion of inter-country cooperation and should be repeated more regularly.

Participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Greece, to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece as well as to Thessaloniki Port Authority for their hospitality and support in the organisation of this Workshop, to all the speakers for their valuable contributions to the successful deliberation of the work, and to the UNECE Transport Division for its initiative to organize this workshop.