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TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY (UNTER) PROJECT

Report on activities implemented in the second half of 2004 and beginning of 2005

Transmitted by the United Nations TER Project Central Office

Introduction

TER Cooperation Trust Fund Agreement ensures the implementation of its main objectives by offering its framework and experience in reforming the railway and CT system in the member countries and increasing the quality of services according to new standards and to the changed transport conditions developing in Europe. The 16 member countries are: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. Additionally, five observer countries: Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Ukraine participated at various TER actions. Lately, 3 new countries, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine attended the meetings organized in 2005. The first two countries have started the process of joining the TER Project. Thus, new links between TER countries and Caucasus region will soon be developed.

The cooperation with the European Commission and the EU Member States increased continuously, proving to be beneficial both to the TER countries and EU member countries. In addition to three old members of the EU, six new TER countries joined the EU in 2004, bringing the total to 9 countries which are presently EU-TER members. In addition, two new TER countries, Bulgaria and Romania, have signed the accession treaty with the EU.

In addition, TER relations and cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI), UIC and CER have lately been intensifying. The international status of TER as a relevant partner in the transport field has been widely recognized.

Regional transport cooperation

For 15 years, the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project provided the cooperation framework to Central and Eastern European countries with a view to promoting and implementing initiatives for an efficient international rail and combined transport system in those countries in accordance with the Pan-European infrastructure agreements.

In this context, it is worthwhile recalling the main specific objectives of the Trans-European Railway:

- To ensure the coordinated upgrading of infrastructure of the TER network to the AGC and AGTC standards.
- To contribute to the modernization of rolling stock.
- To help participating Governments in improving rail efficiency and the adaptation of the railway organization to market oriented management.
- To develop a database on the railway and combined transport system in the region.
- To coordinate the improvement of operation parameters and ameliorate the situation at the border crossings with a view to eliminating the bottlenecks in international rail transport.
- To develop the cooperation among the member countries in the preparation of studies.
- To promote the cooperation among the member countries in the field of combined transport.
- To promote training activities for experts of the member countries.

TER short-term strategy

Based on the good experience obtained in many areas, TER is implementing the short-term strategy in order to achieve a more rapid progress in carrying out its tasks as well as in ensuring the integration of TER into the European transport system.

This strategy has as a main objective the integration of TER in the new European transport environment, as well as strengthening the cooperation with the EU. It should ensure the incorporation of the Project into the European transport system, secure institutional role for TER

Project implementation within the European infrastructure development plans, develop closer cooperation between TER and other related initiatives and projects, apply on a larger scale

the inter-modal concept as well as supplementary development and operational plans between TER, TEM and other components of the European networks, take the leading role in the region in the development of the Freight Villages concept as a supplementary component of the railway network and, last but not least, achieve a higher level of political support from the Governments of the member countries in the implementation of projects in the railway and combined transport sectors in the region.

Within this strategy, the paramount objective is the implementation of a Master Plan on the most important and priority railway and combined transport projects available in the TER region. Soon, its results will be available to all interested in this field.

TER activities carried out in the second half of 2004 and beginning of 2005

- On 1-2 July, the nineteenth session of the TER Steering Committee took place in Milan, Italy. The TER Programme of Work and budget for 2004 as well as the Financial Report for 2003 were unanimously approved.

Involvement of TER in Secretarial Work on Pan-European Corridor VI and Matters arising from the UNECE-ITC sixty-sixth session were discussed and pertinent decisions were taken. It was approved that the new strategic objectives of the UNECE-ITC be incorporated in the TER Programme of Work for the new cycle 2006-2010. It was agreed that TER PCO would support the activity of TER countries in relation to the developments on various Pan-European Corridors including Corridor VI.

Issues related to TER-PCO staff were also discussed, UNECE being requested to take the necessary steps in this field for ensuring further on the implementation of TER objectives in 2005 and beyond this date.

- On 30 August, a delegation of Slovenian Railway officials visited the TER Office on issues related to the discussion of new measures to be adopted by countries for facilitation of border crossings.

- On 16-17 September, representatives of the Central European Initiative and EBRD made a presentation on the CEI Summit Economic Forum to be organized on 24-26 November 2004 in Portoroz, Slovenia.

During this Forum a TER-CEI seminar on facilitation of border crossings will be jointly organized. Also in a special meeting with IFIs, representatives of several TER countries will present projects proposed for TER Master Plan.

- On 22-23 September, the second TER Expert Group Meeting for the TER Master Plan was organized in Budapest.

Issues were discussed related to the assessment of projects to be included in the TER Master Plan, financial possibilities for implementation of projects and completion of the task for identification of projects in countries which did not provide any data like Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and Ukraine.

The Vice President of Europlatforms presented relevant aspects related to the creation of logistic centres on the transport infrastructure in the TER and TEM countries.

- On 15 November, the last Co-ordination Group Meeting for the TER and TEM Master Plan took place in Budapest.

The final structure of the report on the TER and TEM Master Plan was agreed, as well as the terms for the completion of the study.

- On 24 and 25 November 2004, the TER-CEI meeting on measures taken by TER and CEI countries for the facilitation of border crossing procedures took place in Portoroz, Slovenia. Future action needed to bring border control in line with Schengen regulations or EU Directives was discussed. This meeting was organized during the CEI Summit Economic Forum held at the same time in Portoroz.

Sources of information for the removal of obstacles at border crossings were the reports of the above-mentioned organizations or various studies done to identify the real situation and the measures which could facilitate the procedures and increase cooperation among relevant bodies in the border crossing control.

- Extensive work was developed by TER PCO as well as the external consultants in order to finalize the draft report on the TER Master Plan.

On 19 April 2005, in Vienna, Austria the final meeting of experts for the TER Master Plan took place. During the meeting, the draft report of the study with Annexes and maps were presented by the Deputy Project Manager. Also, the distribution of hard copies of the draft report was ensured. Based on the remarks collected during and after this meeting, TER PCO will finalize the report on TER and TEM Master Plans.

- On 20-22 April 2005, in Vienna, Austria the twentieth session of the TER Steering Committee took place. It was attended by representatives of 15 TER countries plus Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine as observer countries – future member countries.

The Steering Committee approved important documents like the Programme of Work for 2005 and budget for 2005.

During the session, the extension of the TER Project after 2005 was discussed for approval and most of the countries' representatives agreed to support the legal formalities for approval required in their country for this prolongation. Draft proposals for updating the Annexes to the Trust Fund Agreement were prepared by TER PCO and discussed during this session. Later on, in 2005 a special session of the TER Steering Committee will finalize these annexes and adopt the extension of the TER Project for a new period of 5 years, i.e. 2006-2010.

- On 15-17 June 2005, in St. Gallen, Switzerland, a Workshop on Modern Railway technology and rolling stock was jointly organized by TER, SwissRail and the authorities of the Canton of St. Gallen.

The Workshop offered the participants the possibility to get acquainted with new management, planning and design as coordinated services offered by one provider, train power supplies in tunnels, modern maintenance and test equipment, locomotives for cross-border traffic, electronic ticketing system as well as new types of coaches manufactured for suburban and intercity trains.

The Minister of Economic Affairs of the Canton of St. Gallen, receiving the participants to the workshop, expressed his readiness to support the idea of Switzerland joining the TER Project for a stable and regular cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries.

The participants to the Seminar highly appreciated the transfer of know-how and technical information, the demonstration and quality of the Swiss rolling stock.
