

6TH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
PAN EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR X
THESSALONIKI, GREECE
27 FEBRUARY 2004

Draft minutes

Item 1: Opening address by the Chairman of the Committee

1. Mr. Patsiavos, the Chairman, welcomed all the participants at the 6th Meeting of the Pan-European Transport Corridor X Steering Committee wishing them a pleasant stay in the city of Thessaloniki. He also wished for successful work during the meeting and for concrete results.

2. Mr. Patsiavos briefly explained how the overlapping pre-election periods in Croatia and Greece resulted in the organisation of the 6th Meeting of the Steering Committee in Greece and not in Croatia, as initially planned. He also stated that the next meeting of the Steering Committee would take place in Croatia.

3. Mr. Patsiavos shortly described the general framework after the last meeting of the Steering Committee in Bled and he mentioned the Kickoff Meeting of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings along the Pan-European Corridor X, which took place in Athens on 23 January 2004. He also mentioned the forthcoming meeting of the Chairmen of the Pan-European Corridors that is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 15 March 2004, as well as the Conference organized by the European Commission in Spain in June 2004.

4. Before proceeding to Item 2, the Chairman expressed the sympathy of the Greek government and himself for the loss of the Prime-Minister of F.Y.R.O.M. on the previous day.

Item 2: Approval of the Agenda

5. The agenda was approved without any changes or comments.

Item 3: Adoption of the Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Committee

6. Concerning the Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Steering Committee Mrs. Zdraveva, from F.Y.R.O.M., presented some comments on points 45 and 70.
7. On the same issue Mr. Adelsberger, from Austria, also presented some comments on point 19.
8. Prof. Taxilataris, from the Technical Secretariat, asked the two delegations to submit their comments in written form, so that they could be incorporated in the final minutes.
9. The minutes were adopted with the above-mentioned amendments.

Item 4: Activity report - The progress of works on the 3 years' Work Programme since the 5th meeting of the Steering Committee (T.S.)

10. Prof. Taxilataris briefly presented the progress achieved since the last meeting of Bled in July 2003(see attachment).

Item 5: Results of the kickoff meeting of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings along the Corridor (T.S.)

11. Prof. Taxiltaris presented the short term action plan of the Working Group for the improvement of border crossings along the Pan-European Corridor X, which was adopted during the kickoff meeting of the Group, in Athens on January 23rd 2004:
- i. The Group will huddle twice a year. One of the meetings would indispensably be held on the previous day of each time meeting of the Steering Committee. Therefore the next meetings of the Group should be organized in June 2004 and Spring 2005.
 - ii. Coordinator – contact person with the Steering Committee and the Technical Secretariat is assigned (Mr. G. Kounadis, Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance), for ensuring the alignment of the actions of the Group to the tasks and activities of the Steering Committee.
 - iii. Communication – Cooperation with DG TREN and DG TAXUD will be ensured. Meeting with DG TAXUD in Brussels before the 6th meeting of the Steering Committee (27.2.2004) will be organized.
 - iv. The website of the Technical Secretariat will be the host for communication and dissemination of information of international interest. Continuous update with evolutions of national and international level, investment issues (infrastructure, equipment, personnel) and legal and institutional issues.
 - v. Communication and cooperation with other Pan-European Corridors (in priority with Corridors in the area: IV, V, VII) for uniform confrontation of common problems will be undertaken.

- vi. Cooperation (exchange of information) with UN/ECE, SECI, TTFSE, TIR, Transport Companies etc. will be ensured.
- vii. Preparation of the MoU signing (Spring 2005) and signing of any convention contributing to facilitation of border crossing procedures.
- viii. Codification of structural and operational problems concerning cross border procedures, on the basis of the Technical Secretariats' study and the comments, additions or modifications made by the representatives of each country, with emphasis to the identification of the current fees regime per country, will be undertaken.

12. Mrs. Zdraveva, from F.Y.R.O.M. took the floor and proposed the third meeting on customs to be organized in FYROM in Spring 2005.

13. Mr. Patsiavos replied that according to the short-term Action Plan drafted during the meeting of 23rd January, this 3rd Meeting should be held on the previous day of the 7th Meeting of the Steering Committee, and therefore these two meetings will take place in Croatia, according to what has been stated at the opening address. He proposed the 4th meeting on customs, scheduled for June 2005, to be held in Skopje.

