

**UNECE**

# **SPECTRUM** of Border Crossing Facilitation Activities



**UNITED NATIONS**

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC  
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

# SPECTRUM of Border Crossing Facilitation ACTIVITIES



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# United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is one of the five United Nations regional commissions, administered by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1947 with the mandate to help rebuild post-war Europe, develop economic activity and strengthen economic relations among European countries, and between Europe and the rest of the world. During the cold war, UNECE served as a unique forum for economic dialogue and cooperation between East and West. Despite the complexity of this period, significant achievements were made, with consensus reached on numerous harmonization and standardization agreements.

In the post-cold-war era, UNECE acquired not only many new Member States, but also new functions. Since the early 1990s the organization has focused on analyzing the transition process, using its harmonization experience to facilitate the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the global markets.

UNECE is the forum where the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and North America – 56 countries in all – come together to forge the tools of their economic cooperation. That cooperation concerns economics, statistics, environment, transport, trade, sustainable energy, timber housing and land management. UNECE offers a regional framework for the elaboration and harmonization of conventions, norms and standards. The experts of UNECE provide technical assistance to the countries of South-East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. This assistance takes the form of advisory services, training seminars and workshops where countries can share their experiences and best practices.

# Transport in UNECE

The UNECE Sustainable Transport Division is the secretariat of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The ITC and its 17 working parties, as well as the ECOSOC Committee and its sub-committees are intergovernmental decision-making bodies that work to improve the daily lives of people and businesses around the world, in measurable ways and with concrete actions, to enhance traffic safety, environmental performance, energy efficiency and the competitiveness of the transport sector.

The ECOSOC Committee was set up in 1953 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the request of the Economic and Social Council to elaborate recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods. Its mandate was extended to the global (multi-sectoral) harmonization of systems of classification and labelling of chemicals in 1999. It is composed of experts from countries which possess the relevant expertise and experience in the international trade and transport of dangerous goods and chemicals. Its membership is restricted in order to reflect a proper geographical balance between all regions of the world and to ensure adequate participation of developing countries. Although the Committee is a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, the Secretary-General decided in 1963 that the secretariat services would be provided by the UNECE Transport Division.

ITC is a unique intergovernmental forum that was set up in 1947 to support the reconstruction of transport connections in post-war Europe. Over the years, it has specialized in facilitating the harmonized and sustainable development of inland modes of transport. The main results of this persevering and ongoing work are reflected, among other things, (i) in 58 United Nations conventions and many more technical regulations, which are updated on a regular basis

and provide an international legal framework for the sustainable development of national and international road, rail, inland water and intermodal transport, including the transport of dangerous goods, as well as the construction and inspection of road motor vehicles; (ii) in the Trans-European North-south Motorway, Trans-European Railway and the Euro-Asia Transport Links projects, that facilitate multi-country coordination of transport infrastructure investment programmes; (iii) in the TIR system, which is a global customs transit facilitation solution; (iv) in the tool called For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS), which can assist national and local governments to monitor carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions coming from inland transport modes and to select and design climate change mitigation policies, based on their impact and adapted to local conditions; (v) in transport statistics – methods and data – that are internationally agreed on; (vi) in studies and reports that help transport policy development by addressing timely issues, based on cutting-edge research and analysis. ITC also devotes special attention to Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), sustainable urban mobility and city logistics, as well as to increasing the resilience of transport networks and services in response to climate change adaptation and security challenges.

The Sustainable Transport Division and the UNECE Environment Division also co-service the Transport Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Finally, as of 2015, the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division will be providing the secretariat services for the Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt.

# UNECE spectrum of border-crossing facilitation activities

## Introduction

Transport has been one of the main driving forces of globalization as well as a pre-requisite for the development of world trade. Transport costs, and particularly the costs of long distance transport, have gone down continuously, thanks to numerous technological innovations like the commercial operations of the steamship, the development of railways as well as the emergence of motorized road vehicles, the constantly increasing size of vessels and other vehicles, the standardization of loading units, in combination with the eventual emergence of containers and Information Technology (IT) supported fleet- and route-management.

One of the most complicated elements in international trade and transport transactions is to move products across borders and bring them into free circulation in another country. In fact, the effort it takes to move these products from one country to another, across borders, and by means of various modes of transport, is time consuming and costly.



The United Nations legal instruments on border crossing facilitation and the activities of UNECE can be used as a medium to enable accession to and assist with implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

It follows that cost-effective international trade and international transport of goods requires the alignment of ordering, payment, insurance, logistics, customs inspection and clearance, and border controls. If this complex process is not solved seamlessly, goods are delayed or go missing, the wrong goods are being shipped, and overall transaction costs increase. Border inefficiencies are, in fact, estimated to cost twice the amount of tariffs, while

the removal of those inefficiencies could increase global trade by as much as US\$ 1 trillion, and create as many as 21 million jobs worldwide. Further to this, a recent study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that reducing global trade costs related to trade facilitation by just 1 percent would lead to a \$40 billion increase in world income.

Against this background, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), one of the most concrete outcomes of the Doha negotiation round, is designed to streamline customs procedures, increase transparency, foster customs cooperation and reduce red-tape and redundancies in order to expedite trade flows. WTO members adopted, on 27 November 2014, a Protocol of Amendment to insert the new Agreement into Annex 1A of the WTO Agreement. The TFA will enter into force once two-thirds of members have completed their domestic ratification process. In the meantime, attention must be drawn to the overlapping relevance of border crossing facilitation legal instruments and activities at UNECE as a medium to promote accession to and implementation of the TFA.

Finally, the complexity of international trade makes it an easy target for organized crime. Document forgery, unlicensed transport operators, and tampering with the goods along the way are all difficult to detect.

It is worth noting that, despite the emergence of customs unions and free trade areas across the globe, border crossing facilitation is as relevant as ever, not only because of interregional and transcontinental trade but also because, due to political and historical reasons such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR), borders have, actually, increased compared to the past.

Even though global border-crossing issues vary from country to country, they generally span across three main elements: harmonization of laws and regulations; standardization of means and simplification of procedures.

## **Border-crossing facilitation at the heart of ITC**

With the advent of the twenty-first century, ITC recognized that the significance of borders had changed. Entering another country had become a complicated process with a number of issues, such as longer waiting times at borders and more layers of bureaucracy, resulting in additional costs and slower economic growth.

It proceeded to group its activities around border crossing facilitation and in this way it has made the distinction between broad-based reforms and essential specific measures. This approach has been supported by the mere fact that tools and legal instruments serve different purposes at the same time. In this context, ITC offers a forum for countries to negotiate international legal instruments, to harmonize their rules and procedures, to agree on best practices, to streamline transport investment plans, to support infrastructure development, to serve traffic safety purposes and, through all this, to accomplish the highest possible level of border-crossing facilitation.

ITC and its subsidiary bodies, thus, administer a total of 58 UN legal instruments that facilitate the international movement of cargo, driver and vehicle. They have all been concluded in the spirit of non-



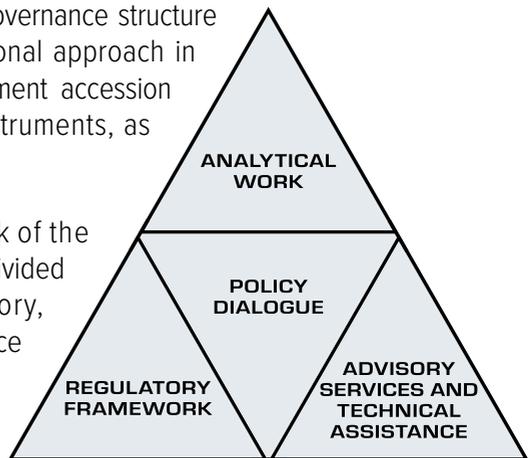
discrimination and continue to grow within the framework of the ITC specialized working parties.

The Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), of ITC, was established in 1953, as a group of Customs

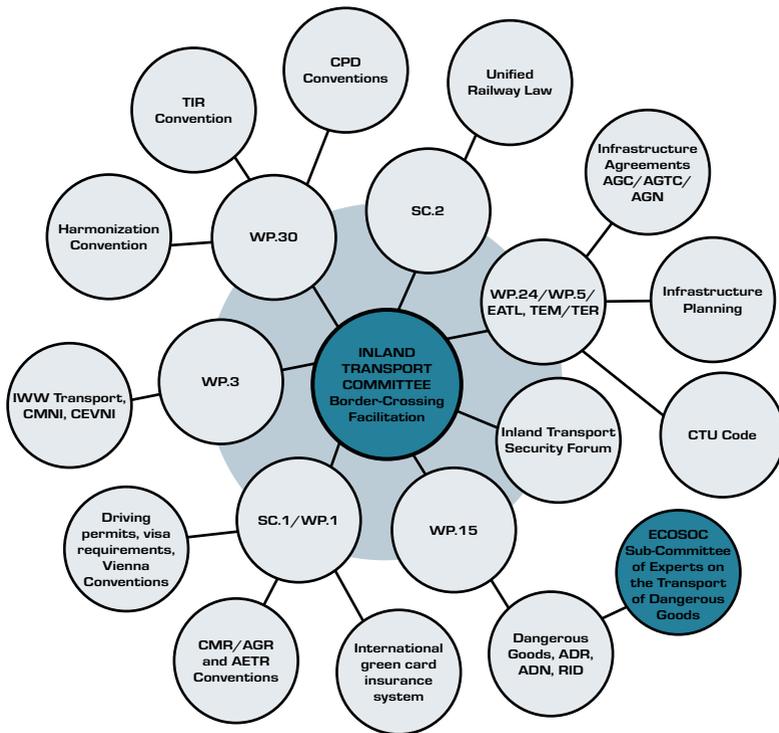
Experts. By 2015, it is not only one of the most long-standing working parties in UNECE but it has matured into an intergovernmental forum that deals with activities of a policy, legal, administrative, documentary, technical, and economic nature. In particular, WP.30 prepares, reviews, and administers a large number of United Nations conventions and agreements in the field of border-crossing facilitation.

Other legal instruments and Working Parties complement the activities of WP.30 by covering social legislation for professional drivers and transport operators, setting the conditions for the international transport of dangerous goods, providing regulatory frameworks for liability and insurance, as well as regulations governing international road, rail, inland water and intermodal transport. All conventions are administered by the relevant Working Parties or Administrative Committees in charge of updating and amending these instruments. The UNECE secretariat incorporates a governance structure that offers a multi-dimensional approach in effectively assisting government accession to United Nations legal instruments, as well as their implementation.

The core areas of the work of the UNECE secretariat can be divided into four pillars: regulatory, analytical, technical assistance and policy dialogue. The secretariat manages a regulatory framework to



**UNECE 360° structure of border-crossing facilitation activities, conventions and related working parties**



which governments can adhere, while also conducting analytical work which supports the development of legal instruments and explores emerging challenges that require governments to take common action. The third pillar focuses on technical assistance and capacity building to help countries to better implement international transport legislation. These three are guided and supported by cooperative policy dialogue that takes place within the various fora of ITC.

# Border-crossing and the role of coordinated border management

The term Coordinated Border Management (CBM) refers to a coordinated approach by border control agencies of neighbouring countries seeking greater efficiencies in managing trade and freight and passenger flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. At the international level in particular, CBM involves collaboration between neighbouring countries which can be launched via a policy declaration, a Memorandum of Understanding, or a bilateral/multilateral agreement. The cornerstone of any successful cross-border agency cooperation and border management is communication and information exchange.

## The Harmonization Convention

The International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, generally known as the “Harmonization Convention” was signed in Geneva, under the auspices of UNECE in 1982. It is open to accession by all United Nations Member States and forms one of the most broadly accepted legal foundations of coordinated border management. There are 55 Contracting Parties to it, that are committed to streamlining administrative procedures at borders and reducing the number and duration of controls carried out by customs authorities. This commitment should be reflected in:

- cooperation and coordination between customs and other border services;
- the provision of qualified personnel with the necessary equipment at the place where the controls are to take place; official instructions to officers to act in accordance with international agreements;
- cooperation with the competent international bodies, in order to facilitate new multilateral or bilateral agreements;
- arrangements for the joint control of goods and documents by neighbouring countries; opening hours of frontier posts,

categories of goods, modes of transport and relevant international customs transit procedures;

- the exchange of information required for controls to be effective;

In May 2008, Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention entered into force, focusing on border procedures for international road transport and providing for:

- facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers;
- operational measures to speed-up border-crossing procedures for goods, particularly for urgent consignments, such as live animals and perishable goods;
- harmonized technical provisions relating to faster controls of road vehicles (technical inspections) and equipment used for the transport of goods under controlled temperatures;
- standardized weighing operations and procedures to avoid, to the extent possible, repetitive weighing procedures at border-crossings; and
- minimum infrastructure requirements for efficient border-crossing points.

On 30 September 2014, in the context and with the support of the pilot project spearheaded by the Union of Road Transport Associations of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation region (BSEC-URTA), the first International Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC) under Annex 8, Article 5 of the Harmonization Convention was issued in the Republic of Moldova. Georgia and Ukraine were the first countries to accept the IVWC.



In November 2011 a new Annex 9 to the Harmonization Convention on rail border-crossings, entered into force. The new annex introduced, among others, a set of key principles to facilitate border-crossing procedures for international rail freight:

- simplified procedures for crossing of borders by officials and other persons engaged in international rail transport, including granting them visas;
- minimum infrastructure and staff requirements for border (interchange) stations in order to rationalize and expedite the necessary formalities at those stations, including information technology and communications systems to enable the exchange of advance cargo information;
- cooperation and coordination of actions between adjacent countries at border (interchange) stations; reciprocal recognition of all forms of control of rolling stock, containers, piggyback semi-trailers and goods;
- carrying out selective customs controls on the basis of risk assessment and management;
- simplified controls at border (interchange) stations and moving, as far as possible, certain forms of controls to the stations of departure and destination;
- setting up time limits for border clearance and monitoring actual delays of trains or wagons at border (interchange) stations;
- reducing paper documents and simplifying documentation procedures by using electronic systems for the exchange of information;
- use of the CIM/SMGS railway consignment note, also as a customs document.

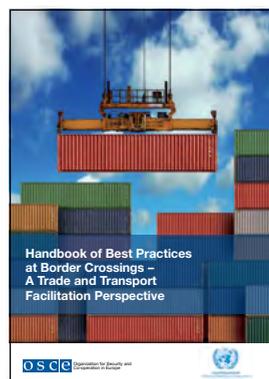
### **Box 1: Effects of transport delays on costs and performance**

- ✓ Border-related costs, when importing goods, may amount to as much as 15 per cent of the value of the goods being traded;
- ✓ Only about a 25 per cent of delays is due to poor road or port infrastructure; 75 per cent is due to non-tariff barriers, such as numerous customs and other tax procedures, clearances and cargo inspections - often before the containers reach the port;
- ✓ On average, each additional day that a product is delayed prior to being shipped reduces trade by at least 1 per cent; The effect is larger on time-sensitive agricultural goods - one day of delay reduces the relative exports of such products per country by 7 per cent on average;
- ✓ One-day reduction in delays before a cargo sails to its export destination is equivalent to reducing the distance to trading partners by more than 85 km;
- ✓ Increasing global capacity in trade facilitation by half, when compared with the global average, would increase world trade by US\$ 377 billion, amounting to a 9.7 per cent rise in global trade.

**Source: OECD**

In addition to the monitoring and regular updating of the Harmonization Convention, UNECE is building on the principles of coordinated border management through its analytical work. The most recent result is the joint publication of UNECE and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) called “Handbook on Best Practices at Border Crossings: A Transport and Trade Facilitation Perspective” which was published in 2012 and which, at the moment is available, in addition to English, in the Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian and Russian languages.

The main purpose of the Handbook is to assist countries in developing more efficient border and customs policies by promoting existing best practices in this field. It provides concrete examples from across the UNECE region and beyond on how border-crossing points can be made increasingly efficient and secure, thereby



## Box 2: Effects of border-crossing facilitation tools

Average customs clearance times for imports through facilitation (hours)		
Economy	Before facilitation	After facilitation
New Zealand	240	0.2
Singapore	48-96	0.25
Greece	5-6	0.5
Republic of Korea	2.8	0.75
Costa Rica	144	0.2-1.9
Peru	360-720	2-24

*Source: UNECE-OSCE Handbook on best practices at border crossings, 2012*

allowing smooth trade and transport operations, while at the same time reducing the possibilities for corruption, illicit trafficking and transnational crime and terrorism. It pays particular attention to road border crossing-points but also touches upon border-crossing points along railways and at sea ports.

