

Reduce Border Waiting Times!

Abstract from latest IRU
Working Papers on Road
Border Crossing Improve-
ments



REDUCE BORDER WAITING TIMES

Latest IRU Working Papers on Road Border Crossing Improvements

Geneva

February 2009

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Geneva, 16 May 2008

IRU ISTANBUL DECLARATION

"ROAD TRANSPORT, DRIVING PEACE AND PROSPERITY"

*unanimously adopted by the IRU General Assembly and by the
1900 participants from 70 countries at the 31st IRU World Congress
in Istanbul, Turkey, on 16 May 2008*

Peace and prosperity depends to a great extent on the improvement of wealth distribution, the development of tourism as well as trade and business exchanges. This increases demand for the mobility of people and goods, which requires efficient road transport systems.

Road transport has become not only a vital production tool, but moreover, the principal land transport mode to ensure sustainable mobility of people and goods.

The IRU with its Members and road transport operators – recognising the role that road transport plays in economic, social and environmental progress and integration – must work in a true public-private partnership with governments to drive peace and prosperity by

1. acknowledging the irreplaceable role of road transport

- Governments

Recognising that any modern society and economy requires efficient door-to-door transport which plays an irreplaceable role in supply chains and passenger mobility;

- Road transport industry

Providing its unique door-to-door, high quality, professional and efficient services on its own or as a complement to any mode, to economies and to society as a whole;

2. facilitating road transport

- Governments

Recognising that road transport is the most regulated mode of transport, whilst it should be facilitated and promoted to drive peace and prosperity;

Implementing the United Nations Conventions and WTO Agreements as well as other multilateral legal instruments to facilitate cross-border trade and the free movement of people, goods, road vehicles and their drivers;

Issuing multilateral long-term multi-entry visas for drivers;

Ensuring fair competition by adapting taxation to cover only road infrastructure and by strengthening and harmonising rules of access to the road transport profession and the market as well as the equal treatment of all transport modes;

Increasing security of international road transport and trade by using the UN TIR Convention to implement all the requirements of the WCO SAFE Framework, including AEO status;

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- **Road Transport Industry**

Ensuring highest quality services by enhancing professional competencies of staff through training provided by the network of IRU Academy training institutes;

Committing to implementing security, safety and facilitation laws and rules as well as industry guidelines;

3. driving sustainable socio-economic and environmental development

- **Governments**

Providing real business incentives to expedite the penetration of innovative transport technologies and best industry practices;

Recognising that growing demand for road transport is a consequence of economic growth and social progress and that road transport already covers costs it causes to infrastructure and environment, thus any further internalisation of proven external costs, wherever applicable, should be based on cost-benefit analysis;

Establishing, in every country, an energy policy based on the diversification of oil use, recognising that road transport is totally dependent on oil and currently there is no economically viable and efficient alternative source of energy for this activity; as well as **devising practicable means to stabilise fuel prices** and ensure road transport companies can keep up with cost increases, many of which are imposed by governments themselves in the form of taxes;

Enhancing road safety by targeting the scientifically identified main causes of accidents involving commercial vehicles;

Adopting social regulations to meet the needs of drivers and companies as well as society's increasing demand for mobility;

- **Road transport industry**

Improving road safety records by meeting safety obligations, including driver compliance with the law, ensuring vehicles are well-maintained, by providing appropriate driver training;

Reducing road transport's energy consumption and environmental impact through at-the-source measures and innovative best industry practices; while sensibly **including a fuel escalator clause into any transport contract** until the fuel supply and price situation stabilises;

Promoting co-modality among various transport modes via modern interfaces;

Creating a favourable environment, image and social conditions to attract young people to the profession;

4. interconnecting businesses in all world markets

- **Governments**

Promoting road transport by providing the adequate infrastructure and implementing the required multilateral facilitation instruments to permit the interconnection of businesses in all world markets as no country is landlocked to road transport;

- **Road transport industry**

Promoting the New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative (NELTI), with the support of governments, along tomorrow's major transport corridors;

With this Declaration, the IRU with its Members renew their pledge to work together in Public-Private Partnership to drive peace and prosperity around the globe.

