

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNECE – UNESCAP

*UN Development Account Capacity Building Project
on Interregional Transport Linkages*

3rd Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages

(27 – 29 June 2005, Istanbul, Turkey)

Document 8

Non-physical obstacles and security risks to transit transport along the selected routes as well as measures to remove them.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the document is to help the participating countries to identify non-physical obstacles and security risks to international Euro-Asian transport, in particular by presenting similar work carried out in the framework of the UNECE and of the TEM and TER Master Plan.

2. Overview of non-physical obstacles and security risks to international transport

Transport is a most basic, a most strategic factor for economic development and job creation. It provides access to basic services such as health and education for all and is key to ensure social well-being and cohesion of populations. Transport opens up isolated regions and connects and integrates peripheral areas in countries. At the international level, transport is vital to the development of international trade, exports and imports, which has a major impact on the economic development of countries. International transport is also crucial for the integration of countries and for the reduction of economic and social disparities among them.

In their endeavour to facilitate transport, decision-makers in Governments and international organizations have to face difficult challenges. These include the existence of physical barriers or hindrances, such as insufficient or inadequate transport infrastructures, bottlenecks and missing links, as well as lack of funds to remove them.

But there are also non-physical obstacles, of administrative and regulatory nature. *Long, cumbersome and inefficient border controls*, which still persist at many borders, add unnecessarily to transport delays and costs, and at the same time to the functioning costs of borders themselves. *Arbitrary, discriminatory and non cost-related transit taxes* can also be a deterrent for the development of international transport and trade, particularly for inexpensive commodities and for landlocked countries.

In addition, international transport is vulnerable to security threats including: vehicle theft and misuse; theft of dangerous substances during transport; illegal border crossing of persons or goods; or attacks to key infrastructures points like tunnels and bridges. Transport equipment, as it was the case in the September 11 attacks or in the Madrid train bombings on 11 March 2004, may

be a key instrument of terrorist attacks. Vehicles carrying dangerous goods could also be instruments for, or targets of, possible attacks with serious consequences. Borders are particularly sensitive points from the security viewpoint, as organized crime and international terrorism engage in illegal traffic of goods and people.

Transport rules and regulations that vary from one country to another can also be barriers to international transport and trade. These rules and regulations may concern road traffic rules, road signs and signals, the issuance of driving permits, the driving and rest periods of professional drivers, the transport of dangerous goods and many other transport issues.

The present document refers to border crossing obstacles and recommendations for improvements identified and proposed by the UNECE Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects in the framework of the elaboration of the Master Plan¹.

The work summarised here is intended to assist the thinking of the countries participating in the UNECE-UNESCAP Project on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages and within concerned international organisations about the identified border crossing obstacles. It is also intended to present proposals for ameliorative actions that might be useful to be considered in the framework of the Euro-Asian level.

3. Addressing non-physical obstacles and security risks to transit transport

Addressing non-physical obstacles and security risks to transit transport requires the development and implementation by Governments of appropriate measures. It is important that these measures are internationally harmonized and, in particular, that the transport facilitation measures are well balanced with the required security procedures and controls.

UNECE Governments have over the years elaborated a comprehensive set of agreements and conventions that facilitate transport while providing an appropriate level of safety and security. These include the *Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention)*, of 1975, and the *International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods*, of 1982, for removing non-physical obstacles at border crossings. They also include the *Conventions on Road Traffic* and on *Road Signs and Signals*, of 8 November 1968, as well as the *European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR)*, for harmonizing the rules of road traffic and improve road safety. In addition, the *European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR)* sets up special safety and security rules for the transport of dangerous substances.

Euro-Asian inland transport and the whole economies of countries in the Euro-Asian region would greatly benefit from a full and effective implementation of these UNECE Agreements and Conventions.

