

## **4th Transport Facilitation Technical Committee meeting**

**Teleconference meeting, 27.04.2020**

### **Summary**

#### **Introduction**

- The Technical Committee on Transport Facilitation (TCTF) meeting took stock of the activities carried out in the past period, with focus on the transport measures related to the pandemic situation and the consequences on the transport trends and BCPs operations
- Shorter and more frequent video meetings could be convened, if the situation persists and there is no possibility for meetings to take place in meeting rooms

#### **Green corridors/lanes for essential goods and related initiatives**

- TC Secretariat informed about the state of play regarding the implementation of the Joint Proposal for "green lanes" and "green corridors" in the region prepared by the TC Secretariat and CEFTA Secretariat, which aim was to secure the supply of essential goods through coordinated and accelerated border crossing / sanitary procedures
- TC Secretariat explained its task in monitoring some key aspects of the proposal, especially the waiting time at the BCPs/CCPs on the green corridors, and addressed some on-going issues observed through the methodology for collecting data and related to the provision of daily data for the waiting time on the day of submission of the data
- In monitoring the proposal, the following general observations and findings are stated:
  - Green corridors are functional across the region, there are no major interruptions on traffic flows, all BCPs on the green corridors are operating 24/7 (some services on call), non-stop working gas stations are identified along the corridors.
  - The custom and inspection procedures are applied regularly and there are no new import/export documentation required;
  - All regional partners confirmed the situation has improved since the beginning of the pandemic;
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia pointed out the accessibility problems deriving from the convoy regime set up by some MS; (lifted at the time of the meeting)
  - Serbia and Albania emphasized the issue of the 14 days quarantine of truck drivers imposed by Turkey;
  - SEED and other electronic solutions are welcomed by the Regional Participants;
- TC Secretariat informed that the waiting time at the internal (Intra-WB6 BCPs/CCPs) and external (EU- WB6 BCPs) is stable, with the longest waiting times recorded at the EU-WB6 BCPs: Gradiska/Stara Gradiska (BIH-HR), Batrovci-Bajakovo (SRB-HR) and Horgos-Roszke (SRB-HU), where occasional queues are registered, but the situation has overall

improved, especially after the convoy regime in Croatia has been lifted which created bottlenecks mostly in the BCP Gradiska

- The excellent coordination and partnership approach between the TC Secretariat and CEFTA Secretariat in setting up the proposal for green corridors/lanes, as well as in its promotion and facilitation in implementation were highlighted. CEFTA Secretariat presented useful statistics from the SEED records on daily number of trucks and percentage of essential goods transported through the green corridors
- The Regional Participants praised the work by the Secretariat and informed the BCPs on the green corridors are functioning regularly, hence nothing major to report. Some issues presented/raised by the Regional Participants:
  - ALB mentioned that due to limited space in the interzone of the BCP Hani I Hotit/Bozaj with MNE, occasionally some queues are created.
  - BiH reiterated existing transit restrictions whereby trucks transiting Croatia and heading to Slovenia and onwards to West, can only use BCP Gradiska, and not BCP Samac, which impose problems and burden on Gradiska
  - KOS \* informed that the occasional problems experienced on CCP Merdare are removed, and the KOS trucks are allowed to cross in Serbia. However, the KOS authorities raised again the issue of not using the new joint facilities in Merdare by the Serbian border authorities
  - MNE informed that asphaltting works are continuing on the access road to the BCP Ilino Brdo (with BiH) which may cause some small delays
- Some participants informed about temporary derogation of the driving hours, breaks and rest periods and this should be communicated to the TC Secretariat
- By capitalizing the good results of the green corridor proposal, the TC Secretariat announced the phase 2 which will go beyond the concept of green lanes and the removal of temporary restrictions. It will propose measures for Post-Covid-19 transport facilitation taking into account the BCP inefficiencies in terms of infrastructure capacity constraints, equipment and coordination, in order to tackle the immediate effect of to re-opening of the borders and the increase of traffic, but also to address the structural bottlenecks at intra Western Balkan Border/Common Crossing points and EU/Western Balkans border crossing points.
- The Regional Participants and partner organizations are invited to contribute to the proposal, and assess the possibility to use and adjust the existing infrastructure to cope with the increased traffic after the decontainment.
- The CONNECTA mechanism will be used to support the preparation of sound analysis and project proposals for addressing the specific BCPs needs

### ***Reflections from the private sector***

The WB6 Chamber of Investment Forum, (WB6 CIF) which remained important communicating channel between national authorities and companies throughout the pandemic crisis presented some main problems the transport operators have faced and the consequences to the economy:

- Expiration of validity of obligatory documents for drivers (licences, permission). Procedures on national levels are more or less agreed, but for international documents still some open issues.

- Restrictions regarding maximum driving times need to be followed, which is hard due to the long queues and waiting times
- At the beginning of the crisis, hygienic conditions for drivers were not satisfactory (lack of protective equipment, fresh water, etc)
- Volume of goods has decreased, orders have been cancelled, number of trucks is much lower than before the crisis. Approximate calculations are that (comparing to the last year) volume of goods is 30% less and loss of logistics companies is around 40%.
- Companies are facing financial and liquidity problems, due to overall crisis
- Lack of drivers due to the isolation and time losses
- WB6 CIF reaction on the COVID-19 will continue- gathering the information from the business sector and regular update of information on their web site; WB6 CIF has approached to the European Commission in March in order to grant the access of WB6 CIF companies in the EU green lanes initiatives; WB6 CIF will try to develop simple application in order to gather accurate data directly from companies using BCPs in the region

### ***Regular activities***

- ALB informed that the World Bank project for upgrading the BCP Qafe Thane /Kjafasan with MK (part of TTF Project) is on-going- the procurement plan is revised and sent to the World Bank
- The Border Police Protocol between KOS and MKD on the joint railway border agreement has been signed
- MNE informed that the funds for design and construction of the joint rail station in Bijelo Polje (with SRB) are secured through national IPA
- TC Secretariat announced the official start of the project on establishing eQMS on four pilot BCPs which is carried out by the CONNECTA Technical assistance instrument. A follow-up meeting took place with the CONNECTA project manager and SRB and MK authorities
- The aspects of multimodality will be looked at more closely in the second half of 2020, when the TC Secretariat will start gathering elements for developing a Multimodal regional strategy