



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRANS/SC.2/1999/6/Add.1
16 July 1999

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Rail Transport
(Fifty-third session, 6-8 October 1999,
agenda item 8 (c))

FACILITATION OF BORDER CROSSING
IN INTERNATIONAL RAIL TRANSPORT

Transmitted by the Governments of Belgium, France,
Luxembourg and Switzerland

Note: The Working Party on Rail Transport at its fifty-second session considered the question of the facilitation of border crossing in international rail transport (TRANS/SC.2/190, paras. 37 to 43). In order to continue to collect information on projects in this area, the Working Party had requested Governments to submit information to it at its next session on the following questions:

- (a) Average waiting-time of passenger and goods trains at main border crossings;

Please note that the distribution of documentation for the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) is no longer "restricted". Accordingly, the secretariat has adopted a new numbering system whereby all working documents other than reports and agendas will be numbered as follows: TRANS/SC.2/year/serial number. Reports, agendas, resolutions and major publications will retain their previous numbering system (e.g. TRANS/SC2/189).

- (b) Progress made (in minutes) subsequent to the implementation of the measures taken by Governments (e.g. for Customs, police, sanitary and phytosanitary inspections) by railway companies (technical inspections) to reduce border-crossing times for passenger and goods trains;
- (c) Other measures that are envisaged in future to eliminate delays during the crossing of borders;
- (d) Succinct reports on bilateral and multilateral contacts which have taken place between Governments and railways of neighbouring countries in order to improve border-crossing in international rail traffic (TRANS/SC.2/188, paras. 22 to 27).

The information transmitted to the secretariat is set out in detail below for consideration by the Working Party.

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BELGIUM

Continuation of measures initiated in 1997 and 1998 to facilitate border crossings of goods trains.

1. 1997

Studies and contacts prior to the organization of a freight corridor on a major European route: between Belgium (Antwerp and Brussels), Luxembourg, France (Lyon) and Italy (Turin, Genoa, La Spezia and Gioia Tauro).

2. 1998

12 January: implementation of the first corridor (known as the Belifret corridor) on the above route. This corridor comprises a series of train-paths permitting goods trains to travel efficiently, principally as a result of cutting down or eliminating border stops by means of:

- A. Juxtaposition or unification of statutory procedures applied on each of the networks involved, thus determining the standard rules of "construction" of the trains in question;
- B. Exchange of safety data concerning train composition;
- C. Use of a common braking sheet by drivers on two or more networks, reflecting the composition of the train.

24 May: extension of the corridor to Spain on the one hand (Barcelona and Valencia) and to France on the other (Marseille);

24 October: extension towards Milan;

contacts established and studies initiated with a view to the application to international goods trains between Belgium, Luxembourg and France of the three statutory principles A, B and C above which will speed up border crossings.

3. 1999

Continuation of work so that objectives A, B and C can be finalized by the end of the year.

FRANCE

- (b) In the EEC and EFTA countries, the States have taken steps to reduce or eliminate border checks.

Within the European Union, the very notion of "border crossing" has become obsolete.

However, technical, administrative and commercial obstacles to the development of international rail services still exist:

existence of different electrification systems and gauges;

disparity in technical rules for operation;

existence of two stations at border crossings;

inadequate electronic data transmission from one network to another;

lack of harmonization of transport plans;

lack of common rules governing beyond-border liability in respect of exchange of rolling stock and cross-over driving crews.

The measures adopted by the French State and the SNCF in cooperation with neighbouring States and their networks have enabled waiting-times to be reduced considerably. The benefit has been felt at the following border crossings:

Border crossings	Length of wait (in minutes)	
	Minimum	Maximum
Bettembourg/Zoufftgen	2	5
Forbachs/Sarrebrück	2	5
Port Bou/Cerbère	30	60
Basel	20	25
Modane	12	30

In this context, the efforts to be made by the States are aimed at eliminating systematic border checks and introducing them at the destination or the place of origin:

To encourage the interoperability of the networks (cf. Directive No. 48/96/EC of 26 July 1996 concerning the interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system);

To ensure fair competition among the various transport modes;

To ensure a better application of simplified procedures, particularly those established by the Community authorities for veterinary and phytosanitary matters.

The following measures, which are in the process of implementation, should be added:

Development of freight corridors in cooperation with the various railway network infrastructure managers for a better harmonization of transport plans and reduction of stopping times at borders;

Purchase, particularly by SNCF, of interoperable locomotives. Some of the 30 "ASTRID" locomotives to be brought into service this year will also be able to use the Belgian and Italian rail networks.

LUXEMBOURG

(a) Stops for trains crossing the CFL network are attributable mainly to technical operation factors such as:

Change of locomotive provided for in the timetable or due to different types of traction current - average delay 20 minutes;

Queue of international passenger trains at Luxembourg station - average delay 10 minutes;

Withdrawal or addition of goods wagons in Bettembourg marshalling yard - delay varies depending on the extent of shunting operations needed.

(b) On the CFL network, international passenger and goods trains are not delayed by Customs or police inspections. On international passenger trains, spot checks are made while the train is under way. Trains using the CFL network and most import and export trains are subject to a technical inspection known as the "trust inspection", which is normally conducted at the formation yard.

A brake test is required, however, with each change of traction unit and whenever vehicles are added. Also, when an SNCB traction unit is changed for an SNCF unit, or vice versa, the braking conditions for foreign drivers are checked.

There is no progress to report in these areas.

(c) Once the new 3000 series dual-voltage locomotives, to be delivered during the financial year 1999, come into service, most stops for locomotive changes will be eliminated.

In the context of the development of the freight corridors (Freightways), joint measures have been taken in respect of the harmonization of statutory procedures with the French and Belgian networks to facilitate border crossings for trains. It is intended to extend these provisions to all cross-over trains.

Adaptations have been made to computerized freight systems in the context of the freight corridors to facilitate separate data input for the different networks.

(d) In addition to the regular interviews within the various UIC (International Union of Railways) and FTE (Forum Train Europe) commissions, contacts are currently concentrated on the harmonization of the procedures described under (b) and (c).

SWITZERLAND

Generally speaking, the CFF have no particular problems with Customs checks at borders. However, occasionally lengthy delays were noted last year in some border stations because of inadequate traction capacity on the part of certain foreign networks.

The CFF have made their objective the reduction of border delays for goods trains to a maximum of 30 minutes. This objective has materialized in the bringing into service in transit traffic and in bilateral traffic of international express trains which stop only very briefly.

The CFF are also endeavouring to reduce the total length of transport operations by means of technical and administrative improvements.

In addition, as regards Customs matters, various bilateral arrangements have been reached in recent years with Switzerland's neighbours. These agreements concern both railway questions and the facilitation of crossings for road transport. They have made it possible to put national inspection offices next to each other, to carry out checks in the course of the journey and to improve bilateral cooperation.