The Handbook has, thus, become a reference document not only for national policy makers and senior customs and border officials, but also for representatives of transport agencies, the business community and civil society. It has contributed to further dialogue on these issues and is starting to be also used as a reference when drafting border management policies aimed at facilitating legal trans-border commercial movement, while paying due attention to the necessary security aspects.

## Customs transit: a decisive factor in border-crossing facilitation

Customs transit systems are devised to facilitate, to the greatest possible extent, the international movement of goods under customs seals in international trade and to provide the required customs security and guarantees. For such a system to function satisfactorily, it is essential that any formalities involved are neither

too burdensome for the customs officials nor too complex for the transport operators and their agents. Therefore, a balance needs to be struck between the requirements of customs authorities on the one hand and those of transport operators on the other.

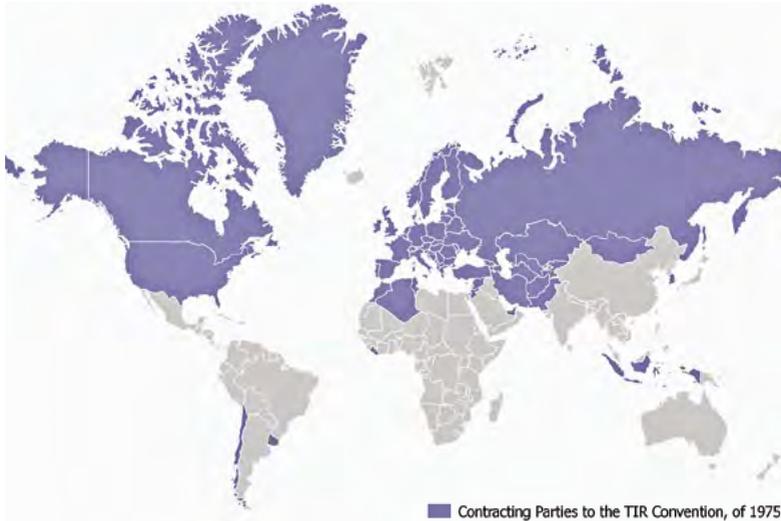
Traditionally, when goods crossed the territory of one or more countries in the course of an international transport of goods by road, the customs authorities in each country applied their national controls and procedures. These varied from country to country, but frequently involved the inspection of the load at each national border and the imposition of national security requirements (guarantee, bond, deposit of duty, etc.) to cover the potential duties and taxes at risk while the goods were in transit through each territory. These measures, applied in each country of transit, led to considerable expenses, delays and interferences with international transport.

### **The TIR Convention: a global customs transit solution**

Anyone who has ever travelled on European roads will recognize the familiar blue and white TIR plate, borne by thousands of trucks and semi-trailers using the TIR customs transit system. For the driver, the transport operator and the shipper, this plate stands for fast and efficient international road transport.



The TIR transit system started soon after the Second World War in order to contribute to the facilitation of international transport initially between a small number of European countries. This was, at first, an industry-led scheme in order to reduce the difficulties and delays experienced by transport operators. At the same time, it offered customs administrations of participating countries an international system of control replacing traditional national procedures, whilst effectively protecting the revenue of each country through which goods were carried.



The success of this limited scheme led to the negotiation of the TIR Convention which was adopted in 1959 by governments and entered into force in 1960. The practical experience, the technical advances and changing customs and transport requirements and the emergence of new transport techniques, the maritime and inland containers, led to a complete revision in 1975 which aimed at rendering the TIR Convention more efficient, less complex, more secure and adapted to intermodal transport. Today, the TIR Convention of 1975 has been ratified by 69 countries from all around the world and is currently operational in 58 of the Contracting Parties, covering a geographical scope from Lisbon to Vladivostok, and from Narvik to Bandar-Abbas.

The TIR System is based on 5 essential principles:

- Secure vehicles or containers,
- International chain of guarantee,
- The TIR Carnet,
- Mutual recognition of customs controls and
- Controlled access.

After a strict selection process by national customs authorities, the TIR Carnet holder is entitled to use a TIR Carnet. This TIR Carnet, representing both the customs transit declaration and the evidence of an international financial guarantee, is duly completed and stamped by customs authorities who seal the load compartment at departure, and, thus, ensure the integrity of the load to customs authorities at all successive border-crossing points, while avoiding time-consuming inspections or bond deposits at each border.

The operation of the TIR guarantee system is straightforward. Every national guaranteeing body - an association or chamber of commerce representing the interests of the transport sector in a particular country - is authorized by the customs administration of that country to guarantee payment within that country of any duties and taxes which may become due in the event of any irregularity occurring in the course of a TIR transport operation. The national guaranteeing association, thus, guarantees the payment of duties and taxes of national and foreign carriers for TIR Carnets which have been issued by itself or by a guaranteeing association in another country.



**TIR is the only transcontinental customs transit system, and has a growing geographical coverage: 69 countries.**

All national guaranteeing associations constitute a guarantee chain linking all TIR countries. Today, the only existing and well-functioning guarantee chain is administered by the International Road Transport Union (IRU), a non-governmental organization representing the interests of road transport operators worldwide and authorized by the Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention. The guarantee chain is supported by several large international insurance companies and is supervised by the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB).

The United Nations, as a universal organization, is the depositary of the TIR Convention and provides the framework and the services to administer and, where necessary, adapt the TIR Convention to changing requirements.



## **The TIR System spreads e-solutions**

Customs administrations are confronted with an enormous dilemma. On the one hand, they are governed by laws which oblige them to collect and account for revenues in an effective and efficient manner and to prevent fraud and smuggling of contraband. On the other hand, they are increasingly criticized by trading parties (importers, exporters, transport operators, freight forwarders) for not facilitating the speedy throughput of cargo.

Taking into account the limitations of customs manpower and the increasingly sophisticated methods of customs fraud and smuggling, there seems to be no other way than to increase productivity and customs control by adapting national and international administrative procedures and making use of the latest technologies and electronic data processing.

With this in mind, the Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention have been working towards the computerization of the TIR procedure. However, given the large number and the diversified administrative structure of the 69 Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention, any computerized system must be able to function in a very decentralized and flexible manner, on the basis of only a few internationally accepted standard features, such as the establishment of an international centralized database under customs control and the management

by customs of data on guarantees. This is a challenging task which will have to be realized with an appropriate level of connectivity with the existing TIR related IT systems.

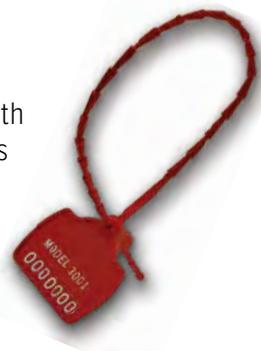
The intergovernmental process towards the computerization of the TIR procedure (eTIR) was launched in 2003. Once operational, it is expected to bring additional security and risk management opportunities, thus reducing the risk of fraud. The other main advantage will be the maximization of the benefits of integrated supply chain management. Finally, the provision of advance cargo information and the exchange of information in real time will speed up the TIR procedure.



The efforts to computerize the TIR procedure have gained momentum in 2014 and 2015. The TIR Contracting Parties have concluded the work on the technical and conceptual aspects of eTIR and have established a dedicated expert group to work on developing the appropriate legal framework for computerization. At the same time, Contracting Parties have agreed on launching a pilot project on eTIR, with Turkey and Iran (Islamic Republic of) as pilot countries that will serve as a basis for identifying any potential drawbacks in the system before complete operationalization of eTIR. The pilot is going to use existing electronic tools and build on them towards a completely paperless TIR procedure.

### **Register on seals and stamps**

The TIR secretariat maintains an online register with descriptions and sketches of customs sealing devices and customs stamps. The purpose of the electronic register is to increase efficiency, save time and minimize potential errors.



### **International TIR Data Bank**

The TIR Convention stipulates that operators wishing to use the TIR system should demonstrate sound financial standing,



absence of serious or repeated offences against customs or tax legislation, as well as deposit a written declaration with the national association specifying their responsibilities. In order to keep track of authorized TIR Carnet holders, TIRExB established an international data bank on authorized TIR Carnet holders, accessible to all Contracting Parties. The

International TIR Data Bank (ITDB), operated and maintained by the TIR secretariat, contains information on all transport operators authorized to use TIR Carnets, using a unique identification (ID) code system. Any withdrawal of authorization by customs authorities as well as exclusion from the system is also recorded.

