



9th Transport Facilitation Technical Committee meeting
Hybrid meeting, 07.10.2021.

Summary

Introduction

- The 9th TCTF hybrid meeting is held with an aim to summarize the activities that took place since the last Technical Committee on Transport Facilitation meeting, with special focus on achieved progress in implementation of Transport Facilitation Action Plan, as presented in Transport Community Permanent Secretariat's (hereinafter: TCT Secretariat) draft Progress Report.
- TCT Secretariat welcomed the participation of all regional partners, the European Commission, EU member state representatives, CEFTA, IFC/World Bank, CONNECTA, WB Chamber of Investment Forum and International Development Group.
- The Director of TCT Secretariat highlighted several main achievements in border cooperation, namely opening of BCP Svilaj and newly constructed bridge connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia; establishing joint BCPs between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as signing of Custom protocol between North Macedonia and Kosovo* for Hani Elezit rail station. He pointed out that TCT Secretariat's activities were recognised and acknowledged in point 15 and point 17 of the Joint Declaration signed at the EU-Western Balkans summit of EU leaders in Brdo, Slovenia held on October 6th.

Progress in the implementation of the Transport Facilitation Action Plan

TCT Secretariat presented the main findings of the draft Progress Report in implementation of Transport Facilitation Action Plan, its monitoring mechanism, and objective to track progress in order to provide the stakeholders on the information where and by whom further efforts are needed. After presenting the measures and its implementation, regional partners were invited to present the current state of play as well as the next steps in this regard.

Conclusion: The members of TCTF acknowledged the findings and recommendations from the Progress Report prepared and presented by the TCT Secretariat. TCT Secretariat will share the latest version of the Report that reflects contributions from today's meeting. Afterwards, it will be sent to the RSC for adoption on the meeting on 21st of October and to the Ministerial Council on 22 October in Montenegro.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



The actions from the Chapter 3 of the TF Action Plan are superseded by the Action Plan on Waterborne transport and multimodality adopted in July 2021, and hence they do not form part of the monitoring exercise. TCT Secretariat announced the upcoming new Technical Committee on multimodality and waterborne transport to be established, that will cover the mentioned aspects.

Road BCP/CCP measures

ALB-MKD: significant progress, design for the main project for BCP Kjafasan in MKD financed by the World Bank is in progress; ALB: contract for needs of BCP Qafe Thane is signed – based on consultant's report, the ToR for design and supervision of the facility are developed, PIU and the WB team leader agreed in principles on prepared ToRs, it is ready for publishing, around July 2022 contract will be signed and work will start. No interstate commission is formed to discuss issues related to operationalization of the Agreement yet.

Conclusion: TCT Secretariat suggested to ALB and MKD to form an inter-institutional and interstate committee to discuss the next practical steps in the process of putting in function the joint border crossing (JBCP) Kjafasan-Qafe Thane.

ALB-MNE: lot of activities, re-establishment of the inter-institutional committee meeting took place in Tirana in July, outlining a step by step approach for joint BCP for Hani Hotit-Bozaj, and for re-categorization of the BCP Sukobin-Muriqan; joint BCP Zatrebacka Cijevna- Grabon is put in operation in August 2021. ALB: draft agreement for Hani i Hotit/Bozaj based on CONNECTA model is prepared, Montenegro also prepared 3 documents, but additional expert support is needed, as well as consultation of TCT Secretariat to discuss how to proceed.

Conclusions: The expert support to be provided by the TCT Secretariat's TA on capacity building will be used to review and revise if needed the draft agreements and protocols between ALB and MNE.

Both parties suggested and agreed to organise afterwards meetings on institution-by-institution basis (custom to custom, ministry to ministry from both parties) in order to advance in the talks in each respective domain.

BIH-MNE: one BCP works as joint BCP- Vracenovici-Deleusa, Information should be provided on Klobukllino Brdo where the joint BCP is agreed to be on side of BIH. In next two weeks meeting between Border police, Customs and Ministry in BIH will take place, where stakeholders will go through activities in Action Plan and report back to TCT Secretariat.



BIH-HR: Svilaj BCP has been put in operation for international passenger traffic; further activities to be carried out for international freight transport.

