

4TH MEETING
OF THE WORKING GROUP FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF BORDER CROSSINGS
ALONG THE PAN EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR X

ATHENS, GREECE

20 DECEMBER 2006

Draft minutes

Item 1: Opening address by the Chairman of the Working Group and the Chairman of the Steering Committee for Corridor X

1. Mr. Kounadis, the Chairman of the Working Group, welcomed all the participants, wishing a good stay and fruitful outcome.
2. He summarized the aims of the Protocol signed in June 2006 to facilitate the efficient flow of persons and goods along borders crossings of Corridor X, to simplify and harmonize required procedures, formalities and documentation applied, to strengthen cooperation and coordination among all involving authorities for improving cross-border operations, and to increase the overall efficiency of the Corridor.
3. He continued with the tasks of the Working Group: to ensure adequate coordination and application of the Protocol, to properly facilitate and secure trade, to elaborate and adopt common rules of procedure for the Working Group and to promote, in an institutionalized manner, the collaboration between involving states.

4. Mr. Patsiavos, the Chairman, took the floor and welcomed all the participants to the first meeting of the Working Group after the official signing of the Protocol and the beginning of a new initiative that will further promote Corridor X.
5. He mentioned that he considers the Protocol fundamental for Corridor X to become an efficient and attractive transport network, in order to see the national investments and projects acquire the added value they really deserve and to attract more investments.
6. He added that the Protocol is one of the most important achievements of the Steering Committee of Corridor X and that the Steering Committee of Corridor X is the first of the ten Pan European Corridors that moved forward to solve a very crucial obstacle such as the cross borders. Consequently the Steering Committee puts significant weight in the implementation of the Protocol according to the timetable the Working Group would define.
7. As chairman of the Steering Committee of Pan European Corridor X, he also expressed his full support and his sincere hope that the endeavors of the Working Group will have fruitful results.

Item 2: Approval of the agenda

8. There were no objections on the provisional Agenda and that was considered as adopted.

Item 3: Brief presentation of the Protocol signed in Corfu 16.6.2006 and information on the ratification of the Protocol procedures in each country

9. Mr. Kounadis presented the Protocol in broad lines and then asked the participants to inform the Group on the ratification of the Protocol in each country of the Corridor X.
10. Mr. Patsiavos informed the participants that Serbia signed the Protocol (the Serbian Minister was not present at Corfu Ministerial meeting).

11. Mr. Adesberger informed that no ratification is required in Austria and that the Protocol is in force.
12. Mr. Popov informed that the Protocol is in force in Bulgaria (no ratification is required).
13. Mr. Rakos informed that the Protocol is in force in Hungary (no ratification is required).
14. Mrs. Gligorovska informed that the Protocol is in force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (no ratification is required).
15. Mr. Patsiavos informed that Greece has started the ratification by the Parliament and it is expected that the Protocol will be ratified in the first semester of 2007.
16. Mr. Princic informed that the Protocol is in force in Slovenia (no ratification is required).

Item 4: Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Working Group

17. Mr. Miltiadou presented the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Working Group.
18. There were some linguistic amendments raised by the representatives of Bulgaria and Slovenia.
19. Mr. Kounadis, with the reference to point 4 of the provisional Rules of Procedure, clarified that the first Chairman of the Working Group for the first three years of operation was appointed during the meeting in Corfu.
20. The participants had no further comments, and Mr. Patsiavos proposed that the new version of the provisional Rules of Procedure to be sent to the national coordinators of the countries not present at the meeting, in order to have a finalized document for approval by the Steering Committee during its next meeting.
21. The participants agreed.

