

6th Transport Facilitation Technical Committee meeting

Videoconference meeting, 22.09.2020

Summary

Introduction

- The 6th TCTF videoconference meeting was held in aim to debrief on the activities undertaken since the last meeting, as well as to inform participants on the state of play with regards to the situation at the borders, current state of play on road BCP priority projects and follow up of the Action plan on Transport Facilitation
- TC Secretariat welcomed the participation of the representatives from DG MOVE, Hungary and Croatia
- The Director of the TC Secretariat highlighted the priority actions in the area of transport facilitation, with special focus on continuation and extension of the Green lanes, establishing joint rail and road border-crossing points, eQMS and infrastructure developments, as envisaged in the Action Plan on transport facilitation
- The Director of the TC Secretariat stressed the importance of a good coordination among all relevant stakeholders, notably transport, customs and border police authorities, recognizing that they all have shared competencies and responsibilities in transport facilitation
- The Director of the TC Secretariat acknowledged the empowering work of the Technical committee on transport facilitation and conveyed a message to its members that their role in reaching the goals for smooth traffic along the TEN-T Network is crucial

Debriefing on the activities undertaken since the last meeting of the Technical committee on transport facilitation

General information

- TC Secretariat defined six priorities for period 2020-2025; transport facilitation is one of them- aiming at minimizing waiting times at borders (internal WB6 and external WB6-EUMS)
- TC Secretariat is working on preparation of the Ministerial Council to be held on 26.10 which is expected to endorse all Action Plans of the Transport Community
- TC Secretariat is being assembling all available information on the status of BCPs and future planned activities, in order to propose concrete projects for financing

Monitoring the BCPs situation:

- TC Secretariat presented the outcomes of border-crossing monitoring in the period June-September, whereas as of September daily monitoring is replaced by weekly monitoring.
- Regarding WB6 internal borders, situation is overall stable, with a slight increase of the inbounds times and a sharp decrease of the outbounds times for the observed period.
- At WB6-EU borders, situation is largely stabilised during summer, but the need for rapid and coordinated action to tackle the long-lasting problems at certain Border Crossing Points is again highlighted.

Activities of CEFTA and WB6 CIF:

- Drafting multiannual plan for Regional Economic Area has been core of CEFTA's activities, envisaging substance of actions planned for next 4 years; strong priority for working together with TC Secretariat on measures to expand "Green lanes" if possible to all BCPs/CCPs in the region and to perishable and other goods, as well as with EUMS.
- One-stop shops and joint controls are also priority for CEFTA and included in MAP REA, in order to facilitate trade of goods in the region. System for electronic exchange of data (SEED) will be upgraded to SEED+ (SEED now applicable only to customs, planned to extend to other agencies in the process of clearance), currently- drafting ToR for SEED+. Full connectivity between SEED and eQMS will be required when designing the eQMS system. Next block of activities is directed towards mutual recognition programmes for industrial products, and for expanding it to other agricultural products.
- Chamber Investment Forum – organized online round tables in June, where more than 70 companies from the region participated, in aim to express concrete needs (such as physical improvements of the BCPs in terms of more lanes, permanent lane for perishable goods etc.), which were then communicated to all decision makers and relevant stakeholders.
- CIF participated to the consultation process of MAP REA and supports maintaining and streamlining "green" corridors; its main proposal is to add concrete indicators for all objectives – such as increased capacities on BCPs, and decreased waiting times (indicator: 70% of the waiting time compared to the referent year)

Multimodality

- With regards to multimodality and port facilitation, infrastructural problems remain in TC Secretariat's focus, as well as discussions on Green agenda for the region – special attention given to border crossings, as well as how to make roads more resilient, safer, better connected, sustainable mobility solutions like electric charging stations, and urban mobility. ADRIPASS project is near completion – recommendations and actions proposed for the ports and BCPs in the Adriatic-Ionian region.

Debriefing on the state of play with regards to the situation at the borders/ Road BCP priority projects/ Regular activities

- EC (DG MOVE) expressed appreciation for the work of the TC Secretariat in the area of transport facilitation, green lanes initiative and for providing data and transport figures on waiting times;
- with regard to Galileo app- unclear if and how it will be continued: short term contract to develop the app. is over and the EC is internally reflecting on the added value and possible features of any new version of Galileo app, as well the financial envelope that needs to be earmarked;
- Crisis management under the German EU Presidency, and possible contingency plan for transport was announced for the upcoming EU Transport Council on 28th of September.

