
Current SEETAC Activities – Fifth Report to SEETO Steering Committee

Background

The SEETAC Project is funded under the South East Europe Programme and IPA Programme. It started on April 1st, 2009 and will last until September, 2012. The geographical area covered by SEETAC is South East Europe (EU members: Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece and SEETO Participants and Ukraine).

Project objectives are separated in six working packages, whereas overall Project objective is the establishment and implementation of an effective and coordinated SETAC framework, promoting and fostering institutional cooperation between SEETAC Partners in order to reach the EU objectives, such as: transparency and information reliability, harmonized and efficient institutional framework as well as implementation of the transport priority projects.

The specific project objectives have been identified in the following WPs:

1. WP1: transnational Project management and Coordination (responsible partner CEI);
2. WP2: establishment of an institutional communication system aiming at fostering the information and dissemination activities (responsible partner INFORMEST);
3. WP3: implementation of a coordinated database management system (responsible partner Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport);
4. WP4: definition of multi-modal traffic scenarios and common mobility standards and environmental guidelines (responsible partner Slovenian Ministry of Transport);
5. WP5: identification of necessary financial resources and financing mechanisms (responsible partner University of Thessaloniki Greece);
6. WP6: finalization of SEE Spatial Planning and legal framework (responsible partner SEETO).

The SEETAC is a cross-sector project, focusing on transport system and on customer's satisfaction, identifying the scenarios, the transport strategy, the necessary financial resources and donors and the priority interventions needed by the infrastructure and the transport policies in the area. According to the SEETAC AF that gives relevance to concrete and visible outputs, the specific project outputs have been identified as: establishment of an institutional communication system aiming at fostering the information and dissemination activities; implementation of a coordinated database management system; definition of multi-modal traffic scenarios and common mobility standards and environmental guidelines; identification of necessary financial resources and financing mechanisms; and finalization of SEE Spatial Planning and legal framework

Report from the 3rd SEETAC Annual Meeting & Infrastructure Forum (SEEIF) in Athens, 21-22nd May 2012

SEETAC 3rd Annual Ministerial Meeting & Infrastructure Forum (SEEIF) was held in Athens on May 22, 2012. This meeting brought together representatives from all relevant transport ministries (Ministerial representatives of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine), European Commission (DG Enlargement and DG Mobility and Transport), International Financing Institutions (EIB),

regional organizations (RCC and SEETO) and transport operators (International Road Union, Trainose, the Hellenic Railways Organization and the Hellenic Regulatory Authority for Railways) in order to discuss how to connect the South East Europe to the EU transport system. Main slogan was: SEE Transport Networks. Joining our forces: Together we can do better

The conference consisted of two separated meetings. It started with South East Europe Infrastructure Forum where main topics were coordination of priorities, transport investments in the region, administrative reforms and border-crossing bottlenecks. SEEIF give opportunity to all participants to discuss about integration of the Western Balkans in the EU transport system. In this first part of the Conference representatives of SEETO Mr. Izet Bajrambasic (SC member and representative of SEETAC SC for SEETAC Project) and Mr. Mate Gjorgijevski (SEETO Transport Law Expert) took opportunity and gave presentation on SEETO work and participation in SEETAC Project and significantly contributed to discussion. Forum provided valuable inputs to the SEETAC 3rd Ministerial Meeting.

3rd SEETAC Transport Ministerial Conference was opened by Mr. Aristeides Bourdaras, Secretary General of the Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks and by Amb. Gerhard Pfanzelter, CEI Secretary General, who underlined the importance of the transport sector in the South East Europe. They stressed importance of integration between the Western Balkans and the EU transport systems in order to generate transport continuity and infrastructure development in the European area and beyond, thus implicitly leading to a rising competitiveness and economic development with the ultimate aim of integrating the Western Balkan countries in the European single market.

The meeting continued with exposure of Mr. Fortuna, where he presented main achievements of SEETAC Project. Mr. Fortuna pointed out importance of reconsidering the SEE region as a key element of the EU transport system and the importance of overcoming the vicious cycle of austerity and lack of infrastructure investment by the adoption of concrete measures, better regional coordination and accurate selection of priority projects.

