

6TH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF BORDER CROSSINGS ALONG THE PAN EUROPEAN CORRIDOR X

**ATHENS, GREECE
15 FEBRUARY 2008**

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome and Opening address by the Chairman of the Working Group.

1. Mr. Kounadis, Chairman of the Working Group, welcomed all the delegates of the participating countries. He mentioned the absence of a Serbian representative and expressed the necessity of reactivation of Serbia in the activities of the Group.
2. Mr. Patsiavos, Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Pan European Corridor X, welcomed the participants and wished them to have a good meeting with tangible results.
3. Prof. Taxiltaris, welcomed the participants. He mentioned the works of the latest meeting of the Coordinators of Pan-European Corridors and Areas in October in Brussels, where the constitution of the Working Group and its activities were commented as a good practice for all the Corridors in area.
4. Mr. Kounadis took the floor and said that he was very enthusiastic on hearing that the work done is acceptable, especially by the DG TREN. He added that special emphasis should be given in the implementation of the decisions of the Working Group.
5. After the introduction of each country's representative, Mr. Kounadis mentioned the necessity of representatives of mainly the customs authorities to participate in the meetings, in order to confront directly the issues or problems raised.

Item 2: Approval of the Agenda.

6. There were no objections on the provisional Agenda, which was considered as adopted.

Item 3: Adoption of the Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Working Group (Graz – Austria, 14.6.2007).

7. The draft minutes of the last Working Group meeting of 14 June 2007 were adopted.

Item 4: Activity report – The progress of works since the 5th meeting of the Working Group

8. Mr. Kounadis presented the Activity Report of the Working Group for border crossings. He mentioned, once again, the absence of representative from Serbia. He added that the Group must find ways of communication with Serbia, the country with an important role in the corridor, in order to participate in the works of the Group again. However, the opposite scenario should be examined, that is the probability to proceed without the Serbian partners.

Item 5: Information concerning improvements on border crossing facilities and procedures taking place at cross border stations in each country of Corridor X (delegations)

9. Mr. Kounadis gave the floor to the delegates of the participating countries.

10. The Austrian representative, Mr. Kirnbauer said that his country had very good bilateral cooperation with Slovenia in the period before the accession of Slovenia in the EU.

11. The Bulgarian representative, Mr. Popov, talked about the common border station for customs at Dimitrovgrad, which caused the substantial reduction of times on the Rail Branch C of Corridor X.

12. The Croatian representatives, Mr. Nagy and Mr. Radanovic, mentioned the programme implemented in Croatia this year on rail border crossings, on which they have informed their Serbian colleagues but they have no reaction since September 2007.

13. They added that increased delays are observed on the border between Croatia and Slovenia due to the Schengen requirements introduction, mainly at Bregana station.

14. Prof. Taxiltaris mentioned that there could be comparison between the cases of the Croatian – Slovenian and the Greek – F.Y.R.O.M. borders, both being EU external borders.

15. The Hungarian representative, Mr. Rakos, said that although they have good cooperation with the Serbian authorities, there are still problems and they are seeking for establishing a bilateral agreement.

16. The Slovenian representative, Mr. Prinic, confirmed what Mr. Nagy mentioned for the delays observed at the borders between their countries and said that he is not able to propose solutions. Therefore, he added, that the truck drivers moving from Turkey to Germany should not face very long waiting times at borders.

17. Mr. Kounadis took the floor and answered him to define the problems and find solutions to simplify the procedures, exchange letters and information.

18. The representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Delivanov, mentioned that the Serbian side has proposed to them to establish a joint rail border station at Tabanovce.

19. Mr. Pappas, representative from the Greek Railways, mentioned the improvement of the railway services between Greece and Belgrade and that there are on-going discussions with the Hungarian side for similar improvements between Greece and Budapest. He noted that at the Greek – F.Y.R.O.M. borders, the procedures for passenger trains take 60 minutes instead of 30 minutes, so there is a lot of work to be done, especially for freight traffic. He considered the situation better with the police controls, as they are performed on the train en route.

