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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Trans-European Railway (TER) project

Activities implemented in the reporting period 2011–2012

Note by the Project Manager

I. Objectives of the TER Project

1. As requested, the secretariat submits herewith an update of latest developments of the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project for consideration and review by the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/216, para. 19).

II. Objectives of the TER Project

2. The TER Project represents a specific platform for cooperation participating countries in the field of rail transport. At the intergovernmental level, it constitutes the only regional platform dealing with topics of common interest for rail transport and assists in achieving higher standards of rail networks in participating countries.

3. Eighteen countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey) participate in the Project and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is its Executing Agency. The TER Cooperation Trust Fund Agreement, established in 1991 by the UNECE, made the Project self-sustained, financed by direct contributions from member countries and ensuring the implementation of its main objectives, namely:

(a) To ensure the coordinated upgrading of TER network infrastructure to the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) and European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) standards;

- (b) To coordinate the improvement of operational parameters and improve the situation at border crossings with a view to eliminate bottlenecks in international rail transport;
 - (c) To develop cooperation among member countries in the preparation of technical studies;
 - (d) To promote cooperation among member countries in the field of combined transport;
 - (e) To promote training activities for experts of member countries.
4. To achieve these objectives, over the last two decades the Project organized in the last two decades a number of meetings involving decision-makers, TER National Coordinators, railway operators and experts with the aim to facilitate the exchange of experience and best practices. The Project also worked closely together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) as well as with the International Union of Railways (UIC).
5. The TER Project Central Office (PCO) is hosted by the Slovak Government in Bratislava.

III. TER Master Plan Revision and its Follow-up Activities

6. In the reporting period the work of the TER Project focused on finalization and publication of the TER Master Plan Revision. The original Master Plan published in 2006 outlined an investment plan which set out the priority railway infrastructure needs for 21 Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. It was evident that the Master Plan process was successful, but that further work in some areas was necessary. Since the elaboration of the TER Master Plan, a number of new developments have taken place. These may be summarized as follows:
- (a) Completion of the work of the EU High Level Group and the extension of the Trans-European network (TEN-T) to neighboring countries and regions;
 - (b) Approval of the accession of Armenia and Slovenia to the TER Project;
 - (c) Separation of Serbia and Montenegro into two independent states;
 - (d) Accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union;
 - (e) Need for the inclusion of all South-East Europe (SEE) and Caucasus countries in the Master Plan (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia and Montenegro),
 - (f) Proposals of new priorities, projects and links by the TER member countries in the course of the 2007–2009 follow-up work;
 - (g) Completion of the first phase of the UNECE – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Euro-Asian Linkages project and adoption of the priority links and projects identified by it;
 - (h) New data received from several countries (Hungary, Poland, Serbia and the Russian Federation);
 - (i) Increased interest of countries in intermodal transport, including logistics centres, combined transport terminals, seaports and maritime hinterland connections with RO-RO, RO-PAX and RO-LA.

7. Therefore, the UNECE Inland Transport Committee invited the TER Steering Committee, in close cooperation with concerned Governments, to start the Master Plan Revision with the aim to complete this process in 2011.

8. The following 25 countries have been involved in the revision of the Master Plan: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine. The work on the revision of the Master Plan was carried out by the TER PCO with the support of international consultants from participating countries. The intermediate results of the work were discussed at the meetings of the special Expert Group and supervised by the TER Master Plan Coordination Group.

9. The draft Final report of the revision of the TER Master Plan was examined by the seventy-third session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and the Master Plan Final Report (Volumes I (Main text) and II (Annexes)) were distributed at the 31st session of the TER Steering Committee (Salzburg, Austria, 25–29 November 2011).

10. With the elaboration of the Master Plan Revision and launching of its Final Report, the TER Project offered a substantial contribution to the extension of TEN-T and to the practical implementation of the Pan-European Transport Corridors. However, the task has not been completed. It requires further close co-operation between the TER member countries and their immediate neighbors as well as the continued involvement of the UNECE and the TER Project Central Office. This particularly relates to missing information about individual country plans, priorities and to missing data in general, as well as to monitoring the progress of development of the identified rail backbone network on the basis of commonly accepted technical and operational standards.

11. For these purposes, the TER Master Plan Revision monitoring mechanisms were set up, which form an inseparable part of the TER Master Plan Revision Follow-up Action Plan. In particular, the monitoring activities will concentrate on the progress reached in the implementation of the Master Plan Revision infrastructure projects, updating of the revision traffic data and traffic forecasts, development of the backbone network and on its status. The proposed mechanisms will be based on the templates, which will be submitted filled-in to the TER Project Central Office once a year. The TER PCO would process the data obtained and prepare an annual summary report on the results of the Master Plan Revision monitoring to be submitted to the TER Steering Committee for examination.

