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## Summary of the first meeting of the SEETO Working Group on Transport Facilitation (TFWG)

10<sup>th</sup> December 2015  
Brussels

### General points

Based on the conclusions from the Western Balkans 6 summit in Vienna, (August, 2015) and deriving from the "connectivity agenda" as the highest priority for the Western Balkans, the European Commission has tasked the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) to be the focal point for the follow-up of the implementation of the policy reform goals in the transport sector outlined as **Western Balkans Core Transport Network Soft Measures** in the Addendum of the Conclusions.

The details can be found in the conclusions of the Western Balkan 6 summit of Vienna, available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/policy-highlights/regional-cooperation/20150828\\_addendum\\_western\\_balkans\\_summit.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/policy-highlights/regional-cooperation/20150828_addendum_western_balkans_summit.pdf)

The inter-institutional and cross-sectoral nature of the listed soft measures made necessary to establish a Working Group on Transport Facilitation (TFWG) consisted of representatives from the Ministries in charge of transport, trade, custom authorities and border police, CEFTA Secretariat, transport industry, as well as EC services and international organisations dealing with transport and trade facilitation.

The Working Group on Transport Facilitation (TFWG) will monitor and guide the work for implementation of the policy reforms related to the listed soft measures. The ToR for the TFWG is adopted by the SEETO Steering Committee in October 2015.

### Specific points

- The objective of the soft measures is to enable better use of the transport infrastructure and to bring added value to the investments in infrastructure. It is expected that the implementation of the soft measures will bring positive effects through opening of the railway transport market, improving the competitiveness, reliability and safety of the transport system and increasing the effectiveness of the border-crossing procedures, thus leading to more attractive corridors and more investments.
- SEETO is the central point for gathering all relevant information from the TFWG members, necessary to conduct an overall monitoring of the state of play with regards to the implementation process. SEETO will need to report to the EC on the progress made by the national authorities in that process, as well as to bring closer to the WB countries some best practises or to point out and alert if some

problems occur along the process. However, the final assessment on whether one measure has been accomplished or not is going to be done by the EC

- The EC has made clear that the availability of funds from the regional IPA 2016 envelope for infrastructure projects within the connectivity agenda is made conditional upon full implementation of the soft measures. All efforts by the state for full implementation of a measure are needed to be proven; otherwise no positive assessment can take place. There's going to be competition among the countries' projects for the funds- the countries that will have better track record in the soft measures scoring, are entitled to the funds.
- The progress is going to be monitored essentially through a soft measures management plan which was delivered before the meeting, providing actions, sub-actions, implementing bodies, milestones, and expected results. The deadline for implementation of the listed actions in the soft management plan is before June 2016 when the WB6 Summit in Paris will take place.
- National authorities need to report regularly to SEETO (at least once per month) for every action and sub-action from the management plan.

## **2. Observations on the soft measures management plan**

### **1. Opening of the transport market**

#### 1.1 Rail market opening on pilot basis on Orient/East Med corridor

- DG MOVE presented the state of play regarding the rail market opening in each of the SEETO countries, emphasizing the benefits and challenges.
- Participants reported current state of art regarding market opening and stated that progress exist however many of the challenges still lie ahead.
- No major impediments regarding this measure noted so far

#### 1.2 Setting framework for introducing EU Rail Freight Corridors

- DG MOVE and SEETO presented the steps needed for setting the framework for EU Rail freight corridors.
- Regional Participants, will have to do internal consultation with relevant stakeholders (MoT, railways, regulatory bodies) for the inclusion of Western Balkans into Rail Freight Corridor initiative. Furthermore, consultation with neighbouring WB countries and EU neighbouring countries should be done as well. Some, Regional Participants, eg Serbia have already sent joint letter (October 2015) of intent to EC, together with Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria.
- No major impediments regarding this measure noted so far

### **2. Establishment of competitive, reliable and safe transport system**

#### 2.1 Road Safety Inspection (RSI) guidelines and trainings

- SEETO presented the plans for regional RSI trainings, on the basis of already existing guidelines. ToR is under preparation by SEETO, and the curricula for trainings, as well as the trainings will be performed by the EC TA.

- SEETO gave an overall presentation of the road safety situation in the region (the number of road fatalities is slightly decreasing) and informed that SEETO, through the Road Safety working group will deal also with the overall road safety strategy.
- No impediments regarding this measure noted so far; the activities for fulfilling this measure are on-going and advanced.

