



UNION OF ROAD TRANSPORT ASSOCIATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION REGION
(BSEC-URTA)

DOC/GA04/PROGR/03

Istanbul, 15 October 2003

FOURTH MEETING OF THE BSEC-URTA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Baku – AZERBAIJAN
Thursday, 30 October 2003, at 10:00 hrs

BSEC-URTA PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT (2003 - Second Half)

I. BSEC VISA FOR PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS (BVPD)

Project Objectives: To facilitate obtaining visa for professional drivers by creation of a regional concept of "Visa for Professional Drivers".

Summary of Activities:

The Decision of the Second Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly – Tirana, 29 November 2002, regarding Visa Facilitation for Professional Drivers underlined the actions to be taken by BSEC-URTA International Secretariat in its capacity as sectoral dialog partner to BSEC.

The BSEC Ad Hoc Group of Experts Meeting on Visa Facilitation was held in Istanbul during 12-13 June 2003, with participation from BSEC Member States Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine.

BSEC-URTA was invited to attend the Meeting and to present its position.

Taking into account relevant decision of the Eighth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Yerevan, 18 April 2003), the Ad Hoc Group continued consideration of the "*Draft Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States*" and revised the Draft Agreement taking into account the views expressed during the meeting.

The BSEC-URTA International Secretariat delegation showed and stressed that what the profession needs is to obtain long term multiple visas on a professional basis and to obtain such visas in the shortest time with the lowest cost possible and agreeable.

BSEC-URTA delegation explained to the participants about current good examples between Turkey, Bulgaria and Ukraine in visa issuance, and asked for expansion of these onto whole region by means of the Agreement at stake. According to the suggested model; firms produce a list of their drivers working towards the BSEC region. These lists are compiled by the Member Associations and sent to their Ministry of Transport in the end of each year, and each respectful Ministry passes its consolidated national list to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the same country. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs officially sends all the lists of road transport drivers in their countries to the BSEC PERMIS like information verification centre. BSEC PERMIS publishes in the beginning of every year the consolidated list of drivers in the BSEC region and distributes it to Member States. As a result, the drivers make their applications in the beginning of each year and if their names are on the BSEC's official list available at the Embassies or Consulates, they are issued with 1 or 2 year multiple entry visas within 2 days.

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During the meeting, Experts could not reach a consensus on all conditions and phrases of the Draft Agreement. Therefore, the provisions, which require further consideration, have been put inside brackets. The revised Draft Agreement is attached hereinafter as Annex I.

Ad Hoc Group agreed to submit the Draft Agreement to the Committee of Senior Officials, which shall convene in Baku on 29-30 October 2003, and ask for its further instructions, if any.

Current Situation: The next Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of BSEC Member States will consider the Draft Agreement, and will inform the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC Member States (31 October 2003) on the development of the issue. The Council will decide if the Agreement will be applied or if the Ad Hoc Group of Experts will continue its work for further consideration. The existing atmosphere and the direction of developments are promising for a concrete result in the end of still a long way to go.

Strategy Proposal: BSEC-URTA General Assembly may consider diversified action on the levels of its Secretariat and Member Associations to reach the goal of Visa Facilitation as follows:-

1. Adopt a Declaration in Baku on 30 October 2003 for the attention of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which will convene in the same venue on 31 October 2003, which urges the Ministers to bring a concrete end to the ongoing endeavours taking into consideration the abovementioned needs of industry.
2. Reinforce the action by Member Associations on national level in front of national authorities competent for visa issuance, before the next Meeting of Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Visa Facilitation (if any) to reinforce their determination to finalize the "Draft Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States" and submit it for approval and signature to the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
3. Continue lobbying on issuance of visas at the border for professional drivers holding necessary international documentation for international road transport of goods.
4. Instruct the International Secretariat to take appropriate measures to follow up and drive the ongoing actions by the BSEC competent organs.

II. HARMONIZATION OF ROAD USER CHARGES AND OTHER CHARGES

Project Objectives: To trigger efforts on regional level to eliminate as much as possible the differences in Road User and Other Charges between BSEC countries.

Summary of Activities: BSEC-URTA International Secretariat collected all available information on current road user charges and other charges for each particular BSEC country. The sources of information were BSEC-URTA Member-Associations, IRU, SECI and TRACECA studies.

Based on this information the International Secretariat realized before June 2003:-

- Matrix table about practice of permits for road transport in BSEC region,
- Comparison Table on Road User Charges and Other Charges in BSEC countries,

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- Matrix table for maximum permissible weights and dimensions in road transport in the BSEC region,
- Comparison Table for transit cost/km in the BSEC region.

After Third Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly in Istanbul on 6 June 2003, no Member Association sent any requests for correction, amendment or new data.

Current Situation: The BSEC-URTA International Secretariat remains ready to publish and promote its report to the competent BSEC organs for their appropriate action.

Strategy Proposal: BSEC-URTA General Assembly may:-

1. Charge BSEC-URTA International Secretariat to present its report to consideration of the BSEC Working Group on Transport at its next meeting in Istanbul in February 2004.
2. Instruct BSEC-URTA International Secretariat to publicize said report in any appropriate form, electronic in the web portal or on paper, for consideration, information and evaluation of relevant international bodies and organizations.
3. Ask BSEC-URTA International Secretariat to update its report regularly on an annual basis with active cooperation of Member Associations.