Item 6: Presentation of the common time measurement tool.

20. Mr. Raptis, from the Greek Customs Administration, presented the “Common Time Measurement Tool”, on the basis of the “Laufzettel” exercise performed in 2007 at the Greek - F.Y.R.O.M. borders.

21. Prof. Taxiltaris asked about the forms used for the registration of times of entrance/ exit in/ from each country. These forms should be used as models in the pilots for the calibration of the measurement tool

22. Mr. Kounadis promised to send via e-mail the final report of the relevant exercise and the forms used.

23. Mr. Patsiavos said that the objective is an accepted average time at each border to be found. He queried if the objective was to achieve same targets and mentioned that the overall objective is to minimize the time at border crossings.

Item 7: Proposal for the performance of pilot measurements for the calibration of the tool and the definition of the target groups for training activities.

24. Prof. Taxiltaris presented the view of the Technical Secretariat on the way of performance of the pilot measurements. Since the pairs of stations at the Serbian borders are de facto excluded unless the Serbian delegation is reactivated very soon, time measurements could only be performed at the Greek - F.Y.R.O.M. and Croatian - Slovenian borders.

25. Mr. Princic expressed his belief in having good results but he said that he was not able to agree to perform the pilot measurements before presenting the tool to the Slovenian Ministry of Transport. He mentioned that there are different types of borders: external EU and internal EU.

26. Mr. Patsiavos said that three weeks time was enough to start the procedures for these pilot projects.

27. Prof. Taxiltaris said that the peak period for each border is not the same. It should be defined by the authorities of the border stations, and therefore preparatory talks

should take place with the border authorities concerning the organization of the pilot measurements.

28. Mr. Kounadis said that a relevant letter should be sent.

29. Mr. Princic said that it would be helpful if they were receiving the final report of the exercise at the Greek – F.Y.R.O.M. borders. They could use it as a mean to persuade their governments on performing the exercise.

30. Mr. Patsiavos agreed with Mr. Princic and said that they should set a target for the end of March to have the report delivered.

31. Mr. Princic said that they should at least receive an executive summary of the report.

32. Mr. Kounadis clarified that in any case, in order to present a common report of the exercise, there should be an agreement on the results from the F.Y.R.O.M. side.

33. Mr. Rakos asked if it would be possible for all the members of the Group to have the summary of the report.

34. Mr. Kounadis said that the report with the results of the exercise should be ready by the end of March and delivered to all members of the Group.

35. Mr. Patsiavos asked if it is possible to extend the exercise at the rail border stations of the Corridor.

36. Prof. Taxiltaris answered that this could be done after the conclusion of the pilot measurements at road border stations.

37. Mr. Princic said that any other country would be free to do this pilot programme.

Item 8: Open discussion.

38. Mr. Princic referred to the problem the absence of Serbia and proposed that with Mr. Patsiavos, Mr. Kounadis, Prof. Taxiltaris and possibly a representative of DG TREN to visit Serbia and explain them the importance of the project.

39. Mr. Kounadis characterised the proposal very helpful and added that they should find date to communicate with them in order to arrange the meeting.

40. Mr. Patsiavos and Prof. Taxiltaris agreed with Mr. Princic proposal.

Item 9: Coordination of further activities.

41. Prof. Taxiltaris presented and Mr. Kounadis summarized the further activities of the Working Group:

- A report on the exercise performed at the Greek – F.Y.R.O.M. borders should be prepared by the end of March 2008.
- Mr. Kounadis, Mr. Patsiavos and Prof. Taxiltaris should organize a visit to Serbia.
- A time measurement tool for rail border crossings should be elaborated by a sub working group of the Hellenic Railways and the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance.
- A contact (letter) with ARGE Group should be made in order to cooperate in matters concerning rail border crossings.
- The next meeting of the Working Group shall take place in mid June – early July 2008 in Bratislava, together with the 10th meeting of the Steering Committee.

Item 10: Other business.

42. No other issues were discussed.

Presentations available at:

<http://edessa.topo.auth.gr/X/News.html>