Mr. Baron (European Commission - DG Mobility and Transport) underlined the importance of the SEETAC project, as it contributes to the debate on the Ten-T revision process, provides arguments for the extension of the Ten-T to the Western Balkans and works in synergy with SEETO priority projects.

Several SEETO SC members stressed a strategic role of transport in the Western Balkan, and noted that SEETO has leading role in regional transport infrastructure development. They presented future development of transport infrastructure in their countries as well.

In a below of the meeting all representatives of project partners took the opportunity to present their priority and investments program, and to discuss about importance of planning and coordinating at regional level. The meeting was also focused on difficulties of implementing reforms.

On this meeting SEETO was represented by Mr. Izet Bajrambasic - SC member and representative of SEETO SC for SEETAC Project, Mr. Mate Gjorgijevski - Transport Law Expert, Miss. Jordana Ficovic - Financial Expert and Miss. Sanja Dodig - SEETAC Project Coordinator.

Next project meeting is scheduled for end of June and it will be held in Vienna.

Annex I – Final Considerations and conclusions (Background Paper)

The SEE Infrastructure Forum and the SEETAC 3rd Ministerial Meeting take place while the revision of the TEN-T guidelines and the establishment of a new financing mechanism (CEF) are under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council. Their ultimate goal of this conference is to:

- **Advocate** the need to reconsider the SEE as a key element of the EU transport system, acting as a bridge between Europe, Black Sea, Turkey and further to Middle and Far East. All Western Balkan countries are either candidates or potential candidates for EU membership. To reach this goal, they have to fulfill all the criteria and conditions required for membership. Regional cooperation is one of the preconditions for their successful integration into the European Union and is therefore also an essential component of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP).
- **Stress the importance** of overcoming the vicious cycle of austerity, lack of infrastructure investment and low demand for transport services, by the adoption of concrete measures, better regional coordination, and accurate selection of priority projects
- **Urge to consider** the possibility to extend the Mandate of the Ten-T Coordinators through a Corridor approach, to the Western Balkans.
- **Stress** the importance of earmarking adequate resources both at National and European level for selected transport priority projects, thus also contributing to the economic recovery.
- **Highlight the need** to target investments (grants from EU, national funds, IFI loans) on a limited number of high added value, well-coordinated priorities, by taking into consideration that defining the extension as closure of the EU infrastructure system (Integration future Member States' core networks seeking a coherence in the network development of neighboring regions) with the TEN-T extension as an "opening" to the rest of the world.
- **Underline** the potential of extension of the CEF application in the SEE region (Combined with other sources), not only for EU MS, as well as the Europe 2020 Project Bond Initiative
- **Reinvigorate** the situation of the transport infrastructure in SEE, not from the point of view of single projects, but with a more strategic vision aiming at better integrating the transport system of the SEE with the EU And the importance of coordination between the national investments in infrastructure with the EU funds.
- **Highlight** the importance to plan and priorities cross-border projects in line with EU Core TEN-T Network. The SEE countries are located at the cross border of many pan-European axis and the logistic issue increasing role in this context cross border facilitation and the elimination of the bottlenecks at the borders are also key problems. Last but not least, in order to attract financial assistance in the area is important to have data quality and reliable data for the projects in order to provide the appropriate information.
- **Encourage** the necessity to further strengthen the regional coordination vis-à-vis the EC and other IFIs. The planning of new projects, the upgrading of the infrastructure on the EU Corridors still lacks of coordination between the different countries. While the SEE region is rather small, infrastructure planning remains focused on national priorities more than on regional scale one. In this context, regional coordination should play a major role in transport planning and project priorities.
- **Urge** the need for cooperation for effectively tackling infrastructure Horizontal issues. As EU candidate and potential candidate countries need to not only incorporate the total body of EU law (the EU acquis) into their legislative systems, but also to align their transport safety and environmental practices to current EU standards.