

**Abridged REPORT
of the 20th Session of TER Steering Committee**

1. The 20th Session of the TER Steering Committee took place in Vienna, Austria on 20-22 April 2005.
2. The following TER countries attended the meeting: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. Observer countries were: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine. Representatives of UNECE and TER Project Central Office also attended the meeting.
3. The participants to the Steering Committee adopted the agenda of the meeting.

Report of the Project Manager

4. The Project Manager provided detailed information on the activity developed by the PCO during the period from the last session of the Steering Committee, 1-2 July 2004 until to date (doc.TER/SC/128).
5. He underlined the successful development of the TER activities in the reported period, including the elaboration of the TER Master Plan and the continuation of the TER efforts in monitoring the progress in railway border crossings, for the presentation of which a special event was jointly organized by CEI and TER in the framework of the annual CEI Summit Economic Forum in Portoroz, Slovenia, 24-25 November 2004.
6. The Steering Committee approved the report and activity of the Project Manager and the PCO

Status of TER membership

7. The representative of the Executing Agency further informed the participants on the progress of the discussions with other countries in the UNECE region, about their possible accession to TER Project.
8. In this respect he informed the Steering Committee about the receipt of Official notification letters from Armenia and Azerbaijan addressed to the Executive Secretary of the UNECE. In his letter, dated 12 April 2005, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, notified the Executive Secretary on his country's decision to become Contracting Party to the UNECE TER and TEM Projects. In a similar letter, dated 15 April 2005, the Head of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan in Geneva, on behalf of his Government, notified the UNECE Executive Secretary on his country's wish to accede to TER project. According to Article VII of the Trust Fund Agreement these letters will be circulated to TER member countries.

9. Discussions were also held with Ukraine regarding the mutual interest of both sides TER countries and Ukraine to extend their co-operation within the framework of TER Project. The Ukrainian representatives agreed to take part in the CEI-TER Task Force for facilitation of border crossing procedures.

10. Further discussions about Switzerland's involvement in TER activities are ongoing. In this respect a seminar on transfer of Swiss know-how and technical information on Rolling Stock will be organized in June in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Draft Report of the TER Master Plan

11. TER Project Manager, his Deputy and the representative of UNECE informed the Steering Committee on the results of the meeting on TER Master Plan organized in Vienna, 19 April 2005. They outlined the merits and shortcomings of the Master Plan as well as the tremendous work and efforts deployed by the experts of most countries, the consultants, the staff of PCO, the Regional Adviser, in order to implement this outstanding work. It was mentioned that the Master Plan represents the first comprehensive analysis done at the level of the whole region of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and it is a peak in the activity of TER Project carried out during the present Project Cycle.

12. The Steering Committee endorsed the report on TER Project's Master Plan and its conclusions stressing that the elaboration of the Master Plan has so far achieved its intended goals by presenting an investment strategy in the wider TEM and TER region. The Committee agreed with the above-mentioned recommendations made by the experts and stressed that the monitoring and implementation of the identified priority projects represents the most important part for the future follow-up work. In this respect a number of specific tasks have to be followed by the TER Project in the future. These include: Missing or insufficient data should be completed with direct inputs from countries who did not provide data; Regular update of the TER Master Plan Backbone network; A review of the investment strategy by 2008 with a view of identification of the TER Backbone network shape in 2010, 2015, 2020; monitoring the progress and implementation of technical standards for bringing TER Backbone network up to the required international level; harmonization and coordination of the order of priority of projects for implementation across the borders.

13. The Steering Committee agreed with the wide dissemination of the results of the Master Plan, including its publication on the Website, as well as the organization of a Press Conference in Geneva, a visit to Brussels to EU Commission and organization of special High Level events. The Committee noted that a separate volume of the Master Plan, containing more details of the work as well as data used and maps, will be made available to the countries involved.

Programme of Work for 2005

14. The Steering Committee approved the Programme of Work for 2005. It was agreed that as soon as possible PCO would inform the countries on the date and location of TER meetings in 2005.

Budget for 2005

15. The Project Manager presented the draft budget for 2005 elaborated in accordance with the objectives included in the programme of work for 2005.
16. The Steering Committee approved the budget for 2005.

Information on extending TER Project for a new cycle (2006-2010)

17. The Deputy Project Manager informed the Steering Committee on the results of the self-evaluation report of the TER project during 2001-2005, prepared by the PCO based on replies received from the majority of TER countries to the questionnaire distributed in 2004 by the Executing Agency. He reported that all the countries expressed the opinion that TER Project achievements met the established objectives and all of them considered useful to continue the efforts for the implementation of TER short-term strategy in the next project Phase (2006-2010), up to its ultimate targets. In relation to possible adjustments to this strategy, the Deputy project Manager informed the participants that all their suggestions have been considered and would be incorporated in the final version of the new Programme of work for the new Cycle.
18. The Steering Committee agreed with the results of the self-evaluation of the TER Project activities (internal report was distributed to the participants) and recommended that countries having suggestions for improving the Programme of Work for the new Cycle 2006-2010, to send them to PCO no later than the end of May 2005.
19. The representative of the Executing Agency informed the Steering Committee on the communication received from the Hungarian Ministry of Economy and Transport, confirming its support to host TER PCO in Budapest during the next Cycle (2006-2010). Furthermore, he informed the participants on the UNECE support for the extension of TER Project in a new Cycle, based on the positive evaluation of the countries and the excellent performance of the Project in the current Cycle.
20. The Steering Committee expressed its support for the continuation of TER activities in a new Cycle (2006-2010).

Updating (revision) of the Annexes to the Trust Fund Agreement

21. The Project Manager introduced the proposed changes as updating of some objectives in the Annexes or Attachements to the Trust Fund Agreement.
22. Following an exchange of views several proposals for modifications and additions to the proposed Annexes related to the Programme of work for the next Cycle were presented, it was agreed that all such proposals be sent to the PCO until the end of May 2005. Thereafter, PCO will prepare the final version which will be communicated to the member countries for their consideration and approval at the next Steering Committee, which will be organized before the end of this year.

Status of international personnel in PCO

23. The representative of the Executing Agency informed the Steering Committee that besides the Project Manager, for whom written confirmation on the extension of his mandate in 2006-2007 is expected, for all the other posts i.e. Deputy Project Mangers and Assistants Project Manager, would be soon organized a call for candidates following the normal procedure. The letter announcing the call for candidates will be sent to all member countries via Diplomatic channels, accompanied by the conditions of the status of new personnel and other necessary information. The end of September 2005 was set as the deadline for submission of candidatures.

24. The representative of the Executing Agency and the Steering Committee thanked Mr. Mircea Lupescu for his outstanding performance in TER PCO during the last twelve years, which he served as Project Manager or Deputy Project Manger, noting that his high quality work contributed to the general development of the TER Project and its effective input towards the European transport integration. The Steering Committee expressed thanks to the Government of Romania for supporting the assignment of Mr. Lupescu with TER PCO during all this period.

Other Business

25. With regard to the monitoring of the progress in facilitation of border crossing procedures the Steering Committee approved the organization in 2005 of such an event within the WP.2 meeting in the same conditions as in the last years back to back with a TER CEI meeting of the Task Force on Border crossing, in the second half of 2005.

26. The composition of the Task Force is made up of the following countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. PCO will be in charge with providing information in due time for the preparation by the countries of the necessary data for such a meeting as well as time and location of the meeting.

Adoption of the Report

27. The Steering Committee adopted the report of the Session.

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