14. Prof. Mandic, from Serbia and Montenegro, took the floor and made some comments regarding the short-term action plan for the improvement of border-crossings. More specifically, he mentioned that the scope of this initiative must be mentioned in point 1 and this should be "The harmonization and facilitation of border-crossing procedures". Moreover, he stated that the reference, in point 2, to Mr. Kounadis as coordinator – contact person with the Steering Committee and the Technical Secretariat is not necessary. Finally, he noted that there are many also other organizations, not mentioned in point 6.

15. Prof. Taxiltaris clarified that this action plan is the outcome of the meeting on 23rd January and he noted that the countries should make their comments at that time. He explained that he agrees with the scope mentioned by Prof. Mandic and that this scope can be clearly

mentioned in the MoU that will be signed. Concerning point 6, Prof. Taxiltaris stated that the list mentioned is an indicative one and there is no problem in including other organizations as well. The organizations to cooperate with, depends on the discretion of the Group.

16. Mrs. Gligorovska, from F.Y.R.O.M. stated that the information needed for border-crossings in FYROM is now available and she provided the relevant material to the Technical Secretariat.

17. Mr. Patsiavos gave the floor to Mr. Kounadis (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance) who informed the members of the Steering Committee on the “First conference on customs and cross-border co-operation between the countries of South-East Europe”, which took place on 25-26 February in Thessaloniki. At his presentation Mr. Kounadis explained that the meeting was attended by the Directors General of customs, or their representatives, of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, France, The Federal Republic of Germany, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Italy, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Turkey and of DG TAXUD for the European Commission. Furthermore Mr. Kounadis stated that this first conference gave the opportunity for the countries of this region to commit themselves to intensifying customs and cross border co-operation and to begin a process of dialogue at the regional level. In addition, the Directors General have identified a certain number of actions to implement in order to achieve these goals.

18. Mr. Vitos (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance), who also participated in the above-mentioned meeting, took the floor and explained that among the decisions of the meeting is the creation of two working groups, entrusted with the task of considering concrete measures to be taken in order to reach the common objectives:
 - one on procedures and administrative capacity and

- one on the means to resolve the issue of reconciling security, trade facilitation and the fight against fraud.

19. Furthermore, Mr. Vitos pointed out the main recommendations endorsed by the Directors General of customs, as follows:

- The non EU member States must align their legislation to the relevant EU legislation and practices.
- Special attention must be given to the investigation of the proper application of relevant international conventions (e.g.: TIR, Kyoto, etc.).
- The administrative capacity of the customs must be reinforced especially regarding the personnel, the infrastructure and the means of control.
- Countries should organize (in the context of bilateral contacts and agreements) joint controls and should create common border control points.
- Strong cooperation between the administration agencies (e.g.; Police, sanitary and phyto-sanitary agencies, etc.) working at the borders should be developed. Furthermore, the “single window” concept should be applied, so that drivers would deliver all documents to one official.
- Methods for time measurement should be established. These methods should also identify the reasons for delays.
- Cooperation with various economic operators should be established. For example, MoUs with transport operators may be signed.
- The computerization of the customs administration (or of certain procedures) should be applied taking into account the needs and difficulties.
- Common staff training methods should be established.
- Contact points should be appointed in each country, to facilitate the exchange of information.

- 20.** Finally, regarding the application of the common transit convention, Mr. Vitos stated that although all Balkan countries may not be able to incorporate it in their legislation, this can be achieved in practice by bilateral agreement following the principles of the convention.
- 21.** The Chairman thanked Mr. Kounadis and Mr. Vitos for the very useful information they provided and pointed out that the recommendations mentioned are exactly what the Working Group for customs was looking for. He then asked the participants for comments.
- 22.** Mr. Meelich, from the UN/ECE TER Office, stated that similar discussions take place in the context of TER Project. Concerning the bilateral agreements, Mr. Meelich referred to the example of Austria and Hungary. The countries have a very transparent agreement since the nineties, according to which all border-crossing control procedures take place on board while traveling. This has reduced the delay on border to 3 minutes, time needed for the change of the driver.
- 23.** Mr. Kounadis mentioned that Greece and Bulgaria have drafted a similar agreement, which will be applied shortly.
- 24.** Mr. Adelsberger expressed his satisfaction for the procedure followed and stated that he, as Chairman of Corridor IV, will ask from the Steering Committee of Corridor IV to also adopt it.
- 25.** Ms. Bozoudi, from SECI and HELLAS-PRO, took the floor and stated that SECI-PRO is promoting such issues with special committees in all countries of the region, giving special emphasis to issues of training, security, introduction of new techniques and the implementation of the “single window” approach. She proposed that the Working Group of Corridor X could co-operate with SECI-PRO so as to take advantage of the existing

