
**Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and
Connectivity (TWG-STTC)**

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Progress report on the development of SPECA TWG-STTC transport databases
(Item 4.6 of the Agenda)

Note by UNECE/ESCAP

1. The importance of transport as an enabler of national competitiveness and sustainable growth has increased dramatically over recent decades. In addition, transport plays a critical role in the 2030 Development Agenda, with targets and indicators spread across multiple goals, highlighting its cross-cutting role in issues such as health, energy access, decent work, gender equality, climate change and more. It is therefore crucial that all countries produce data on transport that are accurate, relevant, timely, comparable and impartial.
2. ESCAP has developed the Asian Highway database as a joint effort by the secretariat and member countries to monitor the development of the Asian Highway network. The Asian Highway database includes comprehensive and detailed data and information on Asian Highway routes in member countries, including countries in SPECA region, and benchmarks their development status against the Asian Highway design standards stipulated in Annex II to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. SPECA countries are encouraged to provide the ESCAP secretariat with updated data and information at regular intervals. An updated database is an important tool for governments to define their national road development policies in line with international trends and gives transport planners and operators access to reliable data to promote international and transit traffic. The database can be accessed at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asian-highway-database>.
3. In addition, ESCAP Statistical Database with over 1300 data series covering a wide range of domains offers a unique regional overview of socio-economic development in the Asia Pacific region over the last 25 years. Various regional aggregates offer convenient ways to compare the

region with other major parts of the world or to compare various groups of countries among themselves. Data are sourced from authoritative data sources from the international statistical system (United Nations and related specialized agencies, World Bank, IMF, OECD, etc.) ensure a comparability across countries and over time. It is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/stat/data>.

4. Transport statistics availability for Central Asian countries has improved in the last year, and this is in part due to earlier technical cooperation and capacity building activities conducted through the SPECA programme. For example, as of September 2019 five out of the six UNECE SPECA countries have provided to UNECE a road accident fatality figure for 2018, the timeliness of which is better than some European Union countries. In addition, three SPECA countries have also provided other transport statistics (such as road infrastructure, vehicle and traffic, and rail datasets) to the secretariat through the UNECE/ITF/Eurostat Common Questionnaire for 2016 or later. This positive trend for data availability is welcome, and it is hoped that this positive trend for data availability can continue, with better timeliness and increased detail. In addition to data production, participation of SPECA member Azerbaijan at the meeting of the Working Party on transport Statistics at UNECE headquarters in June 2019 was welcomed.

5. It should be noted that the setting up of a special database on transport and border crossing activities for the SPECA countries has been recommended since the creation of the TWG-STTC as indicated in the original Terms of Reference. Availability of accurate data is indeed essential for planning infrastructure development and for securing future investments. To progress on this issue, it has been proposed to the SPECA members to provide basic information on key border crossing points (as described in last year's document). The border crossing points proposed were selected based on their location along the Asian Highway network. Such cross-border transport data seem nevertheless currently not readily available. They would however provide valuable input for future transport activities in the region.

6. In addition to SPECA TWG collecting data on an ad-hoc basis, SPECA countries may instead wish to explore producing data as part of the E-Road and E-Rail censuses. These censuses are 5-yearly assessments of infrastructure information and traffic volumes on the two networks, defined respectively by the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR) and the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC). A principal benefit of collecting these data is to allow traffic volumes to be visualized across countries (see the secretariat's interactive road map here: <https://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/e->

[roads_maps.html](#).) This would seem to be particularly useful and applicable to SPECA countries, where much interest lies in measuring Euro-Asian transport links.

The Thematic Working Group may wish to:

- Ensure regular update of relevant information to ESCAP Asian Highway network database;
- Use ESCAP Statistical database for SDGs and transport related statistics;
- Agree to renew efforts to provide annual transport and road safety statistics to UNECE using the web common questionnaire; and
- Explore the possibilities of providing data on the E-Road and E-Rail censuses to UNECE, noting their importance for monitoring Euro-Asian transport links.