### **TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration**

The TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration System (TIR-EPD) is an electronic system developed and operated by IRU, the organization responsible for managing the guarantee chain. Via TIR-EPD, TIR Carnet holders may submit, free-of-charge, electronic pre-declarations to customs authorities in different countries. In turn, customs authorities are able to confirm that the pre-declaration was submitted by an authorized TIR Carnet holder and that the TIR Carnet is valid. This exchange of advance information facilitates pre-arrival risk analysis and makes border-crossings simpler, safer and faster.



The Government of Moldova is implementing a pilot project to introduce Green Lanes for Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) and TIR Electronic Pre-Declarations (TIR-EPD), at all customs points of entry and exit to Moldova. The new Green Lanes will significantly facilitate and secure trade by decreasing truck waiting times at borders, as well as reducing transport time and costs.

## SafeTIR

SafeTIR is an electronic control system for TIR Carnets, whereby the termination of a TIR transport and the validation of the certificate of termination are electronically confirmed by the customs office of destination. The SafeTIR system has been developed and is managed by IRU, in accordance with Annex 10 of the TIR Convention. The system was introduced to minimize risks associated with the increase in trade volumes throughout the 1990's.

## What about cars?

It is often considered a risk that a private or commercial vehicle that crosses borders into a foreign country will be sold on the territory of the visited state without proper import procedures being carried out. To mitigate such risk, countries have put in place national procedures for temporary admission of vehicles into



their territory which involves payment of a guarantee at the border which is reimbursed, on condition that these vehicles eventually leave the country under the same conditions they entered. For the purpose of further facilitating this process and reducing border waiting times, governments have concluded agreements covering both commercial and private road vehicles, thus, standardizing the required customs documents and processes for such temporary admission between Contracting Parties to those agreements.

The Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles, of 1954, and on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, of 1956, facilitate the temporary admission into a country, Contracting Party to the Convention, of private road vehicles and commercial road vehicles respectively. Vehicles that are registered in another country, also Contracting Party to either or both Conventions, can, thus, enter without payment of import duties and

taxes. Each Convention defines the concept of private or commercial road vehicle and establishes the principle of temporary importation of such vehicles under the cover of the international “Carnet de Passages en Douane”. These Carnets guarantee payment of import duties and taxes of the vehicles to national competent authorities if the vehicle, that has been temporarily admitted, is not re-exported.



The “Carnet de Passages en Douane” is issued by authorized organizations and affiliated associations, which guarantee the payment. Currently the authorized organizations are the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme (AIT) and the Federation Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA).

The Conventions describe in detail the functioning of the temporary importation procedures and the documents to be used as well as claims procedures to be applied when exportation of vehicles has not been done within the time limits prescribed. They introduce a uniform procedure and provide for an internationally recognized document, which replaces national procedures and documents, often different from one country to another. The procedure also avoids the operation of national guarantee systems, as all taxes and duties are covered. In addition, it ensures accurate filling-in by competent authorities and associations or private vehicle drivers. As a result, they help minimize procedures and delays at border-crossings.



# Making life easier also for the driver

## The Green Card Insurance system: a cross-border facilitator

The Green Card is an international insurance certificate. It certifies that the visiting motorist has at least the minimum compulsory Motor Third Party Liability Insurance coverage required by the laws of the countries visited. As such, it is accepted without



any obstacle or cost by the authorities of all countries for which the individual Green Card is valid. The Green Card system was founded in 1949 on the basis of Recommendation No. 5, adopted by the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) of ITC.

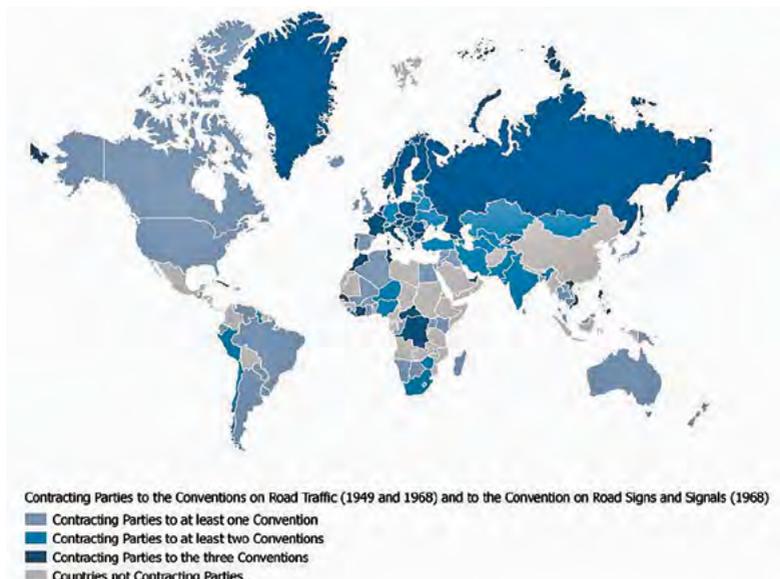
Today, the Green Card system has 47 members, mainly all European countries, as well as Iran (Islamic Republic of) and some countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The Russian Federation has also joined the Green Card system.

With the increase of international road traffic, it became apparent that border controls to check whether a motorist had a valid Green Card was too time-consuming and created possible obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods, especially within the framework of the Single Market of the European Union (EU). For this reason, the Member States of the European Union, Andorra, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein agreed that valid registration plates from those countries substitute the Green Card as sufficient proof of insurance coverage. Consequently, for motorists from 32 countries, Green Card is no longer a required document when crossing the borders. In all other countries, the Green Card still serves as the international insurance certificate.

## Internationally recognized traffic rules and driving permits

For international road transport, it is necessary that drivers can read and understand road signage in all the countries they drive in, and that they hold a mutually acceptable driving qualification, that allows them to legally operate a motor vehicle in a foreign country. Otherwise, not only would international road transport become dangerous, but also particularly burdensome, as drivers would have to hand-over the truck or trans-ship the goods at the border, to a local operator or driver. The 1949 and 1968 Conventions on Road Traffic, the 1949 Protocol on Road Signs and Signals and the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals form the basis for the traffic rules that exist today.

The 1949 Protocol on Road Signs and Signals was the first step towards the conclusion of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals, that sets up more than 200 commonly agreed reference road signs and signals, prescribes common norms for traffic light signals and uniform conditions for road markings.



The 1949 Convention of Road Traffic paved the way for the International Driving Permit (IDP) and was later reinforced by the 1968 Convention, which lays out the main features to be recognized by Contracting Parties in terms of the permit. The IDP is a multi-language translation of the driving permit from the issuing nation, complete with photograph and vital statistics. It is only valid if presented together with the domestically issued driving permit. For private vehicles, the requirement for an IDP is often waived in several countries. Professional drivers, however, are required to have an IDP.

The Convention sought to ensure the mutual recognition of domestically issued driving permits, their validity and their issuance to only those who exhibit a reasonable degree of driving aptitude and physical fitness.



The Conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals are global Conventions, open to accession by all United Nations Member States.

## Facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers

Unlike seafarers and aircrews, professional road vehicle drivers do not benefit from streamlined global arrangements for the issuance of visas or temporary entry to undertake international transport operations. Visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers is largely subject to bilateral agreements on visas. In recent years, some countries have tried to address the issue through sub-regional arrangements. International organizations, including UNECE, have also made an effort to help facilitate visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers. In spite of this, there is still no specific visa category for vehicle drivers in many countries and in most countries they are considered either visitors or foreign labourers for the purpose of visa issuance.



Professional road vehicle drivers have to go through complicated and difficult procedures to apply for visas and are generally granted only a single-entry visa each time. In some countries, drivers are required to apply for visas in person at embassies or consulates in major cities and wait a week or more to either obtain a visa or to learn that their application has been rejected.

Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention, which deals with the facilitation of road transport, specifically refers to the facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers. It states that the Contracting Parties should endeavour to facilitate the procedures for the granting of visas for professional drivers engaged in international road transport, in accordance with national immigration rules and international commitments. It also provides for the agreement of the Contracting Parties to regularly exchange information on best practices with regard to the facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers.