* * * * *

CRITICAL EU EXTERNAL BORDERS 2008

(Data: January 2008 – December 2008)

This document has been prepared to identify problematic EU external road border crossing points and propose measures to ease difficulties.

Part I summarises main conclusions while Part II contains details on waiting times in 2008 as well as their main reasons and improvement recommendations wherever identifiable for individual border crossings.

No data from 2009 have been used since they are considered as truly misleading due to the drop of traffic as a result of shrinking trade in the present period of international economic recession. The IRU hopes that trade will be the first to return to its normal development path; therefore the seemingly sufficient border throughput capacities today risk becoming insufficient tomorrow.

I. CONCLUSIONS

This information paper is based on waiting time reports accumulated in the *IRU Border Waiting Times Observatory (IRU BWTO)* in the course of 2008 and information received from IRU Member Associations.

The main conclusions in order of priority:

- a) Comparatively rapid and efficient changes can be effected by *procedural improvements*, which have long been at the top of the IRU-suggested list of improvement measures, such as
 - Increase control service availability to 24/24-hour and 7/7-day scheme wherever justified by traffic intensity; extend control staff capacities; train and instruct staff; improve control staff salaries and moral appreciation to better reflect the responsibilities of staff involved in their daily work
 - Reduce the number of control services present at the border; improve coordination among services present on each side as well as between the two sides of the frontier; move all controls away from borders (like checking driver rest and driving times) which are not necessarily related to borders
 - Introduce joint border control technologies between neighbouring countries
 - Move substantial customs and other controls away from the frontiers to check points within the country
 - Implement in an efficient way the TIR Convention and other customs transit systems if available, via e.g. the IRU TIR EPD; separate transit access and control lanes from other types of traffic, apply Single Window and risk management technology, limit conveying only to justified cases etc.
 - Implement modern information and traffic management systems, like traffic management tools; improve e-information exchange between both sides of the border
 - Join an international border waiting time observatory like the IRU's and update data regularly, use it for lobbying and make the operators use it for route planning purposes
 - Reduce corruption and rent-seeking through computerisation/automation, proper salaries, sufficient staffing, training, possible staff rotation and internal control
- b) Improvements can also be achieved with more complex and more expensive investment measures like

- Build additional traffic lanes at border crossings as well as new road sections leading to customs posts and parking areas with appropriate facilities
- Reconstruct special sections of the infrastructure like outworn or narrow bridges in border areas
- Construct modern terminal-like facilities serving control as well as transport operational purposes; build joint facilities between neighbouring countries

Decisions from the highest political level are often needed to launch significant improvement measures in cooperation with both sides of the border section concerned. The European Union institutions should play a main catalysing role by initiating and implementing the appropriate enhancement measures in cooperation with neighbouring countries' Governments whether streamlined procedures or better physical facilities are concerned. Appropriate EU and national budgets should be devoted to improvement programmes.

For information, see enclosed a previous IRU analysis on main barriers to smooth international freight movements by road, presented in the context of WTO GATT, as well as a further IRU paper on the importance of an appropriate implementation of the new Annex 8 of the UNECE Convention on the harmonisation of border control of goods. A further attachment on the advantages of applying the IRU TIR EPD reflects how the interface between the TIR customs transit system and the EU customs regime can smoothly be resolved. The last annex presents how the TIR Convention could be used as a legally binding solution for the application of the World Customs Organisation's SAFE Framework of standards, including the Approved Economic Operator concept. (*Annexes 1, 2, 3 and 4*)

