Council of Ministers

DEVELOPMENT OF ECMT

PROGRESS WITH THE JOINT OECD/ECMT TRANSPORT RESEARCH CENTRE REPORT

This document will be examined under item 3.4 "Development of ECMT" of the draft Agenda for the Moscow Council of Ministers.

Ministers are invited to take note of the Report on Progress and to approve Actions.
PROGRESS WITH THE JOINT OECD/ECMT TRANSPORT RESEARCH CENTRE:
REPORT

Background

Following the work of the Review Group on the Future Direction of ECMT and negotiations with the OECD, the Joint Transport Research Centre was set up by decisions of the OECD Council and the ECMT Ministers of Transport in mid 2003. The Centre brought together in one unit, reporting principally to Transport Ministers, the activities and staff of the former OECD/RTR and the ECMT Economic Research Centre. Fifty countries are full Members.

Ministers asked for a progress report on the operation of the Centre for the Moscow session. This note responds to that request. It is necessarily a preliminary report as more time is obviously needed before the full effects of the decision to set up the Centre can be assessed.

Progress

The Centre formally began operations on 1st January 2004. The staff were brought together and new reporting structures put in place. The work is now overseen by the Joint Transport Research Committee which brings together in one body the Committees that previously managed the individual work programmes. Most countries have now nominated representatives to the Committee. These representatives are generally heads of Research Institutes or senior officials in Ministries responsible for transport research.

The political reporting structures now in place reflect the decisions taken. The main political reporting, through the Joint Transport Research Committee, is to the Committee of Deputies and the Council of Ministers, with the OECD Council also reported to on an annual basis. Budgets are also approved in this joint way and the budget has been maintained at its initial level in real terms.

The strategic direction and a work programme for the Centre has been drawn up and agreed by Ministers in Ljubljana [CEMT/CM(2004)9]. Its implementation is well under way with a programme of Round Tables, research Working Groups and other activities (see Reference Document CM(2005)20).

In line with decisions taken, the Round Table research network has been further expanded to include experts from ECMT Associate Countries. Participation in Working Groups is open to all OECD/ECMT Countries and there is active participation from a substantially increased number of countries compared to previous work.
A constructive dialogue has started between the Research Committee and the ECMT policy committees to ensure synergies and avoid overlap. Reflection on Communication strategies, on evaluation and on statistical coordination has advanced. In particular, progress is being made on the complementarity of IRTAD and ECMT road safety statistics and the IRTAD Group now reports directly to the Committee. A broad reflection on the approach to the next work programme for the period 2007 to 2009 is beginning.

Assessment

The decisions taken by the OECD and ECMT Councils have been implemented. The new structures and a full complement of staff are in place and the new arrangements are working satisfactorily. Further efforts will be made to fully exploit synergies between different work activities and working methods.

The Joint Transport Research Committee has met on three occasions and is motivated and ambitious. Most, but not all, member countries have now nominated representatives to the Committee.

The work programme is underway and treats topics of wide interest in traditional and new ways. New themes, as identified by Ministers in 2003, are being addressed. Participation is good but could be strengthened in some respects, especially from eastern European countries.

Improved synergies have begun to be created between the research work and the policy work within ECMT and the risks of duplication and waste reduced. As one example, there will be close coordination between road safety policy and research work in the lead up to the Dublin Ministerial in 2006.

All staff working full-time on transport in the OECD family are now together in one place, with the improved sharing of expertise and knowledge that this brings.

Next Steps

The merger brought together two units with different traditions and work practices. The first JTRC work programme combined the two previously separate work programmes and working procedures established within the OECD and ECMT. A good start has been made and opportunities for further improvement will be pursued.

A more detailed evaluation of the current programme, which will be undertaken and reported to Ministers in 2006, will help identify any improvements still required.

For the future programme, the aim will be to take an integrated, intermodal and strategic approach. This will facilitate the simultaneous selection of themes and the most appropriate working methods and will allow further synergies and innovations to develop. The Committee wishes to start work on this now so that an outline of the next Programme of Work (2007-2009) which reflects these directions can also be submitted for consideration at the Ministerial session in 2006.
The Committee wishes to ensure that the work of the Centre is policy relevant, adds value, is innovative and challenging and is of a high research standard – in short to make the Joint Transport Research Centre in every way a Centre of Excellence.

Transport Ministers of OECD and ECMT countries are invited to:

− Note the steps that have been taken to implement the decision to establish the Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre.

− Note the progress in implementing the current work programme and the intention to provide a more detailed evaluation to the Ministerial Session in 2006.

− Ask the Centre to outline proposals for an integrated, intermodal and strategic Programme of Work for 2007 to 2009, also to be submitted to the Ministerial Session in 2006.