### **Working conditions for professional drivers**

Working in the road transport sector requires high levels of professional skill and competence. For example, drivers of long distance road haulage vehicles must not only be capable drivers but they must also be able to load and un-

load, repair technical problems, have certain language skills, carry out basic administration and act as ‘ambassadors’ for their company in other countries. They have to deliver goods and passengers in time despite difficulties on the road. They may transport dangerous substances or fragile goods that require extra care and responsibility. In the road transport sector, as with any other, it is important to pay attention to working conditions in order to ensure, on the one hand, a skilled and motivated workforce and, on the other hand, efficiency and safety of road transport across borders.

Fatigue is the most commonly reported health problem in land transport. The road transport sector is highly competitive. Workloads are increasing and drivers face escalating pressures, for example pressures from clients to deliver faster and more cheaply, with issues such as ‘just-in-time management’, increasing traffic, remote monitoring. For these reasons, many drivers are working irregular and long hours.

The European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR), of 1970, aims at preventing drivers and crews of commercial vehicles from driving excessive hours. Driver fatigue is known to increase the risk of serious road accidents. Non-standardized working hours may create disparities in the working conditions of professional drivers and may impact the competitiveness of a company. To this end, AETR regulates the driving times and rest periods of professional drivers. The Agreement also defines control devices that are used to control those periods, and sets up technical requirements for the construction, testing, installation and inspection of these devices. Additionally, AETR also sets up requirements for the checking of driving hours by competent authorities. By regulating the driving times and rest periods of drivers of commercial vehicles engaged in international transport of goods and passengers, AETR creates a level playing field in the road haulage industry and helps prevent road accidents. AETR driving and rest times are also applied within the EU and in



some other countries also for domestic transport. AETR is currently open to accession by UNECE Member States and United Nations Member States participating in UNECE in consultative capacity.

### **Box 3: Driving and rest times for professional drivers under the AETR**

- Breaks from driving** . . . . A break of no less than 45 minutes must be taken after no more than 4.5 hours of driving. The break can be divided into two periods - the first at least 15 minutes long and the second at least 30 minutes - taken over the 4.5 hours.
- Daily driving** . . . . . Maximum of 9 hours, extendable to 10 hours no more than twice a week.
- Weekly driving** . . . . . Maximum of 56 hours.
- Two-weekly driving** . . . . Maximum of 90 hours in any two-week period.
- Daily rest** . . . . . Minimum of 11 hours, which can be reduced to a minimum of 9 hours no more than three times between weekly rests. May be taken in two periods, the first at least 3 hours long and the second at least 9 hours long. The rest must be completed within the 24 hours of the end of the last daily or weekly rest period.
- Multi-manning daily rest** . A 9 hours daily rest must be taken within a period of 30 hours that starts from the end of the last daily or weekly rest period. For the first hour of multi-manning, the presence of another driver is optional, but for the remaining time it is compulsory.
- Ferry/train daily rest** . . . . A regular daily rest period (of at least 11 hours) may be interrupted no more than twice by other activities of not more than 1 hour in total, provided that the driver is accompanying a vehicle that is travelling by ferry or train and provided that the driver has access to a bunk or couchette.
- Weekly rest** . . . . . A regular weekly rest of at least 45 hours, or a reduced weekly rest of at least 24 hours, must be started no later than the end of six consecutive 24-hour periods from the end of the last weekly rest. In any two consecutive weeks, a driver must have at least two weekly rests - one of which must be at least 45 hours long. A weekly rest that falls in two weeks may be counted in either week but not in both. Any reductions must be compensated in one block by an equivalent rest added to another rest period of at least 9 hours before the end of the third week, following the week in question.

# Inland Transport Security

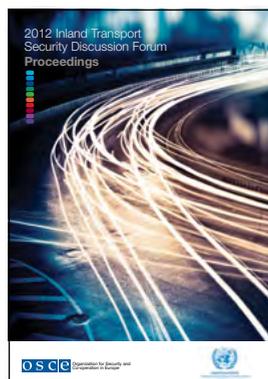
The overall performance and efficiency of the transport sector is dependent on the effectiveness of the security environment in which transport operators undertake their domestic and international activities.

Security in transport encompasses various interrelated components such as physical security against theft, hijacking, violent attacks, intrusion and/or manipulation of goods in the load compartment. Another component of security is, inevitably, the practical and legal conditions under which transport operations are carried out. Security issues have become a major concern since 9/11 of 2001, and are having significant effects on all transport operations. Several policy initiatives and related practices have been launched since, in addition to frameworks that were already in place but strengthened further.

In view of the importance of transport security, in 2010, the Inland Transport Committee recommended that the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division, in partnership with member States, international organizations, private sector, and academia, continue its work aimed at enhancing inland transport security, in particular, by organizing events to exchange information and share best practices. Based on this mandate, the Inland Transport Security Discussion Forum was established.

Among others, the Forum has placed particular emphasis on the issue of secure parking areas, as it is a growing challenge facing the whole supply chain how to protect a stationary vehicle, particularly those that remain parked at border-crossings, awaiting clearance to continue their journey, that are often carrying high value or dangerous goods.

As a contribution to the global effort for increased transport security UNECE and OSCE have jointly compiled a collection of papers on various aspects of inland transport security, written by distinguished experts from public and private sector organizations.



## Reliability for traders through internationally standardized contracts of carriage

Standardization and uniformity of documents is an essential facilitator for any exporter or forwarder who is involved in the international movement of goods, as well as for customs authorities. Standardization of the contract of carriage takes this facilitation a step further, by ensuring that all actors involved in the transport have clarity on their roles, responsibilities and liabilities.

### **Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR)**

Against this background, the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) of 1956 facilitates international road transport by providing a common transport contract, including a common consignment note and harmonized liability limits. CMR fixes the conditions governing the contract for the international carriage of goods by road between the carrier and the shipper and sets the conditions of liability of the carrier in case of late delivery, as well as total or partial loss of goods. If the vehicle containing the goods is transported over part of the route by rail, sea or inland waterway and the goods are not unloaded from the road vehicle, CMR continues to apply to the entire transit. However, if the goods are lost, damaged, or delayed while the vehicle is being carried by the other mode of transport and by an event which could only occur through use of that other mode, the liability of the road carrier is determined by any national or international mandatory law applicable to that other mode. If there is no such mandatory law, then the terms of CMR continue to apply.

CMR has no direct implications for governments as it regulates through private law. However, in order for transport operators to take advantage of the Convention, it must be included in national legislation. An additional Protocol to CMR has entered into force in 2008 to facilitate the use of an electronic consignment note.

The CMR Convention helps to maintain fair competition between carriers and limits the costs of international road transport, including insurance costs. The CMR Convention is currently open for accession by UNECE Member States and all United Nations Member States participating in UNECE work in consultative capacity.

### **A single contract, from Europe to Asia by train: a dream come true**

Railway freight transport is the only mode that does not benefit from a globally uniform or, at least, harmonized legal framework providing for contractual relations between shipper and the transport operator. Thus, railways cannot compete even on international long distance routes on a level playing field with other modes of transport. In light of the fast growing trade between Europe and Asia and between Eastern and Western Europe, this is a rather unfortunate situation.



The international legal framework for the carriage of goods by rail consist of the Convention Concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF), administered by the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) concluded in Bern in 1980 and incorporating the “Uniform Rules Concerning the Contract for International Carriage of Goods by Rail” (CIM) as its appendix B, and the Treaty on International Rail Goods Transport (SMGS), which is administered by the Organization for Railways Cooperation (OSJD). Both these legal instruments were originally designed for the traditional railway market structure, i.e. that of a state monopoly. However, while CIM has been adjusted to new market circumstances, SMGS has remained largely the same.

The current fragmented system creates significant hurdles for the international transport of goods across the borders of countries that are Parties to either one or both of these agreements. It follows that the cumbersome dual legal system, as well as the different stages of market reforms in many European and Asian countries, have

seriously impeded the competitiveness of railways for long distance transport between Europe and Asia. The traffic between the COTIF and SMGS countries has traditionally involved time-consuming border procedures, the alignment and translation of relevant documents and, of course, differing claims handling procedures and compensation regimes, depending on whether the loss, damage or delay of delivery of the goods occurred on the CIM or SMGS part of the route.

Efforts to establish a unified railway law regime had been undertaken in the fifties, but the cold war environment derailed them. With the blissful development of trade between East and West European countries and particularly between Asia and Europe, unsatisfied market needs became exacerbated and in 2009, “the Appeal from Bern” by the International Rail Transport Committee (CIT) called upon UNECE for concerted actions to harmonize the applicable legal frameworks. In its response the Inland Transport Committee has been spearheading the endeavour with renewed commitment and the invaluable support and contribution of CIT, OTIF, OSJD and other stakeholders.

38 transport ministers and other high-level representatives signed on 26 February 2013, during the seventy-fifth jubilee session of ITC, a Joint Declaration that could pave the way towards negotiating a unified railway law (URL), making rail freight transport between Asia and Europe and, ultimately later in the whole world easier, faster and cheaper.



Against this background, the UNECE secretariat presented an alternative concept for an international legal railway regime that, while leaving the present two regimes untouched, would fill the gap left by COTIF/CIM and SMGS for use of a single rail transport contract, a single consignment note and a single liability system, first for Euro-Asian rail transport, with the possibility that the new unified framework could be used in any region of the world. This regime would allow a level playing field for rail transport that is comparable to other modes of transport.

### **Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway**

The Budapest Convention on the Contract for Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway (CMNI) contains rules applicable to any contract of carriage of goods by inland waterways. The rules



apply to all contracts for trans-border transports. This means that if the place of taking over the goods (the port of loading) and of delivery (the port of discharge) are located in two different countries, the Convention applies if at least one of the ports is located in a CMNI Contracting State.

The Convention is applicable to all freight contracts, irrespective of the nationality, the place of registration or the home port of the vessel, and irrespective of the nationality or the domicile of the carrier or his incidental presence elsewhere. The Convention regulates the rights and obligations of the parties to the contract of transport (carrier, substitute carrier, consignor, consignee). In addition, it provides uniform transport documents that are mandatory and must comply with certain requirements. The liability of the carrier is mandatory and takes priority over the responsibility of the consignor. CMNI was jointly drafted by UNECE, the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) and the Danube Commission and adopted at a Diplomatic Conference in 2000 and is open to accession by all United Nations Member States. The depositary of the Convention is Hungary.

# Crossing borders with dangerous goods

Dangerous goods include a wide range of products of economic importance, such as petroleum products, gases, chemicals and fertilizers which may present a risk during transport.

The transport of dangerous goods needs to be regulated in order to prevent, as far as possible, accidents to persons or property and damage to the environment, to the means of transport employed or to other goods. However, with different regulations in every country and for different modes of transport, international trade in chemicals and dangerous products would be seriously impeded, if not made impossible and unsafe. Moreover, dangerous goods are also subject to other kinds of regulations, e.g. work safety regulations, consumer protection regulations, storage regulations, environment protection regulations.

In order to ensure consistency between all these regulatory systems, the United Nations has developed mechanisms for the harmonization of hazard classification criteria and hazard communication tools as well as for transport conditions for all modes for transport. In addition, UNECE administers agreements that ensure the effective implementation of these mechanisms as far as transport of dangerous goods by road, rail and inland waterways is concerned. This way, the cross-border transport of dangerous goods is not only made safer, but also efficient and predictable for the purposes of border controls.



## **ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and ADR**

More specifically, UNECE provides secretariat services to the ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, which issues recommendations for all modes of transport, including air

and sea. It also administers the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), of 1957.

ADR in particular aims at ensuring the highest possible level of safety in the transport of dangerous goods by road at an economically acceptable cost. It identifies the goods that are considered as dangerous goods and that can be admitted in international transport as well as those that cannot be admitted. For the former, ADR establishes the conditions under which they can be carried. These include the classification of substances according to their specific type of danger (explosives, flammable liquids, flammable gases, corrosive substances, etc.), packing conditions, labelling, marking, placarding, documentation and special requirements for tanks. ADR also contains requirements for transport operations, driver training as well as vehicle construction and approval. It is worth noting that ADR has been made mandatory in many countries, also for the domestic transport of dangerous goods. Any United Nations Member State may accede to ADR.

### **European agreement on the Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN)**

As concerns other modes of transport, the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN) was concluded in Geneva on 26 May 2000 on the occasion of a Diplomatic Conference held under the joint auspices of UNECE and CCNR. It entered into force on 29 February 2008 and aims at ensuring a high level of safety for the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways; contributing effectively to the protection of the environment by preventing any pollution resulting from accidents or incidents during such carriage; and facilitating transport operations and promoting international trade in dangerous goods.

### **Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID)**

The Regulations concerning the International Transport of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) are annexed to the Convention for international transport by rail (COTIF). Forty-four countries including Western and

Central European countries, plus certain Middle East and North African countries are RID Contracting States. RID is published by the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), which is based in Bern. RID is closely aligned with ADR.

#### Box 4: Goods cross borders on rivers

- ✓ The navigable inland waterways of Europe and Central Asia span over more than 29,000 km, with more than 400 important ports and terminals.
- ✓ 22,000 km of these waterways are considered inland waterways of international importance and 14,700 km can be used for containerized transport, which is the fastest growing market segment in inland navigation.
- ✓ Inland waterways are an environmentally friendly, reliable, safe and cost-efficient mode of transport. They can also carry large volumes of bulky and containerized cargo at very low noise levels, day and night, seven days a week.
- ✓ The main European international rivers are managed by specially established river commissions, entrusted with setting technical and legal standards for the navigation in their respective river basins. These are the CCNR, the Danube Commission, the International Sava River Basin Commission and the Mosel Commission.
- ✓ UNECE maintains international conventions, such as the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), as well as several conventions dealing with the international private law issues and liability in inland navigation. Importantly, UNECE, in cooperation with the river Commissions coordinates work towards mutually recognized documents and technically harmonized inland water transport infrastructure to facilitate international inland water navigation.
- ✓ The European Code for Inland Waterways, also referred to as CEVNI, contains the core rules applicable to the traffic on inland waterways in the UNECE region such as marks and draught scales on vessels, visual signals on vessels, sound signals and radiotelephony, waterway signs and markings, rules of the road, berthing rules, signalling and reporting requirements, as well as prevention of pollution of water and disposal of waste. These harmonized rules constitute the legal and technical basis for national inland waterway codes in UNECE Member States. The most recent, fifth, edition of CEVNI updates existing regulations, using the best practices from the existing traffic regulations of the River Commissions and UNECE Member States.



# Seamless connectivity through harmonized infrastructure standards and development

The provision of transport infrastructure is one of the necessary conditions for the movement of international trade and the efficiency of international transport operations. In their endeavour to facilitate transport, however, decision-makers in governments and international organizations face difficult challenges. These include the existence of physical barriers or hindrances, bottlenecks and missing links, as well as lack of funds to remove them. Solving these problems is not an easy task. It requires actions on the part of the governments concerned, in coordination with other governments at international level. The UNECE governments have long-standing experience and expertise in the development of coherent international transport networks in Europe. They have created four main transport network agreements aimed at the development of coherent networks for road, rail, inland water and combined transport:

- The European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR), of 1975,
- The European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC), of 1985
- The European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), of 1996
- The European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), of 1991

These four core infrastructure agreements provide the international legal and technical framework for the development of coherent international transport networks. The AGR, the AGC and the AGN define the E-road, E-rail and E-Waterway networks, respectively, and the infrastructure parameters to which they should conform. By acceding to either or all of these agreements, governments commit themselves to their implementation, including the construction or the upgrading of the E-networks in their territories, within the

framework of their national investment programmes but without any time constraints.

The European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), of 1991, provides the technical and legal framework for the development of efficient international combined road/rail transport in Europe. Combined international combined road/rail transport in Europe. Combined road/rail transport comprises the transport of containers, swap bodies and entire trucks on railway wagons to and from especially equipped terminals. AGTC determines all important European railway lines used for international combined transport, identifies all terminals, border-crossing points, ferry links and other installations that are important for international combined transport services and establishes internationally acceptable infrastructure standards for them. The Protocol to the AGTC, on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways extends the provisions of the AGTC to Inland Waterway transport. Similarly to the other infrastructure agreements, Contracting Parties are expected to implement AGTC within the framework of their national investment programmes without any time constraints. The AGR, AGC, AGN and AGTC are currently only open to accession by UNECE Member States and States participating in UNECE work in consultative capacity.