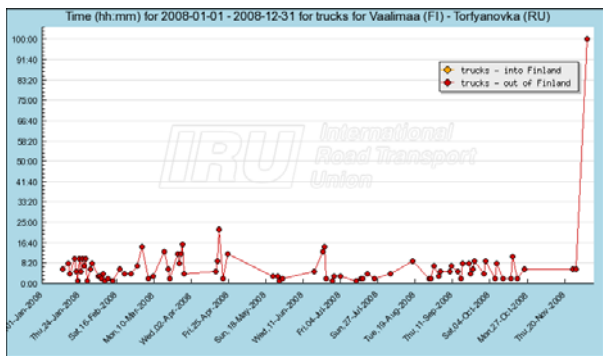
II. SPECIFIC BORDER SECTIONS

1. Finland – Russian Federation

1.1 Vaalimaa (FI) – Torfyanovka (RF)

Relatively calm, except for the period of April 2008 for traffic into Finland. (Graph 1)

Graph 1



Main reasons for waiting times:

The major reasons for existing problems between Finland and the RF are created, according to the IRU Member in Finland, mainly in the Russian territory and are due to Russian measures, or lack of them. There is a requirement for excessive and time consuming data entry into the Russian e-data bank, conducted by frequently inefficient and insufficient control staff.

Unsuccessful efforts have been made to reduce the number of control services and authorities being present at the Russian side. In the autumn of 2007, Russia tried to transfer all control tasks to two or maximum three remaining control services at the border, but Russian authorities stated that the remaining 6-7 control functions would continue working in the hinterland area. This issue is still on the agenda.

On the Finnish side there is also a need to re-organize the border operations, including control and management. In addition, according to IRU's Member in Russia, a source of fluctuating traffic and waiting times is due to the fact that the ports of Finland do not work during weekends and holidays.

Improvement Measures needed and proposed EU/National Action:

The most important measure targeting the reduction of border traffic congestion and queues should be to alert important Russian politicians and decision makers of the continuous problems of border crossing operations. In practice, this must lead to employing an increased number of Russian control officers at the border and each desk / working post which should be functioning for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Further action proposed:

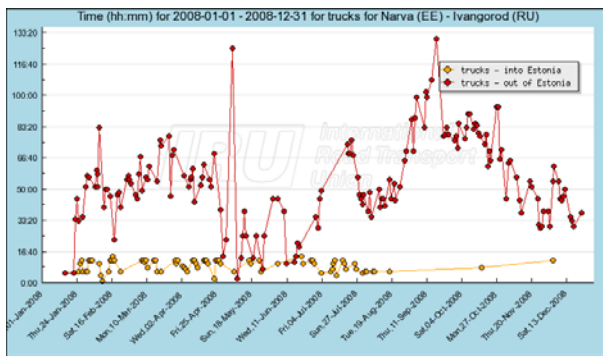
- Establish management, coordination and controlling of the entire border crossing traffic system
- Define and implement a modern information system
- Prepare operational and controlling models for over-demand situations
- Introduce electronically steered and controlled traffic guidance, speed limitation and warning/information systems (for drivers) which include automated and real-time traffic monitoring and calculating both for incoming and outgoing units; use long term traffic prognosis for anticipatory traffic guidance purposes
- Build additional traffic lanes from Highway 13 to Highway 6 in Finland; build parking areas
- Build a road from Svetogorsk and Brusnichnoe to Vyborg

2. Estonia – Russian Federation

2.1 Narva (EST) – Ivangorod (RF)

There has been a dramatic situation throughout the whole year on this road leading to St. Petersburg, in particular, at the end of April and September times out of Estonia reached almost 130 hours (five days for a truck to pass!!). (Graph 2)

Graph 2



Main reasons for waiting times:

Russian custom controls are continuously changing their procedures, as experienced by the IRU Member in Estonia, resulting in very slow checks and lack of decisions to accelerate procedures on the Russian side.

Improvement Measures needed and proposed EU/National Action:

A solution should be sought at the highest political level.

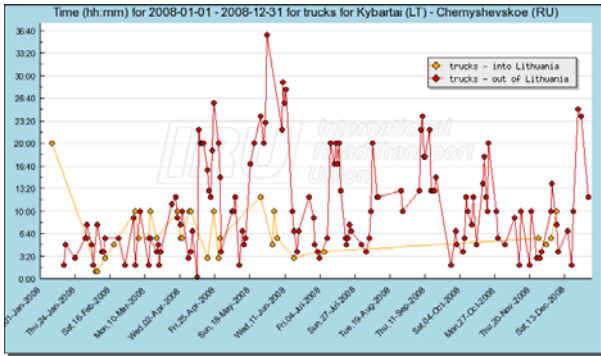
In addition, according to IRU's Member in Russia, a bridge in Ivangorod needs to be reconstructed.

