TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR A WIDER EUROPE

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KEYNOTE INTRODUCTORY PAPER

“TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNECE”
BY THE
UNECE
On 1 May of next year, a new era will start in European history when 10 new countries become members of the EU. This development will bring European countries closer to each other and reinforce trade exchanges between them, with considerable impact on the volume and pattern of national and international traffic on the continent as well as on transport infrastructures. This historical turning point will not only have an impact on the current and newly acceding EU countries, but also on the “wider Europe” which borders on the enlarged EU in the East and South.

Within UNECE international transport infrastructure planning is carried out around and on the basis of four main infrastructure agreements, respectively for road, rail, inland water and combined transport. In addition, two sub-regional cooperation projects promote the coordinated development of international road and rail networks in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. More recently, the planning and development of Euro-Asian transport links has gained momentum. Moreover, UNECE Governments have agreed on common methodologies for transport planning and data collection, including traffic data collection.

**UNECE Transport Infrastructure Agreements**

They include: the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR), done in 1975; the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC), done in 1985; the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), done in 1991; and the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), done in 1996. These four international Agreements define respectively the road, rail, combined and inland water transport networks. They also determine the minimum technical norms and requirements according to which the relevant infrastructures should be built. The AGTC also includes operational parameters for combined transport services. Finally, they establish a well known numbering system, in general following a north-south and east-west grid system.

Although legally binding for countries that become Parties to them, the UNECE infrastructure agreements give Governments ample latitude for implementation. In particular, they establish neither deadlines nor priorities.

Constantly kept up to date, the UNECE infrastructure agreements are, nevertheless, the only Pan-European governmental basis for the long-term development of coherent international networks for the various modes of inland transport. As such, they were taken as a basis for the determination of the Pan-European transport corridors at the Pan-European Transport Conferences in Crete and Helsinki.

Incorporating already the main roads and rail lines planned for the Eastern parts of the Russian Federation and for the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, the road and the rail networks can be taken after May 2004 as a basis for the identification of priority Euro-Asian transport corridors.

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1 According to the designations used by the European Commission, the new European Union neighbourhood includes Russian Federation, the Western Newly Independent States (NIS) - Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, and Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia.
The UNECE networks do not cover the networks in Wider Europe southern countries. However, on the basis of the UNECE agreements, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has elaborated two agreements that established the road and rail networks respectively of the ESCWA Region.

**TEM and TER**

The Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and the Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects are sub-regional cooperation frameworks created on the initiative of several Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries for the coordinated planning and development of their international road, rail and combined transport networks. The current legal basis of each project is a UN Trust Fund Cooperation Agreement signed by the participating countries. Both projects are financed mainly through in cash and in kind contributions from participating countries. Decisions in each project are taken by a Steering Committee composed of participating countries. Both projects have recently been increasingly focusing on Corridor related activities, including secretariat functions of Corridor VI. They are also cooperating with each other in order to explore possibilities for combined transport. The enlargement may have a major impact on both projects in the medium and long term. It will be up to the participating countries to decide on the future role of the Projects.

**Euro-Asian transport links**

Soon after countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus became UNECE Member States, the UNECE Inland Transport Committee decided to include their main international transport links in the E transport networks. The extension of the E road and of the E rail networks was completed in 2000 and 2001 respectively (see above). The extension of the E combined transport network is underway.

The development of Euro-Asian transport links (EATL) is currently being considered in more detail within the UNECE. The prevailing view is that EATL should primarily connect the major regions in Asia with the system of Pan-European Transport Corridors. In pursuing these objectives, it is also felt that in planning the development of Euro-Asian links great attention should be paid to the adoption of transport facilitation measures before large-scale infrastructure investments can be considered.

With this perspective in mind, the UNECE is taking up the planning and development of Euro-Asian transport links in close cooperation with the UN Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). After the development of a joint strategic vision for the development of EATL, which has proposed that planning work focus mainly on the four main Euro-Asian corridors identified at the 2nd Euro-Asian Transport Conference (St. Petersburg, 2000), the UNECE and UNESCAP are about to start jointly the implementation of a new Project on Capacity Building in Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-Sea Transport Linkages. 17 countries neighbouring the Euro-Asian borders have been invited to participate in the project and to nominate Focal Points. Emphasis will be placed on the application of regulatory and organisational measures ensuring to make the best use of existing infrastructures. This choice will have an advantage for the countries concerned to glean the benefits of improving transport operations in the short term. Additionally, the UNECE-UNESCAP project also intends to contribute to the identification of priority links and projects along the Euro-Asian corridors.

**Planning tools**

The UNECE has developed elements of a common methodology for transport infrastructure planning at pan-European level, including the intermodal approach to infrastructure planning, definitions of infrastructure bottlenecks and missing links and more recently the “Set of Guidelines for Socio-Economic Cost Benefit Analysis of Transport Infrastructure Project Appraisal”. The UNECE also collects road, rail and inland waterways transport statistical data. In addition, every five years the UNECE undertakes a Census of traffic on E roads. In 2005, in addition to the usual Road Census, the UNECE will undertake for the
first time a Rail Traffic Census. The Rail Census will be carried out jointly with the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat).