
Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

18th Session
4-5 April 2013
Almaty, Kazakhstan

Development of Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL)

(Item 4.5 of the Agenda)

Note by UNECE/UNESCAP

1. The 75th Jubilee session Inland Transport Committee (ITC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) started on 26 February 2013 with a high-level Ministerial meeting. Ministers from across Europe and Asia endorsed an important study, the report of Phase II of the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project, during this policy segment. 32 countries signed a Joint Statement on the launch of Phase III of the EATL¹, which recommends and guides specific trade- and transport-related measures to make EATL not only more efficient and attractive to investors, but also create and keep thousands of jobs.
2. The EATL Phase II report, released for the Committee, identified nine rail and nine road routes between Europe and Asia. These routes are new versions of the “old silk roads”. In total, 311 projects along EATL routes have been identified as priorities for smoother, safer and more efficient transport and trade. 188 projects were identified as high priority overland transport routes which need special attention. The identified EATL projects are valued at over \$200 billion.
3. The EATL Project has been carried out in its various phases in close cooperation with other international organizations involved in the region, including UNESCAP. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have also been involved in the consultation process.
4. The EATL study compared overland and maritime transport of goods. It was found that the maritime transport is cost-effective, but in most cases it takes up to 30 days for standard port-to-port routes. Rail could indeed provide a viable alternative for Euro-Asian freight transport, being twice as fast as maritime transport and could be door-to-door. In addition, it

¹ Available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2013/itc/Joint_Declaration_on_EATL.pdf

was noted that in some incidences, door-to-door costs could be reduced between 10 and 30 percent as compared with the maritime transport.

5. Preceding the ITC Session, on 25 February 2013, UNECE hosted an international conference dedicated to Road and Rail Financing. The conference paid special attention to the prioritization methodology of transport investment projects, such as the EATL and the Trans-European Railways and Motorways projects (TEM and TER). Public and public-private funding of road and rail transport infrastructure development were also discussed, in particular in a panel discussion involving donors and International Financial Institutions.

The Project Working Group may wish to

- Invite SPECA countries to actively participate in meetings and other efforts towards the development of EATL phase III.
- Encourage close cooperation and joined efforts of UNESCAP and UNECE in the development of EATL Phase III, originally scheduled for the next two years.

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