ALB:

- waiting for comments from MKD in order to finalize Framework agreement covering all BCPs, including opening of joint BCP QafeThane/Kjafasan (delays due to COVID and elections in MKD); PIU under the World Bank's TTF project is operational and ToR for QafeThane infrastructure is being prepared, to include dedicated lanes for trucks and busses
- with MNE- online meeting held in July where the situation on 2 road BCPs and joint rail station in Tuzi was discussed, expressed willingness to support financing in order to improve infrastructure, waiting draft conclusions from this meeting to be approved from MNE side; TC Secretariat participated to the meeting and provided advices and support.
- with Greece- resolved problems, as of 17th of August situation on the borders is stable, limitations of number of passengers allowed to enter Greece on both BCPs due to sanitary situation; bus drivers are not required to have negative PCR test when entering EL.

BIH

- with regard to passenger transport issues, comments will be sent in written to TC Secretariat next week;
- Border police reported that 3 BCPs with Croatia are operating under an agreement for international border crossings, but not as joint BCPs (which is also not envisaged for Gradiska and Svilaj).
- Ongoing projects IPA 2015 funded for installation of automatic car plates readers on all BCPs is soon to be completed

HR

- integrated border management is under Ministry of Finance, and issues for international border agreements under Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Regarding the transport infrastructure- Ministry of Transport follows improvement of connectivity, agreements for investment maintenance of bridges are at a final stage of preparation or signed (with Serbia and BiH), bridge Svilaj (BiH-HR) is completed and both countries should reach an agreement for cross-border heavy vehicles traffic

KOS:

- raised again the pending issue at CCP Merdare related to non- use of the new facilities by the SRB border authorities
- no problems on BCPs with ALB, MNE and MKD;
- with regard to customs protocol from the rail border agreement with MKD, a meeting with the Minister of Finance is expected.

MKD:

- limited move forward due to elections; draft action plan- request sent by RSC member to postpone certain deadlines due to the pending issues and no sufficient advancement;
- eQMS TA - major delays – need to oblige ministers to nominate persons in order to continue, and to hold a joint meeting with CONNECTA in order to answer pending questions
- with ALB- draft framework Agreement for road BCPs sent to Ministry of Interior and Customs for comments; World Bank's Trade and transport facilitation project – ToR for design drafted for BCP Kjafasan

MNE:

- all BCPs operates currently without difficulties, custom procedures without delays
- at Vracenovici /Deleusa (not on the TEN-T Network) construction is in progress, Scepan Polje/Hum- passengers cannot enter due to lack of sanitary inspection, but exit of goods and passengers to BiH goes without problems
- joint BCP- bilateral meeting with Albania was held, draft conclusions sent to superiors for validation

SRB:

- no major changes since the last reporting period, no obstacles for foreign citizens to enter Serbia,
- Ljubovija/Bratunac joint BCP with BiH agreement signed (not on the TEN-T Network)
- traffic delays with HR and HU are due to lack of lanes, there's ongoing project for extension on number of lanes in BCP Horgos (from 16 to 24).

HU

- traffic flow is increasing every year, and the infrastructure cannot follow that increase especially in peak season; number of staff is insufficient; several ongoing projects to have effective monitoring and registration of persons crossing the border.
- Border Management – to make a difference between one stop shop (members of customs are undertaking activities together with border guards) and joint border controls between neighbouring authorities (which is possible to organize at one place, but only in smaller BCPs, whereas at bigger BCPs this is not the case due to the national regulation.

CONCLUSIONS

- ALB and MNE to finalize in shortest time, the conclusions from the bilateral meeting concerning the road BCPs and rail BCP Tuzi, as well as to provide a timeline for concluding agreement for the joint road BCP Hani i Hotit/Bozaj
- BIH to send elaboration of the difficulties experienced regarding cross-border passenger traffic to the TC Secretariat by 28th of September
- MKD to provide feedback to the ALB authorities on the draft Framework Agreement for road BCPs, as soon as possible. Both authorities are welcomed to share the draft agreement to the TC Secretariat, which is ready to avail its support to the bilateral negotiations
- KOS and MKD to reinforce the efforts for concluding the Customs protocol deriving from the Agreement for joint rail border crossings
- MKD and SRB, each respectively, to schedule at earliest possible a technical meeting between the relevant authorities, TC secretariat and CONNECTA Project team, regarding the TA Project on eQMS
- KOS, MKD and SRB to provide TC Secretariat with clarifications regarding the status of BCPs and planned activities/projects by 30th of September, in order to define project fiches
- Next TCTF meeting is expected to be held in the beginning of December, when TC Secretariat will present the outcomes of Ministerial Council and WB6 Summit.