



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRANS/WP.5/2005/4

17 June 2005

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

(Eighteenth session, 15-16 September 2005,
agenda item 4 (c))

DEVELOPMENT OF EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS

Organization of demonstration runs of container block trains and related developments

Transmitted by the Government of Romania and the Turkish State Railway

ROMANIA

1. Demonstration train South- North (Halkali – Koln)

The train ran on 10/11 June 2004 with train number 40668 – 1:

- Giurgiu-Russe (Bulgaria) departure at 19.30;
- Giurgiu Nord (Romania): arrival 20.00, departure 20.43;
- Curtici (Romania) arrival 12.58, departure at 16.30 to Lokoshaza (Hungary).

The time needed for transiting Romanian territory, on the basis of the timetable shown above, was of 975 minutes (16 hours and 15 minutes), and the total time (including the technological processes required on entering and leaving the country) was 1,230 minutes (20 hours and 30 minutes).

The timetable for these trains was improved during the International Timetable Conferences in 2004, and the tariff is applied in accordance with the Common Convention with CFR SA, having the Infrastructure Access Fee (TUI) reduced to 50%.

2. Other activities

During the period 2004-2005, the Romanian National Railway Company (CFR) and the Romanian Ministry of Transport, Constructions and Tourism have taken part in international meetings concerning the running of block trains on Europe–Asia routes as follows:

A. Meetings of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Reduction of the waiting times of shuttle trains at border crossings in the SECI region:

1. Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, 27–29 April 2004

The meeting was attended by the representatives of UNECE, the World Bank, SECI railways – Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, by the representatives of the border police from Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro, representatives of the customs authorities from Serbia and Bulgaria, and by the local advisers of GTZ in Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro.

2. Thessaloniki, Greece, 18-20 January 2005

The meeting was attended by the representatives of UNECE, the World Bank, SECI railways – Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, representatives of the border police and customs authorities from Greece, and by the local advisers of GTZ in Bulgaria.

3. Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 May 2005

The meeting was attended by a representative of UNECE, relevant ministries from Bulgaria and Serbia and Montenegro, railway undertakings from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, infrastructure managers from Bulgaria and railways from Greece and Serbia and Montenegro, border control authorities from Bulgaria, a representative of the World Bank (WB), and the GTZ railway transport consultants.

The actions of the group were targeted at the issues related to railway border crossings such as:

- Railway border control procedures:
 - o Working procedures in the joint border stations;
 - o Monitoring the compliance with the planned waiting times.
- Identification of problems related to border crossing by monitoring the railway border crossings;

- Conditions related to the organization of traffic of a direct block freight train across SECI countries in order to demonstrate running times, on the basis of the results of the demonstration runs of a block train put into service by DB and TCDD on the Koln – Halkalı route in May 2004;
- The system of efficiency parameters for the freight train controls at border crossing – the analysis of the existing systems and their efficiency for identifying the main problems, on the basis of the monitoring of the railway border crossings;
- Analysis of improvements of the international railway transport, as a consequence of the initiatives promoted by the SECI Working Group.

B. Meeting organized under the care of SERG, Istanbul, Turkey, 14-16 February 2005, on streamlining the railway border crossings by reducing the trains' waiting times in border stations

The meeting was attended by the representatives of Turkish (TCDD), Bulgarian (BDZ) and Romanian railways (CFR), relevant ministries from Bulgaria and Romania, border police from Turkey and Romania and customs and sanitary - veterinary authorities from Turkey.

The meeting:

- Identified and analysed causes for stoppages at border crossing for 3 international block trains on routes Halkalı - Koln, Koln – Derince and Koln – Kosekoy;
- Identified and analysed causes for stoppages at border crossings for other international freight trains;
- Identified and considered taking joint measures (border police, customs bodies and railways) to reduce the border crossing stopping time of the international freight and passenger trains.

The meeting decided to set up a Commission to meet at least twice a year. The Commission will be made up of representatives of the transport ministries, railway undertakings (at the level of general directorates and management of the border stations), customs, border police, agricultural ministries, and health ministries in the three countries. The objective of the Commission shall be to discuss, evaluate and propose solutions and to monitor the enforcement of the solutions related to all issues relevant for the reduction of the stopping time at border crossings for freight and passenger trains.

C. Meeting of the TER Project Central Office in Portoroz (Slovenia) on “Streamlining the border crossing procedures for the international railway transport” held in November 2004

This meeting was a continuation of the meetings started in 2002. The purpose was to analyse the actual progress in the TER countries, compared to 2002, with a view to improving the procedures and formalities necessary for the railway border crossings in these countries, and removing the existing obstacles in this field.

The following issues were discussed:

- Reports of the participating countries related to the progress in the border crossing waiting times;
- Information on and assessment of the bilateral or multilateral agreements, recently concluded among the TER countries for carrying out controls and border crossing procedures in international railway traffic;
- Results of the discussions of the bilateral groups, reached between the neighbouring countries;
- Development of multilateral contracts aimed at improving control procedures in the border crossings railway stations;
- Presentation of new examples regarding the functioning of the joint border operations among the involved bodies, with best practices in border crossing procedures.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the transport ministries, customs directorates, border police and railway administrations in 12 countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Italy and Hungary, as well as by the representatives of International Union of Railways (UIC) and the UNECE.

