

SEETO Soft Measures for development of the Core Regional Transport Network -Discussion paper-

Background

Founded among the first sector-oriented and specialised regional organisations in the Western Balkans, SEETO is recognised as an important stakeholder of the regional transport infrastructure planning process foreseen by its constitutional act- the MoU on Development of the Core Regional Transport Network signed by the Ministers of the respective signatories from the region (Regional Participants) and the European Commission.

The Regional Participants have shown an outstanding level of cooperation and willingness to support the process and they have been participating to the entire SEETO edifice (AMM, SC, NC, WG), each consecutive year contributing to the SEETO budget for 5 years now. In the same time, the European Commission has placed SEETO process in the core of the EU integration process for the area of TEN-T and transport. Also, by participating to the IFI Advisory Group and WBIF and with experience of six rolling Multi-annual plans and six Annual Ministerial meetings behind, SEETO credibility in front of EC, IFIs and governments from the region has increased.

Financing challenges

SEETO performs its regular operations with annual budget of around 400.000 EUR. Initially supported by the European Commission, as of 2008, according to the MoU, SEETO is financed only from the national contributions of the 7 Regional Participants. If additional funds are available, SEETO can also carry out the other tasks envisaged by the MoU which include monitoring of the performance on the Core Network, developing regional studies of interest and supporting horizontal measures.

The support of the European Commission to SEETO had been very much appreciated in the cases of the soft projects for railway reform and road safety auditing in 2008, and the co-sponsored TAIEX events and some other meetings in 2009-2010. With more sustainable and strengthened support in 2011-2012, the goals of the Action plan 2011 can be achieved and the long-awaited issues for better performance of the Core Network and transport development in the region will be addressed.

It is worthwhile to mention that most of the tasks envisaged for the Transport Community Secretariat by the future Treaty are currently performed by SEETO and that certain time period is necessary for establishment and implementation of Transport Community Secretariat. The EC plans to support the functioning of the future Transport Community Secretariat and its main activities by direct contribution of 1.200.000 EUR per year which is allocated in the IPA Multi-beneficiary programme 2011-2013¹.

SEETO soft measures financing shall be considered as a strategic support for further capacity strengthening and preparation for establishment of future regional transport structure. Existing resources and allocated funds could be used for implementation of soft projects within SEETO, especially for the period 2011-2012, in order to support smooth transition on higher level of regional transport cooperation.

¹ Project Fiche No.X, IPA Multi-beneficiary programme 2011-2013

Project proposals for horizontal measures implementation

The following horizontal measures are proposed in accordance to the SEETO Action plan 2011 adopted by the SEETO Steering Committee and defined in the MAP 2009-2013, MAP 2010-2014 and MAP 2011. They are also consistent and logical continuation to the previous support of the EC for the transport horizontal measures.

1. Implementation of Harmonized Data Collection Mechanism and Core Network transport model for traffic analysis and forecasting

This soft measure, adopted within the SEETO MAP 2008-12 is to tackle one of the main problems in SEETO operation – data collection and data harmonisation, as well as the traffic forecast method which is now too general and generic. Traffic analysis and forecasts are crucial inputs for infrastructure planning and programming, thus the decision making on infrastructure investments heavily relies on their results. Also, development of reliable traffic forecasts is extremely important, so that the potential impact of future capacity bottlenecks and of alternative routes can be more accurately placed in time.

The proposed soft measure includes two interrelated components:

- preparation of Harmonised Data Collection Mechanism,
- update of the Core Network transport model for traffic analysis and forecasting.

The first component shall be focused, though not limited, to exchange of best practices with EU institutions dealing with data collection (EUROSTAT, TEN-T Agency, etc), and then it will be followed by technical assistance to create harmonised and integrated regional data base system, including data collection and data storing mechanism, as well as use and application of data. The main focus will be put on National Coordinators and focal points in different Regional Participants' institutions..

For the second component, several steps are needed in transport model processing: collecting the necessary data including the socio-economic data (population, employment, GDP, motorisation rate etc.), regional development patterns, external zones; methodology for creation of Origin/Destination matrices for different modes of transport; and defining scenarios. SEETO is in an excellent position to take a leading role in developing a regional transport model, where information and experiences could be shared and centrally developed.

The data collection process is supported by SEETIS system owned by SEETO which is constantly upgraded and updated.

Expected result: Improved quality and reliability of data and analysis delivered to the Regional Participants and European Commission

Estimated budget: 1.500.000 EUR

2. Gap Analysis of TEN standards implementation on the Core Network

Gap analysis of the various standards implementation along the Core Network and the comparison with the TEN-T network standards is expected to contribute towards identification of shortcomings on the network as a whole, or on the separate parts of it, as well as to provide the basis for policy making and formulation of subsequent soft measures or determination of investments.