experience and to build on what has been achieved. Finally, she invited the participants to the next SECI-PRO event in London.

26. Mr. Patsiavos thanked Ms Bouzoudi and stated that SECI-PRO will be invited in the future meetings of the working group for border crossings.

27. Mrs. Vitou, from the Hellenic Railways Organisation, took the floor and suggested that also the police authorities should be invited in the working group, since police controls appear to be time consuming.

28. Mr. Patsiavos thanked Mrs. Vitou and agreed with her proposal, which had been also set forth during the meeting of 23.1.2004.

Item 6: Review of the 3 years' Greek Chairmanship

29. Mr. Patsiavos briefly reviewed the 3 years of the Greek Chairmanship on Corridor X, starting from 15 March 2001, the date the chairmanship of the Corridor was reassigned to Greece (see attachment). At the end of his presentation Mr. Patsiavos asked for the approval of the Steering Committee to extend the Greek Chairmanship for the next 3 years.

30. Mrs. Palcic, from Croatia, took the floor and expressed her support to the Greek Chairmanship, pointing out that it is not only the 3 years from 2001 that Greece has worked for Corridor X, but also two additional years before that, during the preparation and the signing of the MoU.

31. All the members of the Steering Committee supported the Greek chairmanship, which was agreed to be extended for 3 years, until March 2007.

32. Mr. Patsiavos thanked the members of the Steering Committee for their support.

Item 7: Coordination of further activities

33. Prof. Taxiltaris took the floor and also thanked the members of the Steering Committee for their support to the work carried out so far. Concerning the future activities Prof. Taxiltaris referred to the forthcoming meeting of the Chairmen of the Pan-European Corridors in Brussels on 15 March 2004 and asked for further information from Mr. Preston.

34. Mr. Preston, from European Commission, DG TREN, explained that there are three issues in European Commission's immediate plans:

- a. The signing of the MoU for the transport core network in the Balkans. The process has developed a lot and there are no political problems any more. The next step will be to set a date and invite the Ministers of Transport of the five countries involved. This will allow for the establishment of a permanent Secretariat under a tender procedure, which is ongoing.
- b. The Corridor Chairmen's meeting on 15 March in Brussels. The aim for this meeting will be to discuss what has been achieved especially in view of the fact that the two thirds of the Corridors will be in EU territory after the 1st of May 2004, therefore part of the TEN.
- c. The future of the Pan-European Transport Corridors will be the main issue of the Ministerial Conference, which will be organized by the European Commission in June 2004 in Spain. This conference will be the preparatory step for the 3rd Pan-European Transport Conference, the main issue of which will be the integration of the transport network of the Balkan countries and the extension of the Corridors to Asia and to North Africa.

35. Taking the floor again, Prof. Taxiltaris thanked Mr. Preston for the information he provided and said that after Corridor Chairmen's meeting, the next activity will be the 1st Meeting of the Working Group for cross borders, which will be held in June 2004 in Belgrade. The next step will be the 7th Meeting of the Steering Committee and the 2nd Meeting of the Working Group for cross borders, in Croatia.
36. Mrs. Palcic, from Croatia, took the floor and stated that this meeting will probably take place in the 1st half of March 2005.
37. There were no further comments and the meeting proceeded with Agenda Item 8.

Item 8: Other business

38. Mr. Jovic, from Serbia and Montenegro, presented an overview of the sections of Corridor X and auxiliary connections and gave information on the progress of the negotiations with various international funding institutions for the development of Corridor X in his country (see attachment).
39. Since there was no other business, Mr. Patsiavos closed the meeting thanking again all the participants for their support to the Greek Chairmanship.