¹ The UNECE TEM and TER Projects' Master Plan was completed in March 2005. The endorsement of its Final Report by the Projects' Steering Committees was concluded in June 2005. The objective of the Master Plan was to elaborate a consistent and realistic short, medium, long- term investment strategy on the road, rail and combined transport Backbone Networks in the wider TEM and TER region, comprising 21 Central, Eastern and Southeastern European countries, members to the Projects, and their immediate neighbours. These countries are: Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine. The Final Report of the TEM and TER Master Plan is being published and will be made available to all interested parties soon, free of charge.

4. Overview of the TEM and TER Projects' Master Plan work on border crossing

In the elaboration of the TEM and TER Projects' Master Plan special attention was paid to recognition and addressing of the border crossing problems that are possible to appear in such a project. Quality assessment of the border crossing procedures, the institutional differences etc., was performed in order to prioritize the causes of border crossing problems. Assistance from IRU, UIC, UIRR, UNECE and other related organizations, was provided.

In this connection, it is necessary to acknowledge the valuable inputs, to this part of the TEM and TER Projects' Master Plan and especially to addressing road border crossing issues, provided by the ECMT documents on this topic.

As a first step, the inventory of border crossing points was made, listing data on countries involved, names of border points on both sides of the border and their present and future, whenever defined, status. These border-crossing points were also presented in GIS maps.

Then, the identification of border crossing problems, the separation of problems origins and in each origin the main inadequacies as well as recommendations for problems alleviation, were provided. It has to be noted that the border crossing issues, were examined separately for TEM and TER Networks.

5. TEM Border Crossing Issues (Road)

Border issues constitute major barriers to trade, tourism and transport. Long waiting times at borders cause huge disruption to logistic activities and massively increase costs. Whilst transport operators' employees waste time at borders, it is shippers and, ultimately, consumers, who pay the bill for these barriers, which reduce the efficiency of the global economy and delay much-needed economic development in less-favored regions of the world.

5.1 Inventory of border crossing problems (Road)

The main obstacles at border crossings of TEM network have their origins in: (a) infrastructure, (b) procedures and (c) staff. The main inadequacies per origin are presented below.

Infrastructure

- Unsuitability and insufficient capacity of border posts
- Obsolete and poor quality facilities
- Inadequate equipment
- Absence of separate lanes for transit traffic and empty vehicles
- Under-sized access roads to border posts and insufficient parking space at borders

Procedures

- Insufficient of often over-complex control procedures
- Insufficient computerization of control procedures
- Systematic control of all vehicles instead of controls based on risk management techniques
- Complex and often contentious procedures for weighing commercial vehicles
- Absence of non-stop veterinary and phytosanitary controls

- Introduction of additional controls of doubtful necessity, such as radioactivity controls at some borders (Serbia and Montenegro)
- Lack of coordination between the customs administrations of the various countries, and in particular insufficient exchange of information
- Insufficient cooperation between the authorities responsible for controls
- Non-compliance with TIR procedures
- Failure to provide information to the professionals, private sector, etc
- Changes without notice of the procedures used
- Compulsory convoys of vehicles with customs or police escorts
- Imposition of compulsory pay services using "commercial" structures established at border crossing points
- Proliferation of taxes, duties and fees

Staff

- Shortage of control personnel
- Low productivity
- Non-continuous working hours
- Lack of skills and training
- Lack of continuity in the management of controls due to a high level of staff rotation at all levels
- Inappropriate behaviour of some officials responsible for controls

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

To solve the main problem of delays and all the consequences on transport and economy, the recommendation is to tackle border procedures, through simplification and harmonization. Authorities should anticipate future growth in trade flows by investing – in advance - in improved infrastructure, procedures and training, to prevent borders from remaining or becoming places where scarce resources are wasted. Facilitation of trade, tourism and road transport is an area where it is vital for governments to work together to reduce barriers to economic and social development.

UNECE has developed a number of international Agreements and Conventions on border crossing facilitation, which provide a common legal and technical platform for both EU and non-EU countries for achieving a harmonized and efficient performance of border crossing controls. Therefore, accession to and implementation of these Agreements and Conventions should be in the focus of all Governments of the countries concerned.

Per category of problems, the recommended solutions are presented below.