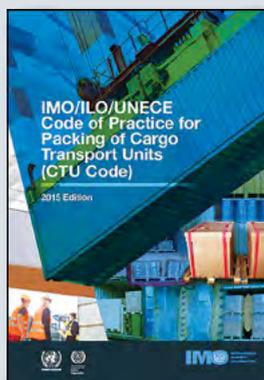
### **Box 5: Safe packing of containers**

Many incidents in transport are attributed to poor practices in the packing of cargo transport units, including inadequate securing of the cargo, overloading and incorrect declaration of contents. This is of major concern particularly because the victims may be the general public or transport and supply chain workers, who generally have no control over the packing of such units.

The Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code), a joint publication of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), together with representatives of industry, addresses these concerns through a non-mandatory global code of practice for the handling and packing of shipping containers and other cargo transport units for transportation by sea and land.

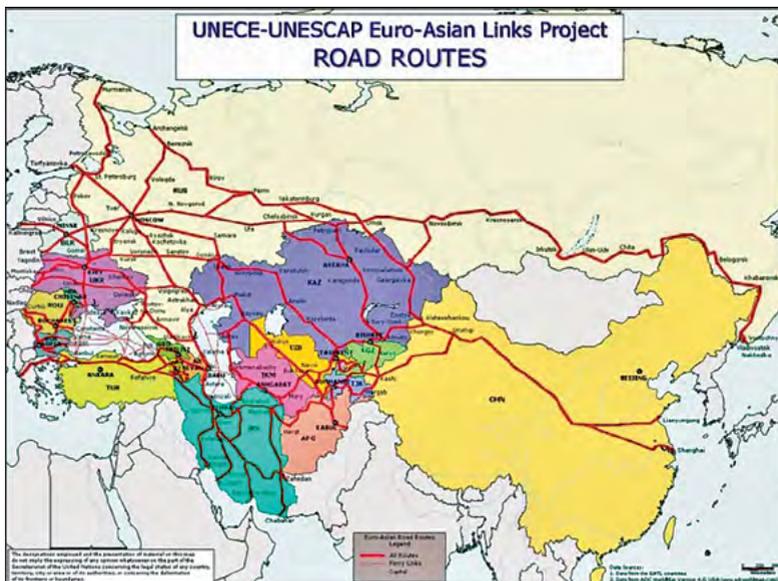
Within the CTU Code, comprehensive information and references on all aspects of loading and securing of cargo in containers and other intermodal transport are provided, taking account of the requirements of all sea and land transport modes. The CTU Code applies to transport operations throughout the entire transport chain and provides guidance not only to those responsible for packing and securing cargo, but also to those who receive and unpack such units. It also addresses issues such as training and the packing of dangerous goods.

The CTU Code is intended to assist the industry, employers' and workers' organizations as well as Governments in training their staff on the safe stowage of cargo in containers. The CTU Code could also be used as a reference base for national regulations and could become a model for internationally harmonized legislation in this field, should such requirements arise.



## **Euro-Asian Inland Transport Links project (EATL)**

Globalization has led to significant increases in trade and transport between Asia and Europe. While most of the traffic has used (increasingly congested) maritime routes, further development of inland transport routes would provide additional credible and competitive transport options. Once established, these efficient and integrated inland routes could not only become an effective tool for the economic development and integration of the Euro–Asian region, but also ensure technically seamless, safe and fast crossing of borders along key trade routes.



With this in mind, UNECE spearheaded the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and with designated national focal points in the Euro-Asian region. In its phases I and II, the project identified the principal Euro-Asian road and rail routes that should be prioritized for development and cooperation. The EATL project has an Expert Group which is the platform for cooperation and coordinated development of the identified inland transport links. Today, 32 countries are involved in Phase III, whose primary objective it is to make the nine road and nine rail EATL routes identified in Phase II fully operational. The project also benefits from the support of partner organizations such as OSCE and is partially funded by the government of the Russian Federation.

## Trans-European North – South Motorway and Railway Projects (TEM and TER)

To ensure seamless connections throughout Europe, including access to markets, UNECE coordinates work on the TEM and TER projects in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The TEM project was initiated in 1977, to assist and promote the development of the TEM motorway network.

The TEM project aims at facilitating road traffic in Europe among and through the participating countries; improving the quality and efficiency of transport operations; reducing imbalances in the motorway network between Western, Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe; and assisting the integration process of European transport infrastructure systems, in order to promote the overall development of the region. In recent years, the emphasis of the project has shifted to the facilitation of ITS applications and road safety improvement.

The TER project was launched in 1990. The objective of TER is to facilitate and develop coherent and efficient international railway and combined transport systems among Central and Eastern European countries. This objective is being achieved by, for example, upgrading network infrastructure, operations and by eliminating obstacles at border crossings.

The TEM and TER Master Plan is central to this work; the Master Plan sets out the priority infrastructure needs, the backbone networks and a realistic investment plan to develop them. It is a core analytical foundation of the project, which was revised in 2011 to reflect changes in traffic flows, political changes in the region, the needs of new participating countries, the desire to harmonize TEM and TER networks with other international transport networks, and the need to connect these networks with important international combined transport routes and with trans-shipment points and nodes.



## **Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)**

Central Asia is a unique region, and this is highlighted by the significant role it can play with its connective potential as a transport hub between two continents. The region also faces unique challenges, as all of the member countries of SPECA are landlocked, with divergent economic development. SPECA was, thus, launched in 1998 to address challenges faced by Central Asian countries.

Within the SPECA framework, the Project Working Group on Transport and Border-Crossing (PWG TBC) carries out its work with the support of UNESCAP and the UNECE. More specifically, the two organizations offer capacity-building and other forms of technical assistance within their respective fields of expertise, that contribute to the efficient and safe operation of regional transport infrastructures and the identification of bottlenecks. The TBC PWG, is mandated to implement the programme of actions resulting from the Almaty declaration and the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024.

The numerous legal instruments administered by UNECE, as well as UNECE analytical, capacity building and technical assistance activities provide a solid basis for the development of harmonized regulatory frameworks for regional transport, particularly in the SPECA region.

UNECE and UNESCAP jointly organize the annual TBC PWG meeting, as well as dedicated workshops at regular intervals, during which SPECA participating countries can be informed and guided as to the ways they can improve transport conditions in their region by acceding to and implementing the United Nations legal instruments.

# Innovation and Information and Communication Technologies

## **UNDA Global Project on Customs-to Customs (C2C) electronic information exchange**

Given that the design and industrial development cycle of innovative technologies are shorter than the policy cycle, regulatory authorities often lag behind at the national level, but do so, particularly, at the international level. This leads to technical fragmentation and, eventually, interoperability issues within and across countries. UNECE, having recognized the importance of innovation and the difficulties that accompany the use of new technologies in transport and border-crossing, is calling for efforts to speed up the development and implementation of regulations and agreements on technical and technological compatibility.

One of the most recent coordinated efforts in that direction is reflected in the project on Customs-to-Customs (C2C) electronic information exchange for transit. The objective of this global project - which is funded by the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and implemented in cooperation with all United Nations regional commissions - is to strengthen the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to facilitate legitimate border-crossing by means of increased secure electronic exchange of information between customs administrations. Simultaneously, the project will contribute to increasing the cooperation between customs administrations and promote the use of international standard electronic messages, in particular, for transit operations.



## Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

When hearing about ITS one thinks either of modern ways of passenger information or of Vehicle-to-Vehicle and Vehicle-to-Infrastructure communication that can improve traffic flow, avoid congestion, or as such reduce the negative impacts of road mobility. However there is also a very important transport facilitation angle to Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). First and foremost, it is important to be able to drive from one country to another without the need to cope with difficulties due to different or incompatible systems. Similarly to the need for a consistent and internationally interoperable transport infrastructure spanning several countries, the information super-highway for mobility has to be based on internationally harmonized systems.

UNECE is leading the work on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) as it recognized, since 2003, the enormous progress that ITS can bring to Inland Transport Systems in terms of traffic management (increasing the capacity of existing infrastructure, addressing e.g. traffic jams), safety (helping address the existing latent road safety crisis) and mitigating the adverse effects of Transport Systems on the environment (in terms of pollution, CO2 emission and energy consumption).