BIH-SRB: regarding BCP Ljubovija-Bratunac- the adoption of law on joint location on BCPs is in progress, (ratification procedure in the Parliament), bridge over Drina -construction is completed, permit issued, traffic to be released very soon; BCP Vardiste-Kotroman on BIH side is completed, on Serbian side- Kotroman – works on 2nd phase ongoing, Mali Zvornik- nothing new to be reported.

KOS-MKD: work on bilateral BCP agreement at early stage, discussions should be in parallel with discussions on modernisation of the BCP, KOS –considering budgeting of next facilities on KOS-MKD border.

This pair of BCP is going to be supported through CONNECTA (design of facilities). TCT Secretariat is discussing with the EC to secure funds once there is progress in negotiation between 2 stakeholders for establishing joint BCPs and upon completion of the design.

Conclusion: KOS and MKD are encouraged to formally create an interstate and inter-institutional committee to discuss both the bilateral agreement and the financing of the future JBSP.

SRB: developments on Gostun -Dobrakovo BCP– procurement for 2nd phase (construction of supporting infrastructure) published in September by the Serbian Customs, by 2023 completion of the 2nd phase is envisaged; MNE informed that the BCPs Dobrakovo-Gostun and Rance Jabuka will stay separated, no plans to have joint controls. Horgos: Transport ministry published public call for tender (extension of capacity, additional truck, car and bus lanes on the Serbian side) deadline October for closing the tender and mid 2023 for the whole project. Initiative for Backi Breg BCP from IPA program (not in the action plan) –for freight traffic.

RAIL BCP/CCP measures:

MKD- SRB no progress, delays in project for construction of the rail BCP Tabanovce

MKD KOS good progress- all Protocols agreed, it is expected soon to have the joint rail station Hani i Elezit functional.

Conclusion: KOS and MKD authorities to inform on the next steps and to finalize the preparations for putting Hani i Elezit into operation.

MKD- Greece no progress



MNE-SRB: MNE is carrier of Bijelo Polje rail station project, end of 2022 completion.

Conclusion: MNE and SRB to inform if and when joint controls on moving passenger trains are going to start.

SRB: initial draft bilateral agreement prepared and sent to the BIH Transport Ministry; with Hungary- draft agreement on cross border rail is on track; No reply from Bulgaria and Romania on the initiative from Serbia; Croatia replied positively, negotiations to start on expert level.

Update on Green Lanes

Green lanes as established in May 2020 are well functioning, between EU and WB6 it is not yet fully operational, pending issue- exchange of information of authorities from two sides, with Greece most advanced- there is political willingness and the discussions on technical level are about to start.

Waiting times are collected manually, highest waiting times are between WB6-EU MS, namely Serbia-Croatia and Serbia-Hungary.

TCT Secretariat informed that discussions with the EC and Galileo agency took place, in order to start piloting on BCPs between WB6-EU MS.

Update on EU Green Lanes and COVID-19 transport restrictions – EC

EC representative informed that no turbulence was noted at most BCPs comparing to pre-COVID period, in most countries there are no restrictions, only Slovenia strengthened conditions for entry. *EC started to work on Contingency plan for freight transport- next 2 weeks it will be open for public consultations, measures to look at in case there is another crisis.* Green Lanes app will go to phase 2 soon- selection for contractor is done, extension of app – to cover Western Balkans.

Technical and financial support

- **CONNECTA TA on BCPs capacity improvements – presentation by CONNECTA**

CONNECTA expert presented the ongoing application for technical assistance for 3 BCPs, which will be sent to DG NEAR for approval, regarding design of capacity improvement on the BCPs Hani i Elezit/Blace, Hani i Hotit/Bozaj and Batrovci-Bajakovo. The commitment notes were received by the beneficiaries for the both intra-WB6 BCPs, while for Batrovci-Bajakovo is still pending from the Croatian side. The scope of work was elaborated- preparation of designs for infrastructure construction/physical interventions and any needed specifications for equipment, as well as procurement plan for equipment to be installed on



the three selected border points, as well as for any engineering works needed. Aiming to precisely define all uncertain elements of the project's scope of work, a scoping stage is proposed in advance to the preparation of the final Scope of Works.

Conclusion: TCT Secretariat encouraged partners to appoint contact points for the CONNECTA project and to create bilateral project teams.

