

**7TH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF
BORDER CROSSINGS ALONG THE PAN EUROPEAN CORRIDOR X**

**BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA
27 NOVEMBER 2008**

Draft Minutes

Item 1: Welcome addresses by the host United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Trans-European Railway Project Manager, the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications of Slovakia

1. Mr. Meelich, Manager of the Trans-European Railway Project of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, welcomed all the participating countries and wished them a successful meeting, while he announced details concerning the general programme organized.
2. Mr. Mojs, State Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Post and Telecommunications of Slovakia welcomed the participants and wished them a fruitful meeting and a pleasant stay in Bratislava.
3. He then stressed the importance of Corridor X and its interconnection to Central and Eastern Europe via an extension of Branch B from Budapest to Bratislava.

Item 2: Opening address by the Chairmen of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings and of the Steering Committee for Pan-European Corridor X

4. Mr. Kounadis, Chairman of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings along the Pan-European Corridor X, thanked the State Secretary for his presence to the meeting and for the warm hospitality both of the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications and of the UNECE TER Manager Mr. Meelich.
5. Mr. Patsiavos, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Pan European Corridor X, took the floor and expressed his sincere thanks to the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications and the UNECE TER Manager Mr. Meelich for his kind invitation to host the meetings of the Steering Committee and of the Working Group, for the improvement of border crossings along the Pan-European Corridor X, in Bratislava.
6. The Chairman of the Working Group then gave the floor to the participants to introduce themselves.

7. Mr. Meelich pointed out the interest in the railway field to discuss an extension of Corridor X Branch B to Bratislava and mentioned a relevant project cooperation for the improvement of this connection (Budapest – Bratislava).
8. He also mentioned the completed TEM and TER Master Plans and the continuation of these projects with extension of the region of interest with new countries (e.g. Albania, Montenegro). He informed that the Terms of Reference for the continuation of the projects have been prepared after a 1st meeting that took place last September.
9. Especially for border crossings, he continued, the TEM and TER projects had collected data, in order to confront delays. He mentioned that the introduction of the Schengen Agreement has de facto solved the problems at many borders. Then he stressed the support of his organization to the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings along Corridor X.

Item 3: Approval of the Agenda

10. There was a suggestion to amend the provisional Agenda, with the introduction of a presentation of SEETO representatives under Item 6.
11. The Agenda was amended accordingly.

Item 4: Adoption of the Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the Working Group (Athens – Greece, 15.2.2008)

12. The draft minutes of the last Working Group meeting of 15 February 2008 were adopted as final.

Item 5: Activity report – The progress of works since the 6th meeting of the Working Group

13. Mr. Kounadis gave the floor to Mr. Raptis from the Hellenic Ministry of Economy and Finance Customs Administration to present the report prepared for the Laufzettel exercise held at the border crossing points of Evzoni and Bogorodica in 2007.
14. Mr. Raptis presented the Laufzettel exercise and the proposed common time measurement tool to be applied in the framework of the Working Group (*see presentation*).
15. Mr. Kounadis then gave some additional details on the report and referred to the printed material included in the dossiers handed out to the participants.

Item 6: Status of Corridor X border crossings: Presentation of the improvements on border crossing facilities and procedures of each country of Corridor X by each national delegation.

16. Mr. Prinic, representative of Slovenia, mentioned that a possible pilot project could be implemented at Slovenian-Croatian borders. He said that preparative communication secured the permission of the Slovenian competent authorities and a letter has been sent to the Croatian side.
17. He added that he considers most appropriate to organize a coordination meeting between the representatives of both countries, mainly for roads, since the times at the rail border crossings have been already measured.
18. He proposed that a letter from the Chair of the Working Group should be sent in order to proceed with the measurements.
19. Mr. Radanovic, representative of Croatia took the floor and informed that the Croatian side is to prepare the answer to the Slovenian request and confirmed the intension of his country to proceed to the measurements.
20. Mr. Prinic then informed that on the line Zagreb – Dobova the joint control of passengers is planned to be regularly performed on-board as from December 2009.
21. The Chairman of the Working Group concluded that the Technical Secretariat will compose a letter according to Mr. Prinic proposal.
22. Mr. Nesic, representative of Serbia, asked about the readiness of the border authorities to act on the agreement between Slovenia and Croatia.
23. Mr. Prinic responded that all the technical details are described in the agreement.
24. Mr. Valben, representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, presented the activities in his country, which concerning the border crossings include the examination of introducing the single document procedure. Concerning the infrastructure, he mentioned that the road section between Tabanovce and Kumanovo (7,6km), at the borders of his country with Serbia, is being upgraded to a motorway.
25. Mr. Kounadis stressed the importance of the introduction of non-paper procedures.
26. He then proposed to perform the measurements at all border crossings along the Corridor and added that is important to define the period of performance of the time measurements, as well as the language of the informative posters to be set at the borders and the forms to be completed by the border authorities.