Infrastructure

- Improving facilities at borders
- Providing a sufficient number of queues and windows
- Improving access to border crossings by widening roads and creating additional lanes

Procedures

- Introducing common customs posts and controls carried out jointly
- Transferring of control procedures to sites inside the country (especially for transit) or at the place of destination
- Introducing new, simplified control procedures
- Complying strictly with the provisions of the TIR Convention
- Simplification and harmonization of procedures for weighing vehicles
- Improving coordination between the customs authorities of neighboring countries
- Creating cooperation between national administrations
- Simplifying and, if possible, reducing of taxes, fees and duties charged at border crossings
- Facilitating the issuance of visas to professional drivers
- Improving communication with the private sector
- Harmonizing and, if possible, reducing of the bans

Staff

- Increasing the number of personnel
- Failing 24/24 opening, alignment of border post opening times
- Training of control personnel
- Motivating of control officials
- Fighting against corruption

Transport services are the life-line between economic and social players. Today, this is particularly true of road transport, since it carries the majority of traded goods moved on land routes (70% by volume, 90% by value). In addition, road transport by bus and coach is highly important in the passenger transport market.

All the problems mentioned previously, result in excessive waiting times at borders and in turn in serious hampering of international movements of goods and people. It is not unusual that due to all these problems cars, trucks, buses and coaches have to wait for hours before they can proceed.

6. TER Border Crossing Issues (Rail)

Border crossing regulations and standards for facilitating border crossing in international rail transport have been developed by UNECE, ECMT, EU, Schengen Agreement, UIC etc.

6.1 Inventory of border crossing problems (Rail)

In the course of the last four years the TER Project has developed a permanent monitoring system to follow the developments and progress achieved in facilitation of rail border control in Central and Eastern Europe. This process is based on country inputs and is promoted in close cooperation with UIC and the European Commission – Justice and Internal Affairs.

Experts from TER member countries, as well as CEI member countries in the last two years attended specialized regular TER meetings to discuss on railway border crossing problems and measures taken, as well as on future facilitation measures and actions needed to bring border control in line with Schengen regulations or EU Directives.

From the examination of the situation in most of the railway border crossings in Central and Eastern Europe, the following problems were identified:

- Lack of adequate technology for the handling of arrival and departure of trains at the border (delayed disposition of locomotives – late arrival of staff – insufficient coordination and management etc.);
- Lack or insufficient legal basis for establishing rules and relations between railway administrations and all other interested institutions in the harmonization of border procedures;
- Slow implementation of measures in line with the need for more adequate information on flows, transmission of data inside and outside a country;
- Inaccuracy in completing the documents, thus causing major delays;
- Inadequate cooperation due to lack of initiative at all levels.

6.2 Recommendations for improvement

From the examination of the situation in most of the railway border crossings in Central and Eastern Europe, the following recommendations were drawn:

- There is a need for the establishment of Railway Working Groups on a bilateral and/or multilateral basis;
- The communication among those involved in the border crossing operations should be further improved;
- All parties involved in border crossing operations should adopt and implement the best practices developed in the field;
- Border control procedures should be organized during the running train;
- The performance of non-railway procedures (such as customs formalities) should be transferred to origin and destination stations;
- For combined transport transportation, all customs and border control operations, including veterinary or phytosanitary should be carried out at the points of loading and unloading;
- Technical facilities on border crossing points should be improved;
- Performance indicators to monitor future progress on border crossing should be introduced.

In the future a special attention should be given to the impact, which the enlarged EU or Schengen area regulations will have on border crossing control at the external border stations of the EU in order to prevent bottlenecks and ensure the necessary fluidity of the traffic of passenger and freight. These regulations are listed below:

- Towards an integrated European railway area – Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (COM(2002)18 final)
- Towards integrated management of the external borders of the member states of the EU – Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (COM(2002)233 final)

- Proposal for a Council Regulation on the establishment of a regime of local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and
- Proposal for a Council Regulation on the establishment of a regime of local border traffic at the temporary external land borders between the Member States (COM(2002)502 final).