3. Lithuania – Russian Federation (Kaliningrad) and Belarus

3.1 Kybartai (LT) – Chernyshevskoe (RF)

Waiting times have been growing since January reaching a peak of 36 hours going to the Russian Federation (Kaliningrad) in June 2008. After a drop in the summer, times grew to 24 hours in September, dropping below 10 hours in October.

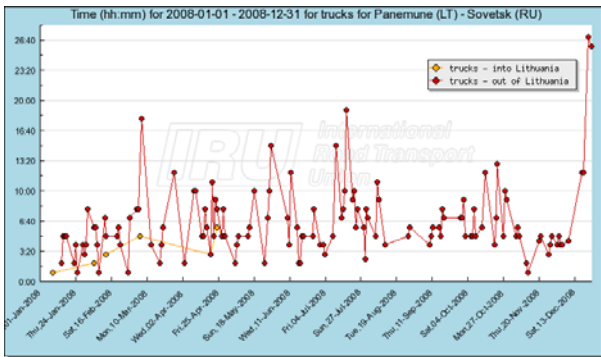
Graph 3



3.2 Panemune (LT) – Sovetsk (RF)

Fluctuating waiting times have always remained under 20 hours in 2008. Idling was reported for outgoing traffic from Lithuania.

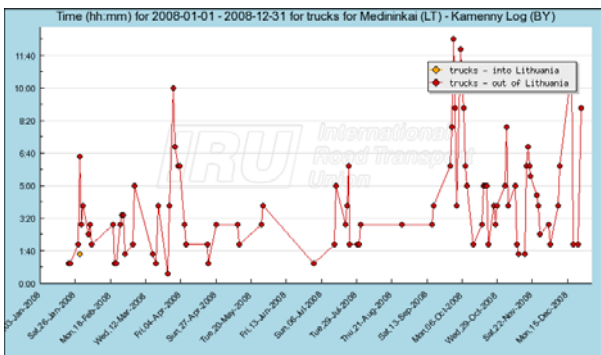
Graph 4



3.3 Medininkai (LT) – Kamenny Log (BY)

Wait has been reported for traffic entering Belarus on this important road connecting Vilnius to Minsk (E 28) but times have remained relatively low except in October 2008 reaching more than 10 hours.

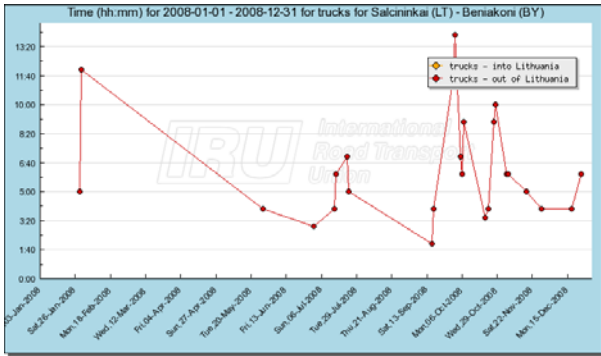
Graph 5



3.4 Salcininkai (LT) – Beniakoni (BY)

The situation is similar to the one observed for Medininkai (LT) – Kamenny Log (BY) under item 3.3 above.