12. Monitoring of the progress in bringing the TER Master Plan revised backbone network up to the UNECE AGC and AGTC Standards will represent the permanent task of the TER Project in the future to be reflected in its annual Programmes of Work. Therefore, the thirty-first session of the TER Steering Committee held on 24–29 October 2011 in Salzburg (Austria) decided to establish the Joint Master Plan Revision Follow-up Expert Group. This Group meets 1–2 times a year to elaborate the specific tasks assigned to it according to the TER Programme of Work and will consist of the representative of the UNECE Transport Division, TER Project Manager, external consultant, National Coordinators/Country experts and experts from invited bodies and International Finance Institutes.

13. At its first two meetings held on 26 October 2011 in Salzburg (Austria) and on 29 March 2012 in Ankara (Turkey), this Follow-up Expert Group inter alia elaborated its Master Plan Revision Follow-up Action Plan, submitted to the thirty-second session of the TER Steering Committee held on 10–14 September 2012 in Timisoara (Romania) together with the Workshop “Master Plan for the future high speed rail network in Central and Eastern Europe”.

IV. TEM and TER activities carried out in the reporting period

14. On 4 November 2011, the Project Manager took part in the South East Transport Axis (SETA) project workshop in Sopron (Hungary), to discuss the accessibility and logistic work flows in the South East Europe region, in which project 11 partners from 6 countries between Vienna/Bratislava and the northern Adriatic ports of Rijeka, Koper and Monfalcone participate and which is funded by the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF).

15. The existing ferry connection between Istanbul and Pendik is not perfect, because of the need to cross the Istanbul strait. The solution would be a rail ferry link from Constanta to Zonguldak to form a new Euro-Asian transport link and create a new logistic chain, which is much needed by the Turkish Forwarders Association, as mentioned at the 2nd TEM and TER Joint Rail and Road/Motorway Follow-up Expert Group Meeting held on 29 March 2012 in Ankara (Turkey).

16. To consider this matter in the wider context of rail transport development in the region with the Turkish authorities, he then boarded the ferry to Istanbul, where the Project Manager discussed with Turkish authorities and representatives of the UN.RoRo.Company also the preparations and possible involvement of the TER project in the EurAsiaRail 2013 to be organized in March 2013 in Turkey.

17. On 31 May–1 June 2012, the Project Manager attended as a speaker the international conference within the SETA project on “Adriatic Sea, Danube, Baltic Sea, Black Sea – A New Extent For Central European Intermodal Traffic”, which took place in Monfalcone, Italy. In the framework of the conference, the 2nd Transnational Project Coordination Meeting on more efficient use of resources through cooperation with special focus on port-hinterland connections was also held.

18. Due to new travel regulations of the UN financial department in Geneva (flight reservations 21 days in advance), the Project Manager could not accept an invitation of the Russian Railways to give a presentation on the topic of high-speed railway-traffic and innovative technologies on 20 March 2012 in Sochi.

V. Major TER present and future challenges

19. The present and future challenges concerning the TER Project can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Extension of the TER Project to observer countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia);
- (b) Extension of the TER Project to the countries participating in the revision of the Master Plan, i.e. Albania, Azerbaijan and Montenegro;
- (c) Full integration of new member countries (Armenia and Serbia);
- (d) Dissemination and promotion of results and outputs of the TER Master Plan Revision Final report;
- (e) Monitoring the implementation of the TER Master Plan Revision;
- (f) Financing the development of the rail transport infrastructure;
- (g) Focus on rail safety and security issues;
- (h) Strengthening the staff of the TER Project Central Office in Bratislava;

- (i) Solving the managerial situation of the Project as from 1 January 2014, when the assignment of the present Project Manager will terminate.
- (j) Master Plan for the future high speed rail network in Central and Eastern Europe.

VI. Conclusions

20. All activities carried out during the reporting period were in line with the Programme of Work of the TER Project as well as with the short-term strategy of the Project as adopted by its Steering Committee in 2009.

21. The TER Project offers the advantages of bringing together representatives of the Ministries of Transport and railway companies from the member countries.

22. In the reporting period, the TER Project strengthened co-operation with major international organizations dealing with rail transport issues and established also closer relations with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO): At the governmental level, TER is the only forum in the region addressing key rail transport issues pertaining to a more rapid integration of the rail transport infrastructure networks of the member countries into the Western European network. It also stimulates better harmonization of the legislation of Central and Eastern European countries with Western European standards in order to ensure a higher quality of service along major corridors in the member countries.

23. The TER Project represents useful tools for implementing the AGC and AGTC standards in the region and improving the railway and combined transport services. The realization of the comprehensive programme of work with concrete outputs led to a permanent increase in the TER membership.

24. The revision of the TER Master Plan, carried out in close co-operation with the UNECE Transport Division, was terminated successfully in the reporting period.

25. The promotion of the results of the TER Master Plan Revision, monitoring of its implementation and the respective follow-up activities represent some of the most important tasks of the Project in the years to come. For these purposes, the Project has established a permanent monitoring systems to be guided and supervised by the special Joint Master Plan Revision Follow-up Expert Group.