TURKEY

Under the coordination of ECO and with the active support of the member countries, the first trial operation of a container train with about 20 container wagons was started on 20 January 2002 on the Istanbul-Tehran-Tashkent-Almaty main Trans-Asia Railway Line Section.

During the first meeting of the Steering Committee, which is in charge of monitoring the Almaty-Istanbul Container Trains in the Trans-Asian main corridor, a number of pertinent questions were considered (7-8 September 2003, Istanbul). The meeting has focused on settling questions concerning the timetable, border crossing procedures and tariffs as well as measures to be taken in respect of regular train traffic.

The second meeting of the Steering Committee (Coordinating Unit) of the Container Trains on the Istanbul-Almaty route was held in Tehran, on 11-12 May 2004. The following outstanding issues were considered during the meeting:

- Scheduling of the Container Train
- Tariff determination for 20 and 40 TEU containers
- Views on establishment of a Common Containers Pool (CCP)
- Means of payment for the entire route.

The eighth meeting of the ECO Railway Authorities was held in Istanbul on 6-7 July 2004, in order to improve regional cooperation in the field of railway transportation. The following issues were considered during the meeting:

- Pending issues to run container trains in the Trans-Asian main corridor
- Revitalizing and operating of the China-Middle East-Europe corridor (Silk Road) and establishing a Working Group to monitor both the Istanbul-Almaty container train and the China-Middle East-Europe corridor
- Endorsing of the finalized MoU on ECO Railway Tariff Policy on International Freight Traffic.

The Memorandum of Understanding on ECO Railway Tariff Policy on International Freight Traffic was signed by ECO Railway Authorities (at the eighth meeting held on 7 July 2004 in Istanbul, Turkey) and put into force by ECO Council of Ministers (at the fourteenth meeting held on 12 September 2004 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan).

Work on clarifying and finalizing these issues is still continuing. In spite of the above-mentioned difficulties, the Istanbul-Almaty train is still running once a week in one direction and up to now 110 trains with 797 containers (on 766 wagons) have been dispatched from Istanbul to Central Asia. Furthermore, 33 trains with 531 containers (on 487 wagons) have been dispatched from Istanbul to Turkmenistan by another regular block train operated as of 26 December 2003.

In addition, to the European direction, a mixed train (between Ljubljana-Istanbul) and three block trains (between Cologne-Halkalı, Cologne-Derince and Cologne-Köseköy) are operated regularly.

Also, a new demonstration train called "Silkroad Turkish Export Goods Fair" was scheduled to be realized on the Istanbul-Ankara-Tebriz-Tehran-Mashad-Asghabat-Dushanbe-Tashkent-Bishkek-Almaty-Astana route during the 24 April - 31 May 2005 time period for once only to introduce the Turkish export goods to the ECO countries and Far East countries. This Fair is also expected to help in promoting the existing ECO container train which is running on the same route.

Organization of demonstration runs

European direction

The following block trains are operated between European Countries and Turkey:

Halkalı (Istanbul) – Sopron (Hungary)

It was initiated in 1998, for two days a week. Totally, 208,212 tons of goods were transported in 15,829 containers in 2004. It is still running regularly.

Cukurhisar – Vienna (Austria)

It was initiated in 2002, for two days a week. Totally, 64,287 tons of goods were transported in 3,154 containers in 2004. It is still running regularly.

Köln – Köseköy – Köln (Germany)

It was initiated on 6 April 2004, for three days a week. Up to now¹ 136 runs of container block trains have been realized for import, and 135 runs for export.

Halkali – Duisburg – Halkali (Germany)

It was initiated on 5 April 2005, for one day a week. Up to now 8 runs were realized reciprocally.

Köln – Derince (Germany)

It was initiated on 6 April 2004, for three days a week. In total 36 runs were realized with conventional wagons. It was cancelled on 30 July 2004.

Halkali – Ljubljana (Slovenia)

It was initiated on 30 September 2004, for one day a week. Up to now 30 conventional wagons have been accepted from Slovenia, and 2 conventional wagons have been dispatched to Slovenia.

Rotterdam – Halkali – Rotterdam (Holland)

The first trial of a container block train was started on 6 May 2005 from Rotterdam, for one day a week.

Asian direction

The following block trains are operated between the member countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Turkey:

Haydarpasa (Istanbul) – Almaty (Kazakhstan)

It was initiated on 20 January 2002. It is still running once a week in one direction. Up to now 113 trains with 818 containers (in 787 wagons) have been transported from Turkey to the ECO member countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

Haydarpasa (Istanbul) – Turkmenistan

It was initiated on 26 December 2003, for one day a week. Up to now 41 trains with 552 containers (in 504 wagons) have been transported from Turkey to Turkmenistan.

Projects

The following block trains will be operated between European countries and Turkey:

Halkali – Ljubljana – Halkali

Container wagons will be transported for one day a week.

Halkali – Duisburg – Halkali (Europe-Asia Block Freight Train)

Conventional wagons will be transported for one day a week.

¹ The information was submitted on 10 May 2005.