III. SIMPLIFICATION OF CUSTOMS FORMALITIES

Project Objectives: To eliminate delays at the border crossing because of the customs regulations and procedures differing from country to country in the BSEC region. In this regard, to identify right strategies and action in harmony with BSEC efforts and IRU.

Summary of Activities: The project was explained to the BSEC PERMIS together with all other major BSEC-URTA Projects. Moreover, the International Secretariat prepared its conclusions in a draft material called: "*Consideration on Simplification of Border Crossing Procedures for International Road Transport in BSEC Region*", which was presented to the Third Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly .

Current Situation: The Third Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly instructed the International Secretariat to present its conclusions to the BSEC.

BSEC PERMIS has been pursuing its close contacts with related other regional organizations including SECI as well as TRACECA. BSEC-URTA International Secretariat tries to follow up any parallel developments that may happen with involvement of BSEC PERMIS in such endeavours.

Strategy Proposal: Having the instruction BSEC-URTA General Assembly, the International Secretariat will take part in the next Meeting of BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development and will present its conclusions on simplification of border crossing procedures and customs formalities.

IV. BSEC WEIGHT CERTIFICATE

Project Objectives: Taking the example of works pursued so far by the SECI, to initiate efforts aiming at creation of an international weight certificate recognized by national authorities of the BSEC countries.

Summary of Activities: BSEC-URTA International Secretariat has studied the documents regarding Weight Certificate, which already exists in SECI and CIS, and noted its conclusions in a draft material called: "*International Goods Road Vehicle Weight Certificate - Comparison between SECI and CIS Models*", which was submitted to the Third Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly.

Current Situation: There are encouraging developments in SECI and CIS countries separately, which may bring a lot of benefit to the profession but the need to interlink these separate endeavours remains to be a priority.

Strategy Proposal: Having the instruction of General Assembly, BSEC-URTA International Secretariat will present its conclusions regarding this issue to the BSEC Working Group on Transport to be held in February 2004 with a view to initiating efforts on appropriate levels to interlink SECI and CIS activities, thus indirectly creating an International Weight Certificate System acceptable all over the BSEC countries and even beyond. Moreover, the Secretariat should keep its contacts with IRU and BSEC PERMIS about their feed back and possible future action be it separately or jointly, if possible.

V. COMBINED TRANSPORTATION

Project Objectives: To promote combined transportation in the Black and Caspian Seas in order to increase competitive advantage of the road transport sector in the BSEC region. In this regard, to improve quality and reduce cost of the services rendered to the road transport sector by the Ro-Ro companies.

Summary of Activities: BSEC-URTA International Secretariat collected information on existing Ro-Ro lines in the Black and Caspian Seas (freight rates, transportation schedules and contact details). Additionally, currently existing problems in functioning of Ro-Ro lines were summarized. In the BSEC Working Group on Transport held in Baku on 1-2 October 2003, the International Secretariat presented its conclusions and proposals in a draft material called: "*Operation and Interaction of Different Modes of Transport*" (see Annex 2). The BSEC Working Group on Transport included the followings in its report under this subject: "*The WG highly appreciated the Working Paper on Operation and Interaction of Different Modes of Transport and possible fields of synergy between road and maritime transport, prepared by BSEC-URTA in accordance with the request of the last meeting the WG and encouraged the BSEC-URTA to continue the research.*"

Current Situation: BSEC-URTA International Secretariat has collected and updated a lot of data on this project and published them on its web portal for access of registered users only.

Strategy Proposal: General Assembly may instruct the International Secretariat:-

1. To print all related information inside a new BSEC-URTA publication called a *Black Sea Transport and Logistics Catalogue* for wider circulation among transport companies;
2. To continue its research on possible ways of cooperation between road, rail and maritime transportation and keep itself as well as BSEC PERMIS and IRU informed about results of such activities.
3. To conduct a survey among users of combined transportation in the BSEC region with a view to identifying existing problems of service quality, which can be improved by joint action of Member Associations in the BSEC region.

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VI. TRAINING

Project Objectives: Together with the IRU Academy to identify training needs of the sector and Member Associations, develop sectoral training projects and information seminars, develop regional training strategies and projects.

Summary of Activities: There have been very important activities and concrete developments under this project matter, which resulted exploration and identification of concrete cooperation, action and opportunities under three main headings at the time of fourth meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly:-

1. Mutual Recognition of Diplomas, Certificates and Other Evidence of Formal Qualification for Road Haulage Operator and Road Passenger Transport Operator in the BSEC Region;
2. Development by AITA-ARTRI-UND of a Distant Professional Learning Software for the International Road Transport Industry;
3. Creation of a Network of Excellence Among Professional Training Centres of BSEC-URTA Member Associations.

Detailed information is given for this project title in DOC/GA04/TRAIN/03.

