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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Rail Transport

##### Sixty-seventh session

Geneva, 23–25 October 2013

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

##### Trans-European Railway (TER) project

### TER project

#### Report on activities implemented in the reporting period 2012–2013

Note by the Project Manager

## I. Objectives of the project

1. The Trans-European Railway (TER) project, of which the UNECE is the Executing Agency, is a platform for cooperation between participating countries in the field of rail transport. At the intergovernmental level, it represents a very important and probably unique regional platform dealing with topics of common interest for rail transport and assisting in achieving higher standards for the rail networks of participating countries.

2. Seventeen countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey) are upgrading the infrastructure of their TER networks to align them with the AGC and AGTC standards:

(a) to coordinate the improvement of operational parameters and improve the situation at border crossings with a view to eliminating bottlenecks in international rail transport;

(b) to develop cooperation among member countries in the preparation of technical studies;

(c) to promote cooperation among member countries in the field of combined transport;

(d) to promote training activities for experts of member countries.

3. The TER project is organized around three pillars:
  - (a) The active participation and support of member countries through the Trust Fund Agreement, deposited with UNECE, which nominates the project's Steering Committee as its highest administrative and political body and is formed by national delegates from each participating country;
  - (b) The Project Central Office (PCO) in Bratislava, hosted by the Government of Slovakia, with project office personnel coordinating activities;
  - (c) National Project Offices set up in, or designated to, each participating country to preside over national activities and those under the project. These national offices operate under the jurisdiction of a nominated National Coordinator from every member.

## II. TER activities carried out in the reporting period

4. The Project Manager attended the reunion on “Solutions for improving cross-border traffic in railway passenger transport” (17–19 July 2012, Bucharest (Romania)) and also met representatives of the Romanian Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure and of Romanian National Railways (CFR), as well as members of the Romanian Railway Industry Association (AIF) and the Club Feroviar. At these events, the Project Manager expressed TER’s interest in the projects aimed at improving cross-border railway traffic as well as in the development of the future high-speed line that would connect Romania to Serbia and Hungary. He promised that these items would be discussed at the planned UNECE-TER meetings to be held in Western Romania and Serbia in the coming months.
5. The Project Manager visited on 20–24 August 2012, Timisoara (Romania), Kikinda (Serbia) and Szeged (Hungary) to discuss with the local authorities organizational issues and preparations for the Workshop on “*Master Plan for the future High Speed Rail Network in Central and Eastern Europe*”.
6. The thirty-second session of the TER Steering Committee was held on 10–14 September 2012 in Timisoara (Romania). At the session, the TER Cost Plan and the TER programme of work for 2013 were discussed and approved and the decision to elaborate the TER Master Plan for High Speed Rail Network was taken.
7. The joint UNECE-TER workshop on Research and Development, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and Road/Rail Intermodal Innovation was organized back to back with the thirty-second session of the TER Steering Committee on 12–14 September in Timisoara (Romania) and Kikinda (Serbia). The workshop was supported by the Ministry of Transport of Romania. The development of the future high speed network in Central and Eastern Europe was discussed at the workshop. The participants expressed the need to consider this topic in a wider context, taking into account other issues including the related corridors and connections to the Adriatic and Black Sea ports. During the workshop a technical visit was made to the Timisoara – Kikinda railway line in Serbia.
8. On 3 October 2012, the Project Manager took part in the Hungarian Transport Workshop in Siofok (Hungary) to discuss accessibility and logistical workflows in Hungary and its neighboring countries. Representatives from Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and from South-Eastern European countries took part in the workshop. The Project Manager informed the participants about ongoing and planned TER activities related to the workshop.

9. On 7–9 November 2012, the thirty-third session of the TER Steering Committee was held in Geneva, with the representatives of 10 member countries taking part. The session examined the draft integrated report in comparison with:

- (a) the revised TEM and TER Master Plan Backbone Networks;
- (b) the European Union (EU) Core Network;
- (c) the UNECE AGR and AGC Networks; and the Euro-Asian Transport Links.

The Steering Committee also took note of the draft terms of reference for the elaboration of the Master Plan for High Speed Railway Network in the TER region and requested that the Project Manager distribute the final TOR to the TER National Coordinators in January 2013.

10. Also on the 7 November 2012, the third meeting of the Joint TEM and TER Rail and Road/Motorway Expert Group was held in Geneva. The group took note of the annual progress report on the results of monitoring and implementation of the Revised Master Plan, and approved the TEM and TER Master Plan Revision follow-up programme of work for 2013.

