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TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY (TER) PROJECT

Report on activities implemented in 2003

Introduction

The TER Co-operation Trust Fund Agreement ensures the implementation of its main objectives by offering its framework and experience in reforming the railway and CT system in the member countries and increasing the quality of services according to new standards and to the changed transport conditions developing in Europe. The 16 member countries are: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. Additionally five observer countries: Belarus, FYROM, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia and Montenegro participated at various TER actions.

The cooperation with other international bodies and, first of all, with the European Commission and the EU member States increased continuously, proving to be beneficial both to the TER countries and those organizations and countries. As a matter of fact, three members of the EU and 8 countries in accession to the EU are TER members. The international status of TER as a relevant partner in the transport field was widely recognized.

Regional transport cooperation

For over a decade the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project provided the cooperation framework to Central and Eastern European countries with a view to promoting and implementing initiatives for an efficient international rail and combined transport system in those countries in accordance with the Pan-European infrastructure agreements.

In this context it is worthwhile recalling the main specific objectives of the Trans-European Railway:

To ensure the coordinated upgrading of infrastructure of the TER network to the AGC and AGTC standards.

To contribute to the modernization of rolling stock.

To help participating Governments in improving rail efficiency and the adaptation of the railway organization to market oriented management.

To develop a database on the railway and combined transport system in the region.

To coordinate the improvement of operation parameters and ameliorate the situation at the border crossings with a view to eliminating the bottlenecks in international rail transport.

To develop the cooperation among the member countries in the preparation of studies.

To promote the cooperation among the member countries in the field of combined transport.

To promote training activities for experts of the member countries.

Detailed information in relation to the above issues was presented at the SC. 2 session in 2002.

TER short-term strategy

Based on the good experience obtained in many areas, TER developed a new strategy for the short term in order to achieve a more rapid progress in implementing its tasks as well as in ensuring the integration of TER into the European transport system.

This strategy has as its main objective the integration of TER in the new European transport environment as well as strengthening the cooperation with the EU. It should ensure the incorporation of the Project into the European transport system, secure an institutional role for the TER Project implementation within the European infrastructure development plans, develop closer cooperation between TER and other related initiatives and projects, apply on a larger scale the inter-modal concept as well as supplementary development and operational plans between TER, TEM and other components of the European networks, take the leading role in the region in the development of the Freight Villages concept as a supplementary component of the railway network and, last but not least, achieve a higher level of political support from the Governments

of the member countries in the implementation of projects in the railway and combined transport sectors in the region.

Within this strategy, the paramount objective is the carrying out of a Master Plan on the most important railway and combined transport projects available for implementation in the TER region. By mid-next year, its results would be available to all interested in this field.

Adoption of this strategy by the TER countries demonstrated their determination to go forward in looking for solutions to the railway transport problems, thus facilitating the integration of the CEEC transport system into the Pan-European system.

TER activities carried out in 2003

- On 29 May 2003, a special meeting of TER was devoted to the discussion and approval of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the TEM-TER Master Plan.

On 30 May 2003, the seventeenth Session of TER Steering Committee took place in Slovakia and approved the implementation of the TER Master Plan in accordance with the TOR discussed, revised and endorsed previously during the special meeting of TER for the Master Plan.

The TER Master Plan will be elaborated by the joint efforts of UNECE, TER-PCO, external consultants and the member countries plus observer countries, in total 21 countries covering the Central and Eastern European Region.

According to TOR, the TER network Master Plan will lead to the identification of investment priorities, establishment of a timetable for their realization and assessment of cost involved and appropriate financing arrangements required. The time limit for the elaboration of the TER Master Plan is one year from September 2003.

- The Group of TER National Coordinators met in Budapest on 23-24 January 2003 to decide on a strategy for its Database and Geographic Information System (GIS) activities. During the meeting the new objectives for the TER database and GIS application, inspired by the need to provide more opportunities for sharing data among the TER countries, were considered. The analyses and comparisons on the modernization of railways, as well as the progress made in this field in the member countries were also discussed. The Group agreed to publish a comparative table with TER standards and parameters versus the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) standards established by UNECE. The TER National Coordinators agreed on the new objectives for the TER Database and GIS activities; on the new TER data structure and way of work; and on the development of a GIS application model for TER. They further decided to establish concrete timetables for data collection, processing and delivery of outputs.

They also considered ways of allowing member countries to use and further explore, in a harmonized way, the TER Database and GIS achievements. They found very useful the organization of training courses for data experts. They also benefited from organized visits by

the national experts to the TER Project Central Office in Budapest for consultation, transfer of knowledge and exchange of information.

- The session of WP on Financial and Management matters took place from 9 to 11 April 2003 in Graz (Austria). The main issues debated were: measures taken by railway companies for market-oriented management, solutions identified to the obstacles and deficiencies to the development of international combined transport in the region, promotion of the new image of railway stations and their integration in the town planning, measures for improving real estate management, railway safety measures, implementation of quality standards in rail transport (ISO Certificate) etc.

From the discussions it resulted that, on most of the issues, progress could be recorded compared to the situation existing 4-5 years ago and measures for modernizing the railway transport were implemented or are under implementation.