Graph 6

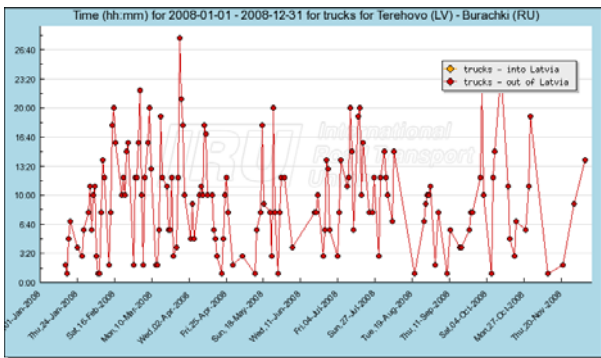


4. Latvia – Russian Federation

4.1 Terehovo (LV) – Burachki (RF)

Permanent difficulties have been observed to cross the border into Latvia with waiting times of around 20 hours in February-March, May and July. (Graph 7)

Graph 7

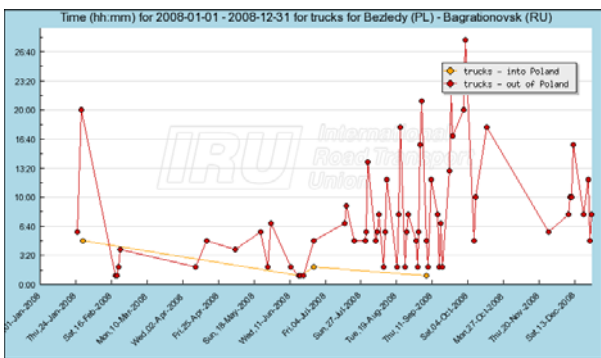


5. Poland – Russian Federation (Kaliningrad)

5.1 Bezledy (PL) – Bagrationovsk (RF)

Long waiting times in January were followed by a calm period until August. Since then times have been growing, reaching 24 hours in September-October for traffic leaving Poland. (Graph 8)

Graph 8



Main reasons for waiting times:

From January to March 2008, long Polish-East border waiting times were related to an emergency situation which was caused by a customs officers strike. Action was taken by IRU's Member in Poland, such as negotiations with government representatives and direct talks with the appropriate authorities at the border crossing points. The problems were resolved and long border waiting times decreased.

During the last two months the wait has been less than 10 hours at all Polish-East border crossing points. Although this is positive news, problems still exist and should be solved by the government taking long-term action.

As the situation at the Polish-East border crossing points remains unsatisfactory, IRU's Member in Poland is still in negotiations with the government, while international hauliers have addressed the Polish government on the urgent issue of border problems.

Problems appear at all border crossing points (PL-RUS, PL-UA, PL-BY) but the most problematic are noted as (PL-UA) Dorohusk/Jagodin, Medyka/Szegine and (PL-BY) Bobrowniki/Bierestownica, Kuznica/Bruzgi.

Improvement Measures needed and Proposed EU-National Action:

The EU could support increasing numbers of border crossing points on the Polish-East side, especially on the PL-UA border section (investment in infrastructure would be the suggested means of improvement).

According to the Polish IRU Member, the following actions are needed and expected from the Polish authorities:

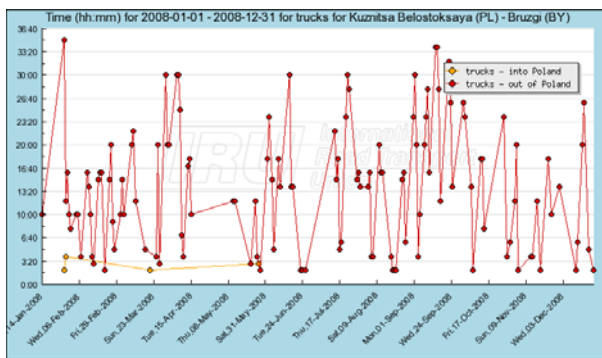
- increase the capacity of border crossing points;
- organise more efficiently the work of border guards and customs offices;
- improve mutual cooperation between Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Russian authorities;
- increase the amount of people employed by the authorities responsible for customs clearances and passport controls;
- increase border crossing points and modernise existing points;

6. Poland - Belarus

6.1 Kuznitsa Belostoksaya (PL) – Bruzgi (BY)

Very volatile waiting times have been reported for trucks leaving Poland. Long waiting times were faced in January (more than 30 hours), March-April, June-July and September. (Graph 9)