27. Mr. Kounadis also asked the Serbian delegation whether is in position to participate in the measurements.
28. Mr. Lasica, representative of Serbia, informed the Group that the Serbian side, after a period of inactivity, fulfilled its obligation of submitting the required information with reference to the period September – October 2008.
29. He supported the proposal of the Chairman and said that he will inform the Working Group about the participation of Serbia in the measurement exercise, after consultation of the responsible Ministries. He then informed the Group that already Serbia participates in measurements performed by the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO).
30. Prof. Taxiltaris, Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat, proposed in coordination with SEETO to define the border station for the measurements in Serbia, also in order to avoid duplication of work.
31. He then proposed, especially for road border crossings, to perform measurements at the Serbian/ f.Y.R.O.M. borders (Presevo – Tabanovce) to maximize the added value of the important motorway projects underway on both sides of the border with the Hellenic Plan for the Economic Reconstruction of the Balkans (Hi.P.E.R.B.) financial assistance and to confront the serious problems observed during peak periods.
32. For the railway border crossings he proposed to exploit the results of other exercises (i.e. SEETO, ARGE Korridor X) and update them.
33. He also proposed that priority should also be given to the performance of time measurements at the Slovenian – Croatian borders due to the advanced level of readiness of the two countries to proceed with the exercise.
34. Mr. Lasica said that the Public Enterprise Roads of Serbia will contact the Technical Secretariat to agree on the border stations for measurements.
35. Mr. Valben agreed with the proposal of Prof. Taxiltaris and said that the issue of performance of measurements at Presevo – Tabanovce should be discussed bilaterally.
36. Mr. Patsiavos, Chairman of the Steering Committee stressed that all the border crossings are of the same importance and proposed to perform measurements at all the stations along the Corridor. He also proposed that the participants provide information by the end of December 2008 when to perform measurements, sometime in the period between January 1st and June 30th 2009
37. Mrs. Vitou, representative of the Hellenic Railways OSE, asked whether the measurements refer to passengers or freight railway transport, since the applied procedures are completely different.
38. Prof. Taxiltaris answered that the measurements should refer to both passenger and freight railway transport.

39. Then Mrs. Vitou proposed to perform the measurements for passengers twice; once during the high period (peak) and another one during normal period. She added that for freight transport one measurement would be enough.
40. Prof. Taxiltaris concluded to the composition of a letter to be sent to all the delegations about the decisions of the Working Group and the proposed process to perform the measurement exercise, with priority to the Slovenian – Croatian border stations (Obrezje – Bregana on Road Corridor X and Dobova – Savski Marof on Rail Corridor X) and the Serbian – F.Y.R.O.M. borders (Presevo – Tabanovce on Road Corridor X).
41. Mrs. Anastassopoulou, Counselor to the Deputy Minister of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for Hi.P.E.R.B., declared the high interest of the Hellenic government in the improvement of border crossings and relevant “soft measures” that would maximize the added value of the projects financed by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Serbia and F.Y.R.O.M.
42. Mr. Nestic took the floor and presented the Serbian policy concerning border crossings facilitation, which among others include the introduction of the single electronic window system at all the border crossings in Serbia (*see presentation*).
43. He also mentioned that the rehabilitation of Dimitrovgrad station has been 50% completed, and will be fully completed within the next 6-7 months.
44. Mr. Raptis informed that construction works of a new border station at Niki (Branch D of Corridor X) are on-going, with foreseen completion by April 2009. The station will be fully equipped, including weighbridge and “X-Rays” equipment.
45. Mr. Popov, representative of Bulgaria, informed that Bulgaria has completed all the planned interventions on the road/ rail network and border crossings. Additionally he mentioned the upgrading of the road branch with two lanes per direction (6m in each direction with no separation between opposite traffic flows) and the upgrading of the rail branch for speeds higher than 100km/h.
46. Mrs. Jankovic, Regional Railway Expert from SEETO made an introduction to the project “Support for Implementing Measures for SEE Core Regional Transport Network Multi Annual Plan 2008-2012”, which has been launched and foreseen to be completed by November 2009 (*see presentation*).
47. Then Mr. Uhl, International Railway Expert from Vienna Consult, gave more details about the project’s main findings. Especially on Corridor X he mentioned the lost competitiveness against Corridor IV, while he proposed to have performance monitoring at the Serbian border crossings on railway Branches B and C.

48. Mr. Kounadis expressed his thanks for the very interesting presentation and stressed the importance for intensive cooperation between all initiatives and projects that have common field of study, such as Corridor X and the SEETO.
49. Mrs. Vitou pointed out that in South East Europe the railway undertakings have to react rapidly on border crossings issue because from the year 2009 penalties will be enforced for delays at borders.

Item 7: Coordination of further activities

50. Mr. Kounadis summarized the actions to be done:
- Composition of a letter by the Technical Secretariat to be signed by the Chairmen of the Steering Committee and the Working Group. This letter would be sent to the participating countries for the performance of time measurements at the border crossings.
 - By December 31st 2008: Response of the participating countries for participation in the time measurements at the border crossings and proposition of potential dates for the execution of the exercise.
51. The next meeting of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossing along the Pan-European Corridor X was decided to be organized together with the next Steering Committee meeting.

Item 8: Other Business

52. No other businesses were discussed.

Presentations available at:

http://edessa.topo.auth.gr/X/Pres/New/7th_WG_Presentations.zip