- **Transport Community TA for capacity building – TCT Secretariat**

Regional partners welcomed the information presented by the TCT Secretariat about launching public call to target capacity needs of border agencies, in order to prepare, revise or complete legal framework, as well as to assist authorities in setting the appropriate institutional framework. The Contractor will be requested to perform two tasks: *Task 1 – Legal support* (drafting bilateral agreements for performing joint controls on border-crossing points, drafting bilateral protocols, operating manuals, roadmap for implementation of eCMR and eTIR instruments, and rules of procedures for inter-institutional working groups) and *Task 2- Institutional support* -by conducting one general training aiming at raising the awareness of the relevant authorities for transport and trade facilitation instruments for the central governmental institutions, and seven specific ones to be held at specific BCPs for strengthening the capacities of the border staff in performing joint controls.

Conclusion: The Regional Participants welcomed the offered expert support by the TCT Secretariat through dedicated TA, and as direct beneficiaries are invited to guide the consultants while preparing the legal documentation and the targeted workshops at BCPs.

- **World Bank/IFC**

TCT Secretariat welcomed the information provided by the IFC about the update of National Single Window development, ongoing TTF project and planned Time Release Studies for 5 regional partners. It is suggested that TCT Secretariat should invite the Team leader of the Transport and Trade Facilitation Project from the World Bank on the next meetings of the TCTF.

- **TAIEX Workshop on rail BCP operations and controls**

TCT Secretariat presented the idea for organization the regional TAIEX workshop for rail BCPs, as well as the ongoing preparatory work. The members welcomed the regional TAIEX workshops, and as agreed, Montenegro will be the leader in the application process, thus also the venue of the meeting will be in Montenegro, as well as the visit to the joint station in Tuzi. The workshop is designed primarily for the



customs and rail authorities. The draft agenda was discussed and shall be shared with the members. Further details regarding the date and location will follow.

- **Economic Development, Governance and Enterprise Growth Project (EDGE) /Presentation of the Final Report WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Assessment- focus on border agency cooperation**

EDGE activities supporting CRM 2021-2024 (reduced barriers in cross-border trade and investment, support to trade facilitation in CEFTA etc) were presented and welcomed.

WTO TFA compliance for 12 countries, including WB6 was done last year (April- August 2020) focus on provisions, objective, compliance assessment methodology and overall findings were presented, WTO TFA article 8.2 -cross border agency cooperation -key findings for the WB presented -main challenges - no mutual recognition, dissimilarities in formalities and procedures at borders, inappropriate infrastructure, lack of coordination with other border agencies at both national and bilateral level.

The Project team is being active in supporting the establishment of JBCP Qafe Thane-Kjafasan and *avails its support to new pairs of regional partners to establish new joint BCPs*. There is no official procedure for application, only the concept note from an interested party is needed. Albania expressed tentatively a need for training in operations for customs and police authorities.

Conclusion: The Regional Participants welcomed the EDGE project and possibilities offered by USAID to assist regional partners in establishing joint BCPs. TCT Secretariat will assist the regional partners to specify further concrete areas of intervention. The planned raising awareness event regarding the concept of JBCP, announced by EDGE, could be used for scoping and determining those specific areas and ways of support.

- **Project proposal on multimodal digitalisation**

Conclusion: All regional partners acknowledged and welcomed the proposal given by the TCT Secretariat about multimodal project “ Enabling e-freight in the Western Balkans” based on the EU Regulation on electronic freight transport information -eFTI (related to all modes of transport except maritime).

The concept proposal shall be shared with the members of the TCTF.



State of play of the implementation of the Common Regional Market Plan

- **Updates by CEFTA**

The members of TCTF and the TCT Secretariat welcomed the latest activities and achievements presented by CEFTA: Green lanes – operational on all road BCPs, extension to rail BCPs is to be operational soon, statistics on usage of Green lanes, statistics of waiting times, harmonising working hours of agencies involved in clearance of goods, the upgrade from SEED to SEED+ and its extension to the border inspection agencies.

- **Updates by WB6 Chamber of Investment Forum (CIF)**

The members of TCTF and the TCT Secretariat welcomed the latest activities and achievement presented by CIF: outputs within Regional Supplier Development Programme -series of networking events shall be organised, 2 types of technical assistance are envisaged by the end of year. Moreover, 120 companies shall be supported to digitalise their services. Market Access Database, which is available on its website, is presented. Synergies between the future TCT e-freight multimodal project and some of the activities of CIF should be explored.

Next TC TF meeting will take place in the first quarter of 2022, at least in a hybrid format, depending on the epidemiological situation.