In 2012 UNECE published a study that forms the backbone of the Inland Transport Committee's activities on ITS, with a background note, a strategy on how to promote and facilitate the implementation of ITS and 20 global actions to implement the strategy. The ITC

is promoting the internationally harmonized use of ITS technologies e.g. for e-Tolling and Variable Message Systems for increasing traffic management performance, but also Advance Driver Assistance Systems addressing safety, and is now focusing on the potential benefits that ITS have in terms of environmental impact mitigation.

Since 2012, the ITS world experienced a major evolution with innovations on Connectivity and Autonomous Driving. It became the center of gravity and the engine of ITS. The potential



industrial applications, the economic consequences as well as the progress expected from these innovations are tempting Countries to regulate them in isolation. ITC is stressing that immediate analytical work, exchange of best practices and regulatory actions are necessary for the safe introduction of ITS innovations, guaranteeing at least the status quo in terms of safety and environmental performance but also making sure that the transport system and eventually, the whole economy could capture its full benefits.

ITC's vision is to proactively address a latent challenge i.e. make sure that the introduction of potentially disrupting technologies won't jeopardize the progress made for decades by the transport community in the field of border crossing facilitation and interoperability. Therefore ITC and the UNECE secretariat are encouraging progress on ITS corridors, such as the Cooperative ITS Corridor Rotterdam – Vienna, and other border crossing facilitation projects such as the International Border Clearance (IBC) in the USA. In addition UNECE promotes and even proposes concrete applications, for instance, the Electronic Border Queue management system between Estonia and the Russian Federation, the eTIR project for seamless and paperless customs transit and the Global Project on Customs-to Customs (C2C) electronic information exchange.

ITC wants to make sure that an autonomous truck or any autonomous motor vehicle will be able to safely and eco-friendly drive though the UNECE Region and beyond without being stuck at the border because of non-harmonized technological, regulatory or institutional systems among neighboring countries. To this end, annual flagship round tables on ITS are organized with the participation of world leading policy makers and innovation drivers, to promote, monitor and facilitate ITS progress.

In 2012-13 in Geneva, the annual flagship ITS round table was organized together



with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 2014 in Brussels, in cooperation with the government of Belgium, and in 2015, in Paris, in cooperation with the government of France.

## Capacity-building and analytical work

The adage ‘knowledge shared is knowledge gained’ has particular pertinence when applied to the field of transport. Every year the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division hosts and participates in several capacity-building events around the world to help disseminate its expertise. This work is further supported by the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation and the Regional Advisory Services.

The main capacity-building activities of the Division are focused on:

- Capacity-building projects, workshops, seminars and training courses aimed at assisting countries in acceding to and implementing the UN transport Conventions, transferring know-how and sharing best practices, as well as implementing global commitments in transport;





- Providing advisory services, strategic guidance and administrative support for technical cooperation projects designed to develop coherent pan-European transport networks, corridors and areas, and Euro-Asian transport links;
- Strengthening national legal and regulatory frameworks;
- Supporting transport initiatives and projects, particularly those carried out by sub-regional groupings, such as in the framework of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and other sub-regional initiatives.

For these purposes, UNECE also works in close cooperation with the other four regional commissions of the United Nations as well as with other partners such as the EU, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), BSEC, among others, and with several non-governmental organizations involved in international transport. For the past several years, UNECE has institutionalized its cooperation with the OSCE Border Management Staff College, by regularly participating in its training courses, particularly those aimed at training customs officers and border enforcement personnel in the Central Asia region. UNECE also regularly organizes dedicated events to raise awareness and understanding of the United Nations transport conventions in Central Asia.



In terms of analytical work, UNECE regularly carries out studies, aimed at supporting the development of legal instruments and exploring emerging challenges that require governments to take common action. One such example of analytical study by UNECE has been published, in 2014, under the title “Review of the transport and logistics system of the Republic of Belarus”.

The geographical location of the Republic of Belarus in the centre of the European continent makes it a natural connecting link between Europe and Asia and creates the opportunity for smooth cargo flows via major transport corridors that pass through its territory. This is well understood in the country and the conditions for the transit of goods through its territory are constantly improving. The government permanently works on increasing transit freight flows through Belarus, promoting the growth of commodity exchange between the EU and Asian countries. The abolition of transport and other agreed controls on domestic inter-state borders of the Eurasian Customs Union member countries<sup>1</sup> since 2011 has increased the appeal of transit through Belarus.

To assist the Government of Belarus to further improve competitiveness of its logistics and transport sector, UNECE has been engaged in a policy dialogue with the government of Belarus, and a comprehensive study has been published, that analyses the current state of international road freight carriers of Belarus and its transport infrastructure; evaluates the main ports that are used for its exports and imports as well as the status of the logistics system in the country; analyses the legal framework in the field of international road haulage; and determines the transit cargo traffic.

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1) Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation

# List of main Border Crossing Facilitation legal instruments administered by the UNECE Inland Transport Committee

Convention concerning Customs Facilities for Touring, signed in New York on 4 June 1954

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/Touring-1954e.pdf>

Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles, signed in New York on 4 June 1954

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/imppriv\\_En.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/imppriv_En.pdf)

Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), of 14 November 1975

<http://www.unece.org/tir/tir-hb.html>

Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation for Private Use of Aircraft and Pleasure Boats, of 18 May 1956

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/aire.pdf>

Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, of 18 May 1956

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/impcom-e.pdf>

International Convention to Facilitate the Crossing of Frontiers for Passengers and Baggage carried by Rail, of 10 January 1952

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/passraile.pdf>

International Convention to Facilitate the Crossing of Frontiers for Goods Carried by Rail, of 10 January 1952

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/goodsraile.pdf>

Customs Convention on Containers, of 18 May 1956

[http://www.unece.org/trans/conventn/legalinst\\_48\\_BCF\\_CCC\\_1956.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/conventn/legalinst_48_BCF_CCC_1956.html)

Customs Convention on Containers, of 2 December 1972

[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ccc\\_1972e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ccc_1972e.pdf)

International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 21 October 1982

<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ECE-TRANS-55r2e.pdf>

Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers Used in International Transport, 21 January 1994  
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/poolcon.pdf>

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR),  
of 30 September 1957  
[http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/adr/adr\\_e.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/adr/adr_e.html)

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterway  
(ADN), of 25 May 2000  
[http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/adn/adn\\_e.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/adn/adn_e.html)

European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR), of 15 November 1975  
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ECE-TRANS-SC1-384e.pdf>

European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC), of 31 May 1985  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/AGC\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/AGC_e.pdf)

European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations  
(AGTC), of 1 February 1991  
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/agtce.pdf>

European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), of 19 January 1996  
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/agn.pdf>

Convention on Road Traffic, of 8 November 1968  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/Conv\\_road\\_traffic\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/Conv_road_traffic_EN.pdf)

Convention on Road Signs and Signals, of 8 November 1968  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/Conv\\_road\\_signs\\_2006v\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/Conv_road_signs_2006v_EN.pdf)

Agreement on Minimum Requirements for the Issue and Validity of Driving Permits (APC), of 1 April 1975  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/IssueValidityDrivingPermits\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/IssueValidityDrivingPermits_e.pdf)

European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road  
Transport (AETR), of 1 July 1970  
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2010/sc1/ECE-TRANS-SC1-2010-AETR-en.pdf>

Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR), of 19 May 1956  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/cmr\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/cmr_e.pdf)

Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Passengers and Luggage by Road (CVR),  
of 1 March 1973  
[http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/CVR\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/CVR_e.pdf)



## SPECTRUM of Border Crossing Facilitation Activities

Border inefficiencies are estimated to cost twice the amount of tariffs, while the removal of those inefficiencies could increase global trade by as much as US\$ 1 trillion and create as many as 21 million jobs worldwide.

Even though border crossing issues vary from country to country, they generally span across three main elements: harmonization of laws and regulations; standardization of means and simplification of procedures.

The UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its working parties, especially the Working Party on customs questions affecting transport have been providing regulatory (58 UN legal instruments), analytical and technical assistance – capacity building activities and have been engaged in policy dialogue to promote border crossing facilitation.

This brochure presents the broad spectrum of UN Conventions relevant for border crossing facilitation and of which the UNECE Inland Transport Committee is the custodian, as well as other activities and tools that can make international movement of cargo and people efficient and thus improve access to markets and opportunities at global, regional and sub-regional scales.

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