The measure is not intended to look at construction design, but rather to explore the possible discrepancies in use of other established or regularly applied standards for interoperability and interconnection, technological and environmentally related standards and to give recommendations on future actions. The outcome shall be an inventory of the Core Network with special focus on the existing signalisation, inter-sections, interoperability of electronic tolls, service stations etc, as well as recommendations from perspective of the TEN-T best practices.

The Regional Partners should have an overview of the gaps in meeting the standards for the interoperability and safety used in the TEN-T as they are expected to meet these requirements while making plans for development of transport infrastructure and applying for the funds within precession assistance.

Expected result: Setting of the stage for harmonisation of operational and technological standards for transport among the Regional Participants and between them and neighbouring EU Member States

Estimated budget: 300.000 EUR

3. Support for training courses for Road Safety Auditors and Road Safety Inspectors in the SEETO region

The main objective of this soft measure is to support the introduction of mandatory Road Safety Audit (RSA) and Road Safety Inspection (RSI) for the SEE Core Network according to the EU Directive 96/2008 on Road Infrastructure Safety Management, by preparing training curricula, organising and conducting training courses, as well as a final examination and certification of Road Safety Auditors and Road Safety Inspectors

This measure was endorsed by the MAP 2011 and is consistent with a previous soft measure project on road safety auditing, financed by the European Commission and successfully completed in November 2009. The new project will be built upon the Manuals that were produced in the previous one and tested in the Regional Participants

The general result of this project is to transfer knowledge, expertise and best practises regarding road safety engineering from the EU Member States to the SEE Region through an intensive and stepwise training designed as combination of seminars, practical exercises, followed by final exam, according to a training curricula formulated in line with the EU directive 96/2008. The training shall be provided for all audit stages according to the Directive: preliminary design, detailed design, pre-opening and post opening stage.

Expected result: Establishment of minimum necessary and sufficient conditions for implementation of RSI and RSA

Estimated budget: 650.000 EUR

4. Addressing regional transport non-physical barriers

In addition to the substantial improvement of the Core Network infrastructure which is necessary to overcome the existing physical barriers, there are various types of non-physical barriers related to administrative and border control procedures. Furthermore, safety and security deficits, legal flaws and non-harmonised rules for access to the market, various types of permits, and non-harmonised technical standards for vehicles are various obstacles for more efficient transport. This leads to considerable waste of time and revenues, which in turn results to increased prices of the transported goods, restricted personal travel and eventually hinders the economic development and full potential of the market in the region.

Therefore, the main aim of this soft measure should be formulation and support in implementation of homogenous rules among the Regional Participants which will significantly reduce the impact of the non-physical barriers, focussing to one or more from the following:

- Analysis and proposal for improvement of bilateral transport agreements between Regional Participants in road transport in order to enable more favourable status of hauliers (permits, requirements etc) and to further liberalise the freight and passenger transport;
- Analysis and monitoring of implementation of railway border crossing Agreements prepared by RSA/RWR Project in terms of operations to be established between railways, including acceptance of equipment, driver certification, inter-railway payments etc.;

- Analysis of possibilities for development and interoperability of advanced information systems and Electronic Data Inter-exchange systems (EDI), as well as implementation of modern vehicle control systems in order to speed up security procedures and reduce delays to the movement of goods and passengers. Notably, various possibilities should be explored for creation of one-stop-shop systems and enhancing the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

The soft measure may be realised through an overall analysis and in-depth study of the existent non-physical barriers mentioned above; and technical assistance for providing concrete policy or legislative proposals and administrative actions.

Expected result: Time and cost savings in transport operations, felt in short term and of benefit for the whole region

Estimated budget: 450.000 EUR

5. Technical support to the SEETO Network and SEETO Permanent Secretariat

The SEETO Network encompasses the Steering Committee members, National coordinators, members of different expert working groups, as well as member of delegations of the SEETO Annual Meetings of Ministers. They all face challenges related to travel expenses for participation to the regular meetings, but also for various network meetings that take place in the region or on EU level (TEN-T days for example). The costs for participation to such meetings are completely born by the national authorities who allocate considerable amount of funds on the top of the national annual contributions to the SEETO budget. Therefore some disbursements should be considered for participation of the SEETO Network to the network meetings in order to ensure the full participation.

In addition, it will be very much welcomed if part of the Technical support by EC is allocated to improving the capacity of the SEETO Secretariat. It currently employs 6 persons which deal with multi-tasking in the daily work and have outperformed in many occasions. Nonetheless, the constant improvement of knowledge and expertise is needed, therefore, it is highly desirable that a low-intensity yearly training program for SEETO staff is developed and supported. It will be combination of transport oriented topics, project cycle, managerial and administrative affairs, as well as networking with other regional organisations, regional visits to the Regional Participants and networking.

Expected result: Improved operations, efficiency and effectiveness of the SEETO Network

Estimated budget: 100.000 EUR