## 2.2 Strategic framework for implementation of ITS on the Core Network

- DG MOVE outlined the ITS (all transport modes) Framework on EU level and offered some further assistance in types of specific thematic workshop that can bring closer the EU legislation on ITS to the WB countries given the fact that some of the legislation for ITS implementation is relatively new
- The countries are at the very beginning of putting any ITS framework on place and they lack knowledge and experience in the field. Only Macedonia reported an on-going project documentation preparation for introducing ITS on Corridor X
- ICT solutions developed by customs, police and other border authorities play a major role in BC facilitation

## 2.3 Maintenance Plan 2016-2020 for the entire Core Network

- Regional participants already have certain road and rail maintenance plans in place; however their efficiency and functionality needs to be reviewed and best practice introduced in order to ensure the accomplishment of the 2020 goal (no sections in very poor and poor condition). Participants mentioned that the plan is only the first step (to be done in 2016) more important issue is to secure the implementation of the plans.
- In order to ensure proper implementation of maintenance plans, it is recommended to adopt the maintenance plans in the form of contract, as it is done in EU (railway sector). EU Legislation already provides plenty of elements for the infrastructure agreement (between the state and public companies dealing with maintenance) and maintenance plans. Consultation with all the key actors (Ministry of Transport, railway, road public authorities, regulatory bodies and industry representatives) is necessary in order to ensure properly functioning infrastructure.
- Furthermore, necessity to coordinate national maintenance plans with plans of the neighbouring countries was stressed. EU member states have to obligation (according to the EU acqui) to coordinate maintenance plans with their neighbours (including Western Balkans).

## 2.4 Development of SEED+ to support CEFTA Framework Agreement on data exchange and simplification of inspections

- The mandate of CEFTA Structures dealing with trade facilitation stems from CEFTA Agreement. The role of CEFTA structures in the trade facilitation is indispensable. The joint efforts with SEETO on transport & trade facilitation will allow for further economic benefits for the economic operators in Western Balkans. The negotiations for the CEFTA Framework Agreement on Trade Facilitation (Additional Protocol 5), including Transport are on-going under the exclusive umbrella of CEFTA. The measure from the soft management plan related to SEED+ is completely under responsibility of CEFTA and SEETO will rely on CEFTA's inputs to be provided in the reporting. The inputs from CEFTA structures are needed in the rail border crossing agreements, as far as custom issues are concerned, accordingly

- The activities for fulfilling this measure are on-going and advanced.
- Information sharing regarding typology of goods passing regional border crossings and traversing Western Balkans would be highly beneficial in order to better monitor trade and transport flows.
- CEFTA strongly recommended to establish a task force between the EC and CEFTA Parties to confirm the scope of action fiches for financing Maintenance + and SEED +.
- CEFTA stated that the relevant paragraph on economic corridors in the conclusions of Vienna Summit should take into account trade in services as well as trade in goods with an aim to better respond to the objectives of SEE 2020 and the Berlin Process.

### **3. Increasing the effectiveness of Border Crossing Procedures**

#### 3.1 Implementation of rail BC agreement between Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- Border Crossing agreement has been signed between Serbian and Macedonian Ministries and Macedonian side has initiated signing of 4 protocols between border policies, customs, inspections and rail authorities.
- The joint station Tabanovce is going to be financed under WBIF- preparation of project documentation commenced. Financing for the construction of the joint station need to be secured.

#### 3.2 Conclusions of negotiations Bosnia and Herzegovina- Croatia for all BCPs

- Bosnian side had established a inter-ministerial group to conduct the negotiations with Croatia
- Existing rail border crossing agreements need to be reviewed. Croatia will need to revise them in order to be in line with the EU legislation. Strong cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia is necessary to implement this measure.

#### 3.3 Implementation of BC agreement between Montenegro-Albania on the Adriatic-Ionian corridor

- Rail border crossing agreement for the joint station according to the SEETO template has been signed in 2013, however protocols between border agencies and infrastructure managers are still not signed. Tuzi (Montenegro) selected as the location for the joint station.
- First contact regarding signing of protocols has been made in October 2015. Albania started with drafting of necessary protocols.
- Montenegro established interministerial working groups for the implementation of soft measures.

#### 3.4 Implementation of IBM at common crossing point (CCP) between Serbia and Kosovo- provide one parking lane on each side of the CCP Merdare

- Kosovo side reported that the project for parking lane has started. Currently there is no progress regarding implementation of IBM strategy and procedures for CCP
- For this measure, contact should be made with EU DEL in Kosovo and UNOPS to assign a specific person to report