11. On 14–15 November 2012, the Project Manager took part in the panel discussion at the SETA project workshop in Szombathely (Hungary). SETA deals with the development of a transportation infrastructure strategy between Croatia, Austria and Slovakia. The Project Manager informed the participants of the outcomes of the UNECE-TER Workshop on Research and Development, ITS and Road/Rail Intermodal Innovations and about the TER Master Plan for the future High Speed Rail Network.

12. On 19–22 November, the Project Manager met executives of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Serbia) in Novi Sad. He mentioned the possibility of private financing for the construction of the high speed line between Timisoara (Romania) and Szeged (Hungary) via Serbia, by making use of EU guarantees for the private financing of railway lines (so-called “projects bonds”).

13. On 11 December 2012 the Project Manager met the representatives of OSCE in Vienna to exchange ideas for the future cooperation between TER Project and OSCE in the fields of climate change, the fight against corruption, the implementation of the 2003 Almaty Declaration and the Programme of Action.

14. On 12 December 2012, the Project Manager organized and took part in the technical visit and working meeting in Wiener Neustadt (Austria), in which Austrian, Czech and Hungarian experts participated. The experts agreed on the necessity of creating new timetables and offering reasonable services.

15. On 20–21 February 2013, the Project Manager attended as speaker of the conference on Infrastructure Development – Priority Railway Projects, organized by the Club Feroviar and the Romanian Railway Industry Association in Sibiu (Romania). The conference was organized back to back with the third International Technical Colloquium on Infrastructure, held on 21 February 2013.

16. The Project Manager also participated actively in the Road and Rail Financing Conference – Launching the Study on Europe-Asia Transport Linkages, Phase II held on 25 February 2013 and in the seventy-fifth annual session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, at the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) session, which took place on 26–28 February 2013, Geneva (Switzerland). The Project Manager reported on the achievements of the TEM and TER Projects, stressing especially the successful termination of the TEM and TER Master Plan Revision, and its follow-up and monitoring activities.

17. The thirty-fourth session of the TER Steering Committee was held on 8–11 April 2013 in Brno (Czech Republic). The Committee discussed the status of TER Trust Fund

contributions for 2013, the staff situation at the Project Central Office in 2014 and considered possibilities and conditions for elaborating the TER High Speed Rail Master Plan, to be launched most probably in 2014 in close collaboration with UNECE Transport Division.

18. The TEM and TER PCOs sent four templates approved by the Master Plan Revision monitoring mechanism to the TEM and TER National Coordinators in April 2013. The data — the results of the implementation of the TEM and TER Revised Master Plan in the year 2012 — will be used for drafting the 2013 annual summary report on the results from the Master Plan Revision monitoring.

19. On 29–31 May 2013, the Workshop – TER Sessions was jointly organized with Russian Railways in Sochi (Russian Federation), where TER participants were also able to participate in the business forum The Strategic Partnership 1520.

20. On 24–25 June 2013, the Project Manager visited the Third Regional Conference on Trade Facilitation and Caucasus Transit Corridor (CTC) Promotion, organized by the Government of Georgia, UNECE and USAID, with the support of the International Rail Transport Committee in Batumi (Georgia).

21. On 23–26 July 2013, the Project Manager conducted a fact-finding mission to the county of Salzburg (Austria) to prepare for the next TER Steering Committee Meeting, the Joint TEM and TER Expert meetings, sessions of Steering Committees (TEM and TER) and a Workshop on Energy, Research and Development with combined technical visits, to be held in Salzburg County/Bad Gastein/Uttendorf on 6–11 October 2013.

22. The TEM and TER PCOs were also involved in the UNECE public consultation on the future deployment of ITS, since both projects have dealt with different aspects of ITS in the road and rail sectors for many years.

23. The TEM and TER PCOs also participated in preparing the UNECE Workshop on Financing Transport Infrastructure (Geneva, 10 September 2013), organized jointly by the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economic (WP.5), TEM and TER projects and the EATL project. At the workshop, high priority transport infrastructure projects will be presented, followed by feedback from international financing institutions and donors.

### **III. Remarks – Conclusions**

24. All activities carried out during the reporting period have been in line with the programme of work of the TER Projects for 2012 and 2013 as well as with the short-term strategy of this project as adopted by the Steering Committee in 2009.

25. In the reporting period, the TER project strengthened cooperation with major international organizations dealing with transport issues and also established closer relations with the Economic Cooperation Organization.

26. The TER project intends to extend its activities to the countries of the Caucasus and the Central Asian region.

27. The agreement with the Government of the Slovakia on the location of the TER PCO will expire at the end of 2014 and it will be necessary for UNECE to enter into negotiations with this Government on the PCO status there in 2015 and in subsequent years. Financing of the project is fully secured through the TER Cooperation Trust Fund after 1 January 2014.