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TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY (TER) PROJECT

Progress report

Transmitted by the TER Project Central Office

1. Introduction

UNECE TER Project has successfully developed along the 10 years of its existence. It has proved its solid foundations in the transport environment of the Central and Eastern European countries, serving the objective to reform the railway and combined transport system in accordance with the new situation prevailing in the region i.e. development of market economy forces in the economies, reduced subsidies allocated to this sector and need for increasing market orientation and implicitly profits as well as offering services of higher quality to the customers. The main objectives set out in the TER Trust Fund Agreement were fully endorsed by the member countries. UNECE as Executing Agency of the Project offered its framework and experience in approaching these issues according to new standards and to the changed transport conditions developing in the region.

The co-operation with other international bodies and first of all with the European Commission and the EU member states increased continuously, proving to be beneficial both to the TER countries and those organisations and countries. As a matter of fact three members of the EU are now TER members. The international status of TER as a relevant partner in the transport field is well established.

2. Regional transport co-operation

Trans-European Railway (TER) Project is a regional co-operation framework established by the Governments of the Central and Eastern European countries with a view to developing an efficient international rail and combined transport system in those countries in accordance with the Pan-European infrastructure agreements, the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) for rail and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) for combined transport developed by all European Governments under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The Project Central Office is in Budapest and it functions in accordance with the Agreement concluded between the Hungarian Government and the UNECE.

A new cycle of TER for the period 2001-2005 started on 1st January, 2001.

Co-operation of participating Governments is provided for and funded through a Trust Fund Agreement deposited with the UNECE. With the latest member, Italy (from 8 of March, 2001) sixteen countries have formalised their membership so far. These are: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey. Additionally four observer countries: Belarus, FYROM, Moldova and Ukraine participated at various TER actions.

3. Main specific objectives of the Trans-European Railway

3.1 To ensure the co-ordinated upgrading of infrastructure of the TER network to the AGC and AGTC standards.

a) TER network

The physical plant of the TER network generally exists. Nevertheless, due to the developments in member countries and to the extension of the TER, it is updated annually. TER considers that special attention should be given to the implementation of the Pan-European Transport Corridors and particularly the modernisation of the infrastructure in the TER countries in order to ensure the integration of the TER lines, of the Pan-European Transport Corridors into TEN.

In this respect, most of the TER lines have been included in the Railway component of the Pan-European Transport Corridors adopted at Helsinki. Moreover, almost all the lines included in the TINA network in the countries concerned, are also TER lines. TER Network is presented in the attached map.

b) TER standards and parameters

In view of the fact that the present infrastructure standards are far below those indicated in the AGC and AGTC Agreements, an objective is therefore to upgrade, in several phases, the existing infrastructure to the level determined in these Agreements, according to the economic and financial possibilities of the Central and Eastern European countries. However, a set of technical and operation parameters, named TER Standards and Parameters have been adopted. They are

applied on short and medium term. Based on the TER Parameters already a number of studies have been done.

The TER parameters are:

Technical standards for the TER Network:

1. Vehicle loading gauge:	UIC/B
2. Minimum distance between track centres:	4.0 m
3. Nominal minimum speed:	120 Km/h
4. Authorised mass per axle:	
- Locomotives (200 km/h):	22,5 t
- Wagons (120 km/h):	20 t
(140 km/h):	18 t
5. Authorised mass per linear metre:	8 t
6. Test train (bridge design):	UIC 71
7. Minimum platform length in principal stations:	250 m
8. Minimum useful siding length:	500 m

Operation parameters for the TER Network:

1. Passenger transport

To establish the system of execution of border control procedures (police, customs) on the moving train with short stops at the frontier station for technical/administrative reasons if necessary.

2. Freight transport

- a. To complete the system of common frontier stations in order to avoid the duplication of border controls.
- b. To rationalise the control procedures at the existing common frontier stations.
- c. To introduce the frontier control operations of block trains in terminals of neighbouring railways wherever possible.

3. Passenger and freight transport

To introduce the frontier control operations of block trains in terminals of neighbouring railways wherever possible.

3.2 To contribute to the modernisation of rolling stock

The rolling stock, motive power, signalling and telecommunication equipment, European Rail Traffic Management System, track maintenance equipment, etc., in many cases do not meet today's standards. The objective is, therefore, to support modernisation or replacement of it by new equipment. In order to exchange the relevant information between the TER countries and railway supply industry, a number of workshops were organised in the past few years. Few countries became members of UNIFE.