Item 5: Provisional Action Plan of the Working Group

22. Prof. Taxiltaris took the floor and presented the provisional Action Plan of the Working Group.
23. Then Mrs. Vitinarou from the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance presented the risk analysis followed by the Greek Customs.
24. Mr. Adelsberger commented that the proposed schedule is very ambitious, but he expressed his full support if it is possible to be realized.
25. Prof. Taxiltaris agreed that indeed the schedule is maximalistic and proposed to postpone some activities, and more specifically the staff training and the pilot measurements.
26. Mrs. Teodosieva informed that at the three customs training centers in Bulgaria the training is planned at least six months in advance, so she agreed with Prof. Taxiltaris on the postponement of the training activities.
27. She also stressed out her belief that the Working Group should not develop new risk analysis methodology and should exploit best practices instead.
28. Mr. Kounadis proposed that the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance provide the participants the risk analysis methodology used in Greece.
29. He then proposed to send the Action Plan as it was and have the reactions of all participating countries by January 31st 2007.
30. Mrs. Teodosieva proposed that staff training should not only concern customs, but also personnel from other authorities involved in cross borders procedures.
31. Mrs. Vitou proposed that there should be cooperation with railway operators in the staff training activities.
32. Mr. Kounadis summarized that the Secretariat will send to the national coordinators the Action Plan and the questionnaires of the survey by the January 31st 2007.

33. Mr. Patsiavos proposed to schedule the completion of the questionnaire survey by the end of April 2007, in order that the Technical Secretariat analyses the information and present the results in June 2007 at the 5th meeting of the Working Group.
34. He also proposed to put the risk analysis methodology and the staff training activities at second stage.

Item 6: Improvements on border crossings facilities and procedures taking place at the cross border stations of each country of Corridor X

35. Mr. Raptis from the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance presented the initiative for time measurement (Laufzettel exercise) at Evzoni and Bogorodica pair of cross border stations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which is scheduled for February and March 2007.
36. Mrs. Teodosieva and Mr. Popov informed the participants that at Dimitrovgrad railway cross border station the control of passengers is performed on board and that there is very good cooperation with customs authorities of Serbia, with electronic data exchange.
37. They also informed about the Integrated Border Management strategy of Bulgaria and that the one desk payment system has been tested at Bulgarian borders with Turkey and very soon will be applied at more stations, including Corridor X.
38. Mrs. Gligorovska presented evolutions in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In January 2007 an agreement with the World Bank shall be signed for financing of the motorway between Tabanovce cross border station and Kumanovo (7,4km). The new station at Tabanovce was opened in 2006 and the construction of a trucks terminal is foreseen with own funds.
39. She also mentioned that a new Law shall enter into force on January 1st 2007 (see also attached presentation).
40. Mr. Princic presented the situation at the Slovenian border stations of Corridor X (see also attached presentation).

41. Mr. Rakos presented evolutions in Hungary. He mentioned the minor reconstruction works take place at border stations on Branch B in Hungary. He also mentioned that an agreement with Serbian authorities is pending.

Item 7: Open discussion

42. A discussion took place about the time measurement tool of TTFSE and the Laufzettel exercise.

Item 8: Coordination of further activities

43. After the kind proposal of Mr. Adelsberger, it was decided to organize the next meeting of the Working Group in Graz, Austria, combined with the next regular Steering Committee meeting on June 14th and 15th 2007.

Item 9: Conclusions

44. Mr. Kounadis summarized the conclusions of the meeting:

- a. The delegates informed the Group on the procedures of ratification of the Protocol. In all countries represented the Protocol is in force, except from Greece, which is expected to enter into force in the first semester of 2007.
- b. The Group shall seek for the participation of customs and other authorities' representatives in the following meetings.
- c. The countries represented agreed on a new version of the Rules of Procedures of the Group and the comments of Serbia and Croatia are required in order to finalize the Rules for approval by the Steering Committee in June 2007.

- d. All the countries shall submit their comments on the Provisional Action Plan of the Working Group by January 31st 2007.
- e. The Technical Secretariat shall send the revised version of the provisional Rules of Procedures and the provisional Action Plan to all the participants in January 2007.
- f. The Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the Greek Ministries of Transport and Communications and Economy and Finance, shall design and send the questionnaires of the survey by January 31st 2007.
- g. The national coordinators shall submit the filled questionnaires of the survey by the 15th of April 2007.

45. Mr. Kounadis closing the meeting thanked the participants for the very effective and fruitful collaboration.