Current Situation: At its last meeting in Baku on 1-2 October 2003, the BSEC Working Group on Transport took the decision to present the first and second subjects above to the consideration of the next meeting of BSEC Committee of Senior Officials, which will convene in Baku on 29-30 October 2003.

Strategy Proposal: BSEC-URTA General Assembly may instruct the International Secretariat:-

- to follow up work of the BSEC-Committee of Senior Officials and request whenever necessary the active lobbying and collaboration of Member Associations vis-à-vis their national authorities to achieve quick positive results within BSEC;
- to continue its active cooperation with IRU and IRU Academy for item (1) and with interested Member Associations under item (2) and (3) above.

VII. INTERNATIONAL FUNDS SURVEY

Project Objectives: To increase Member Associations' awareness about current international fund facilities within reach of the road transport sector, to stimulate Member Associations to elaborate international joint projects in the sector that may create synergies for the BSEC region as a whole. To bring together the fund supplier institutions and representatives of the road transport sector.

Summary of Activities: After the Third Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly, the representatives of BSEC-URTA International Secretariat and BSTDB have met in the headquarters of the Black Sea Trade & Development Bank in Thessaloniki on 9 September 2003 in order to consider the possibility of building an efficient framework of cooperation between two organisations in the light of growing economic cooperation in the region and to encourage representatives of the road transport sector to work out bankable project proposals eligible for financing by the BSTDB.

Current Situation: BSTDB is ready to continue organizing of informative events for the road transport industry. Upon receipt of concrete project proposals from the road transport sector, BSTDB is ready to give its financial support to the bankable ones. In order to encourage the industry from inside and facilitate and accelerate the use of Bank's resources by the industry, BSEC-URTA International Secretariat asked concrete and practical cooperation of BSTDB including training of one of its personnel to understand the Bank's selection criteria for measuring eligibility of project proposals, and thus, give free guidance and pre-screening and consulting service to Member Associations and their interested member transport companies in the BSEC region.

Strategy Proposal: The General Assembly may instruct the International Secretariat:-

1. To work together BSTDB, which is foremost a regional bank charged by respectful BSEC States with a mission to that end, and report to its next meeting the outcome of such work, with a view to better channeling the project ideas and projects within industry towards the Bank;
2. To consider organizing of new informative events with active involvement and contribution of the Bank in certain BSEC Member Countries, hosted by the respectful Member Association and with participation of its leading member transport and logistics companies;
3. To pursue its contacts and cooperation with other interested IFIs in the same context.

VIII. BSEC TRANSPORT JOURNAL

Project Objectives: To create a multi-lingual and bi-monthly sectoral periodical promoting good examples, building general concern on transportation problems, providing inspiration for new projects, sharing all sectoral information equally between all stakeholders, promoting activities of BSEC, BSEC Related Bodies, BSEC-URTA and Member Associations as well as IRU and other regional initiatives including SECI, TRACECA, etc.

Summary of Activities: There is no new activity pursued by the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat under this project title before the Fourth Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly, which is expected to establish a long run budgetary framework for the Secretariat to follow.

Current Situation: Results of the Fourth Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly is awaited.

Strategy Proposal: General Assembly may authorize the International Secretariat whether to take further action under this matter dependent upon its existing means and resources as well as decide about the time of such action.



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IX. BSEC TRANSPORT PORTAL

Project Objectives: To create in the longer-run a Web Portal, which will be very interactive, functional and useful for all stakeholders that can stand like an international reference point for all transport related issues and details on the level of BSEC region.

Current Situation: BSEC-URTA web portal is already realized and functioning in English language on www.bsec-urta.org.

Strategy Proposal: General Assembly may ask Member Associations to cooperate closer with the International Secretariat and communicate to it their active contributions and suggestions including any useful information, ideas as well as reference sources and suggested links so that the BSEC-URTA web portal can be further improved.

X. BSEC TRANSPORT INFORMATION CLEARING CENTER

Project Objectives: To create a multi-channel (open to e-mail, fax and internet correspondence) electronic platform on the regional level for exchange of comprehensive basic information between the Member Associations, IRU, BSEC, BSEC Related Bodies, SECI, TRACECA, EU, CIS, ECO and UN/ECE, where transportation legislation, developments, activities, waiting times at the borders, problems, good/bad examples and information can be shared.

Summary of Activities: The International Secretariat has worked and realized its own web portal and from now it will be possible to use all interactive items of the web portal for the fast exchange of information, discussing common problems and tasks and for having electronic meetings and teleconferences.

Current Situation: Having the necessary platform of a web portal well established, there is need for a set of actions by the International Secretariat to ask cooperation of all the bodies and organizations enlisted under the project objectives above.

Strategy Proposal: The General Assembly may:

1. Ask the help of each Member Association to compile and publish on the BSEC-URTA web portal, the existing information under its current possession about major national legislation, road transport related developments, problems, good and bad examples;
2. Invite all the major international bodies and organizations including but not limited with IRU, BSEC, BSEC Related Bodies, SECI, TRACECA, EU, CIS, ECO and UN/ECE to provide and/or exchange information with the BSEC-URTA web portal as much and early as possible;
3. Instruct the International Secretariat to take necessary action within framework of the above and report to it about outcome of its activities to that end.

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