3.3 To help participating Governments in improving rail efficiency and the adaptation of the railway organisation to market oriented management.

Since the adoption of the Long Term Common Strategy for a sound economic and financial railway operation and management in the TER countries, a permanent activity on restructuring railways and necessary follow up measures is currently developed.

3.4 To develop a database on the railway and combined transport system in the region.

In order to provide in time the necessary information for the elaboration of the pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, the TER countries agreed on the establishment of a TER Data Base. TER is in a position to participate at the elaboration of studies with other companies, consultants etc. based on its own database. Between the TER Project Central Office and the TINA Secretariat a Co-operation Agreement was concluded and implemented.

3.5 To co-ordinate the improvement of operation railway parameters and to ameliorate the situation at the border crossings in the TER countries to the view of eliminating the bottlenecks in international rail transport.

During the years the collection of operational data on rail border crossings was completed. With the support of the TER Database and the contribution of the TER countries' experts on bottlenecks, the identification and elaboration of proposals for the elimination of the bottlenecks on the TER lines, would be carried out by the established Ad-Hoc Working Group on Bottlenecks.

3.6 To develop the co-operation among the member countries in the preparation of studies.

The TER was and is involved in the elaboration of different studies, financed by various national or international bodies or by TER itself.

3.7 To promote the co-operation among the member countries in the field of combined transport.

Several countries made some progress in developing combined transport on their territory. However, in this process they all encountered many difficulties, particularly in relation to the measures required for encouraging the expansion of the combined transport market or the financial survival of the combined transport operators.

3.8 To promote training activities for experts of the member countries.

Having in view the importance of preparing reliable feasibility studies for railway investments, according to the requirements of the International Financial Institutions a comprehensive training programme for the TER countries' experts was drawn up, and annually implemented.

4. A new short term strategy for TER

TER framework, flexible enough to allow the participation of railway experts both at governmental and non-governmental level from the member countries, was during the years a useful body for consultation, exchange of views and co-ordination of actions among TER countries. Moreover it concentrated on introducing changes in countries having a similar socio-political past background but eager to apply measures in line with the developments taking place in the market economies thus bringing hopes for economic prosperity and welfare for its citizens. Based on the good experience obtained in many areas, TER developed a new strategy on short term in order to achieve a more rapid progress in implementing its tasks as well as in ensuring the integration of TER into the European transport system.

This strategy has as main objective the integration of TER in the new European transport environment as well as to strengthen the co-operation with the EU. It should ensure the incorporation of the Project into the European transport system, it should secure institutional role for TER Project implementation within the European infrastructure development plans, develop closer co-operation between TER and other related initiatives and projects as CEI, BSEC, TRACECA etc., apply on larger scale the inter-modal concept as well as supplementary development and operational plans between TER, TEM and other components of the European networks, expand the application of PPP concept in the TER countries and in general with the European private sector to the view of increasing the financial availabilities in the member countries, secure continuity of projects on the main links in the region irrespective of the possible changes in the membership and work on alternative links and connections, take the leading role in the region in the extension of TERFs in the CEEC and development of Freight Villages concept as supplementary component of 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.

The approval of this strategy by the TER countries demonstrated their determination to go forward in looking for solutions to the railway transport problems, to facilitating the integration of the CEEC transport system into the Pan-European system. In accordance with this new strategy, under the UNECE framework and within the division of labour among EU, CEMT and UNECE in following-up the developments on the Pan-European Transport Corridors and Areas, TER Project is ready to bring its contribution to the technical and legal monitoring process of the implementation of the Pan-European Corridors and Areas.

Among the suggested priority areas of work in which TER experience is valuable and it can bring a real contribution together with other bodies can be included the following:

- Overall technical monitoring of the work of various Corridors and Areas based on the Multimodal Corridor concept.
- Development of common methodologies, criteria and guidelines for Traffic Data collection and Processing as well as Traffic Forecasts.
- Development of common techniques for uniform and compatible GIS mapping system all along the Pan-European Corridors and Areas.
- Monitoring of the implementation of harmonised technical standards, terminology and criteria.
- Inventory of infrastructure needs for Corridors and Areas as well as assessment and prioritisation of the relevant projects.

- Inventory of border crossing hindrances for all transport modes and combined transport, progress follow up and reporting.
- Co-operation with other initiatives and bodies having similar objectives on Pan-European or sub-regional level.
- Addressing funding questions and in particular the application of PPP concept on the basis of best practices.
- Particular technical assistance to less advanced Corridor and Areas.