- A seminar on the Freight Village concept, marketing of combined transport services and promotion of CT operators was organized by TER/PCO with Europlatforms, Eurochambers, CEMAT and Interporto Bologna between 18-20 June 2003 at Quadrante Europa terminal in Verona, Italy. The University of Verona was also associated to this Seminar. The participants to the workshop supported the initiative of the UNECE, TER, Eurochambres and Europlatforms, to join their efforts and, in cooperation with other interested bodies, to embark upon an integrated promotion of the FVs concept in the Central European countries by organizing meetings for the transfer of know-how and sharing of experiences from the members of the EU. The importance of the activity of combined transport as such was recognized by all. They supported measures for developing this activity.

The advantages of creating freight villages and the positive impact they have for neighbouring areas and population were recognized. A visit to the Freight Village Quadrante Europa in Verona illustrated the successful development of this terminal in the last 30 years. The Seminar came to the following conclusions:

- Freight Villages and their components, intermodal terminals, are indispensable infrastructure fabrics for a profitable combined transport system.
- Freight Villages as multi-firm commercial estates concentrating transport activities from different operators and users offer a higher quality of transport services.
- To start or develop efficient Freight Villages, adequate legislation based on the successful experience of other countries in this field is a must for all Central and Eastern European countries. The TER initiative in this respect will be continued in the future offering the framework for an efficient exchange of views among all interested partners in this field.
- Establishment and development of freight villages will have a positive impact on the overall economic development of the region where they are set up and on the living conditions of the community.
- The railway should play a more active role in the competitive transport market because bi- or multimodal cooperation among railways contributes to more efficient activity in this sector with better results and higher profits.
- The Italian experience in developing Freight Villages should continue to be shared within UNECE-TER to the advantage of all those involved in this field.

- Transfer of know-how and technical information on modern rolling stock, railway equipment for ERTMS was achieved during the Seminar jointly organized on 22-23 June 2003 by TER/PCO, UEEIV and Alstom Ferroviaria at Torino (Savigliano), Italy. The latest solutions for railway transport needs, rail coaches with tilting bodies-Pendolino, EMU and DMU, ERTMS equipments were presented by Alstom.

It was recognized that the upgrading of the railway infrastructure in Central and Eastern European Countries, in order to ensure the running of modern rolling stock, is an ongoing process. For this purpose, financial resources are available from public funds or international financial assistance. However, it was recognized that having an upgraded network is not enough for ensuring its efficiency and offering railway services of a higher quality. The introduction of new mobile material (rolling stock) should accompany the process of modernization of infrastructure in order to ensure the overall efficiency of the railway operators. Countries' representatives expressed the views that financial assistance is also needed in order to replace the old rolling stocks by new ones.

- Between TER-PCO and the Executive Secretariat of the Central European Initiative (CEI) close cooperation relations were established on the occasion of the attendance by the management of PCO of the CEI-Transport Working Group meeting which took place on 5 March 2003 in Trieste, Italy as well as the discussions held with high officials of CEI. It was agreed that on 6-8 October 2003 in Bratislava, Slovakia, TER and CEI would jointly organize the Conference on facilitation of border crossing procedures, assessment of measures taken until now in CEEC and future actions needed to bring border control in line with EU Directives or "Schengen acquis".

- TER-PCO continued to support in 2003 the implementation of specific projects on the Pan-European corridors in the TER countries like realization of ETCS projects, measures for facilitation of border crossing procedures, improvement of legal framework of co-operation among railways or Ministries of Transport from the member countries, etc. Discussions took place between TER-PCO and Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) for organizing together on 28-29 October 2003 in Lucerne, Switzerland the meeting of Directors General of railways from the TER countries. The meeting is dedicated to the increase of quality of railway services, their diversification as well as promotion of tourism for higher railway profitability.

- The participation of the TER Project Manager or his deputy at the Steering Committee meetings on Corridor II, which took place on 27-28 March 2003 in Dresden, Germany, on Corridor VI which was organized on 7-8 April in Gdansk, Poland, on Corridor III, on 15-16 May in Berlin, Germany, on Corridor IV on 21-22 May in Sopron, Hungary and at the UIC meeting of Managers of Pan-European Corridors on 27 June in Paris. Issues were examined related to the implementation of projects for lines belonging to the above Pan-European corridors as well as the contribution of TER to speeding up the process of modernisation of infrastructure and adoption of measures for the increase of quality of railway services in the TER countries situated along these corridors.

- With the support of UNECE, TER Project activities are presented on the UNECE web site in an updated format (unece.org).

Conclusions

All activities carried out in 2003 were in line with the Programme of Work, as well as with the Short-Term Strategy of TER, adopted by the TER Steering Committee in 2001 in Antalya, Turkey.

TER offers the advantage of gathering during its meetings both representatives of the Ministries of Transport and the railway companies from the member countries.

At the governmental level, it is the only forum in the region approaching all the railway transport issues for a more rapid integration and at higher standards of the railway network of the TER member countries into the Western European network. It also stimulates measures for harmonizing the legislation of the Central and Eastern European countries to the Western European standards in order to ensure a higher quality of services all along the corridors and higher profitability of the railway sector in their countries. In order to implement the AGC/AGTC standards in the region, as well as improving the railway and combined transport services, the TER Project is a useful tool. Realization of the comprehensive programme of work with concrete outputs has led to a permanent increase in the TER membership.