In this respect our involvement could start as soon as an agreement among the EU, ECMT and UNECE would be worked out.

5. Latest developments

During the first half of this year, TER organized two important Seminars on issues of high priority for the CEEC.

- Charging infrastructure and adoption of measures in line with the EU policy in the railway field. The Seminar was organised by TER together with UIC, CER and with the assistance of the European Commission. It took place from 16 to 18 of May at the headquarters of UIC in Paris. Among the issues debated during the Seminar were: the latest Railway Package Directives and its conditions for implementation in the CEEC, various charging systems, internalisation of external costs, possible harmonisation of charging the access to the infrastructure etc. A Summary of Conclusions were worked out by the end of the Seminar.

- Harmonisation of railway legislation in the TER countries, particularly the candidate countries in accession to the EU, in accordance with the latest Directives adopted by the EU and the *acquis communautaire*. The Seminar was organised by TER together with the European Commission (DG Enlargement-TAIEX Office and DG TREN). The meeting took place on 18 and 19 of June in Brussels at the premises of TAIEX. The Seminar concentrated on issues like the implementation of the New Infrastructure Package Directives both in the EU member countries as well as in the candidate countries, the political and legal framework for railway restructuring in the candidate countries, interoperability and railway safety, technical harmonisation in terms of railway products, specific issues arising from the implementation of the new Directives etc. It should be recalled that 8 out of the 12 candidate countries are members of TER.

The 14th TER Steering Committee Session took place from 23 to 25 of May in Antalya, Turkey. The Steering Committee adopted the New short-medium term Strategy and the Programme of Work, the budget for 2001, the list of meetings to be held until the end of the year, the decision to increase the staff in the office in Budapest etc.

An important event in TER was the visit of the Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic to the TER Office in Budapest. The visit was a follow-up of the trip made to Prague, on 8 February, by the Regional Advisor of the UNECE.

During the visit to the TER Office, the Czech Minister expressed his satisfaction for the work done until now and the role of TER in the development of railway and combined transport infrastructure in the region. He underlined the importance and necessity of continuing support for TER from all countries concerned and the European Commission.

He also stressed the importance of quality connections between West and East as well as North and South and made useful suggestions for further strengthening the efficiency of the project and faster attainment of its objectives.

An important step forward in the co-ordination of TER activities with those of other international organisations was represented by the discussions on a document of co-operation between UNECE TER and UIC.

A good co-operation is developing also between TER and the Community of European Railways.

TER was currently involved in the discussions taking place for the modernisation of the railway links between Czech R.-Poland and Austria as well as between Austria-Hungary and Romania. It supported the achievement of concrete results.

Implementation of ETCS and adoption of relevant measures for facilitation of border crossings procedures were among the most important issues approached.

The development of relations between TER and UNIFE (Union of the European Railway Industry) is another important goal established for the next period. It will facilitate the transfer of additional information to the TER countries in terms of the role and objectives of UNIFE, of encouraging the countries to establish national associations of manufacturers of railway equipment.

From this year, with the support of the UNECE as Executing Agency, TER Project is present on the UNECE web site. TER will provide the necessary materials to be included in the web site which will be constantly updated.

For increasing its capacity of action, TER is in full process of reassessing its needs in terms of personnel available at the Office in Budapest. In order to meet the requirements of its increased role, a call for candidates from the member countries for additional staff in the Office was launched.

6. Conclusions

TER offers the advantage of gathering during its meetings both representatives of the Ministries of Transport and the Railways companies from the member countries.

At the governmental level, it is the only forum in the region approaching all the railway transport issues concerning the faster integration and at higher standards of the railway network of the TER member countries into the Western European network. It also stimulates measures for harmonising the legislation of the Central and Eastern European countries to the Western European standards in order to ensure a higher quality of services all along the corridors and higher profitability of the railway sector in their countries. In order to implement the AGC AGTC standards in the region, as well as for improving the railway the railway and combined transport services, TER Project is a useful tool. The realisation of comprehensive programmes of work with concrete outputs, lead to the permanent extension of the TER membership.

TER, only by continuing the expansion of its activities, by its commitment to be more involved in the international activities developed in other fora, by developing relations with the private sector for the transfer of know-how and obtaining additional financial resources and by

increasing the countries' support in the implementation of actions with concrete results, will become more successful in bringing its contribution to the changing European transport environment. In this way it could serve best the interests of the member countries and meet their expectations.