Graph 9

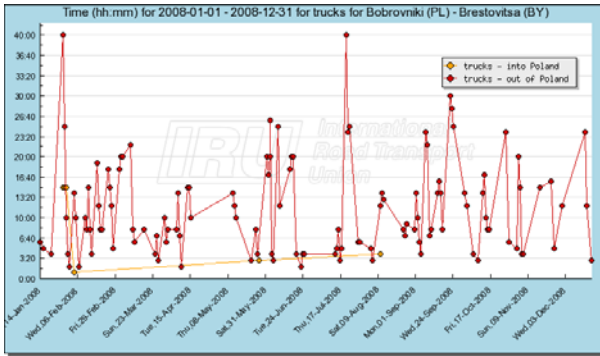


For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1

6.2 Bobrowniki (PL) – Brestovitsa (BY)

Forty hours of waiting times were experienced in February and July, while during other periods times were fluctuating between 10-20 hours for traffic into BY. (Graph 10)

Graph 10

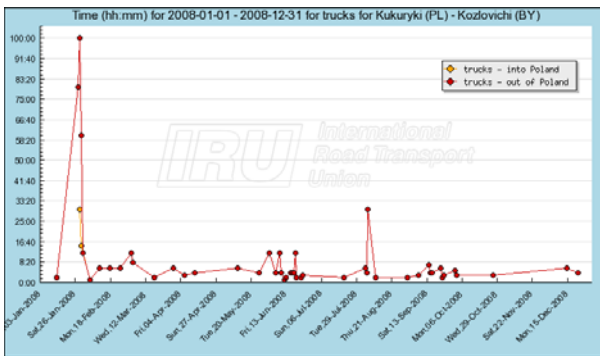


For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1

6.3 Kukuryki (PL) – Kozlovichi (BY)

This border crossing on the road E30 Warsaw – Minsk (- Moscow) was the most feared and overloaded border crossing point until a few years ago. Lately it has become relatively calm with one exceptional peak time of 100 hours (!) and long hours preceding and following this peak, for traffic into BY in January. (Graph 11)

Graph 11



Main reasons for waiting times:

One of the main reasons for slow processing of traffic entering Belarus is, according to the IRU Member in Belarus, the need for repeated examination by Belarusian Customs of information accompanying goods imported from the EU. Customs Authorities of the Republic of Belarus have no possibility to use e-documents and pre-arrival information from customs offices of the neighbouring states.

See also item 5.1.

Improvement Measures needed and Proposed EU-National Action:

The European Commission should, according to the IRU Member in Belarus, initiate the conclusion of agreements between the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus and customs authorities of the neighbouring EU Member States on the exchange of e-pre-arrival information on goods and vehicles crossing the Belarusian border from EU Member States.

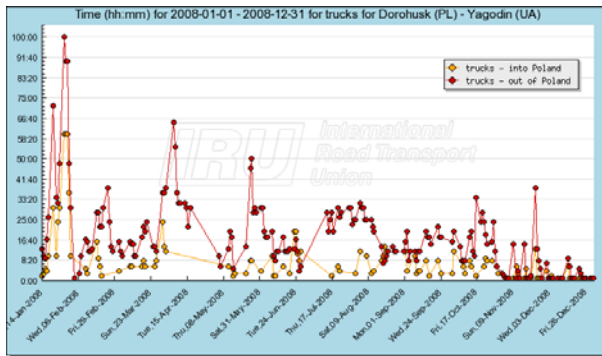
See also item 5.1.

7. Poland – Ukraine

7.1 Dorohusk (PL) – Yagodin (UA)

After a difficult period in January for traffic leaving Poland (100 hours!), there has been a gradually decreasing trend with relative peaks and fluctuations in April and the summer period. (Graph 12)

Graph 12



For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1.

In Dorohusk/Jagodin Polish authorities can clear 300 trucks during one 12-hour working shift; the Ukrainian side is much less productive.

In addition, according to information received from the IRU Member in Ukraine, the difficulties and recommended improvements at Ukrainian borders are the following:

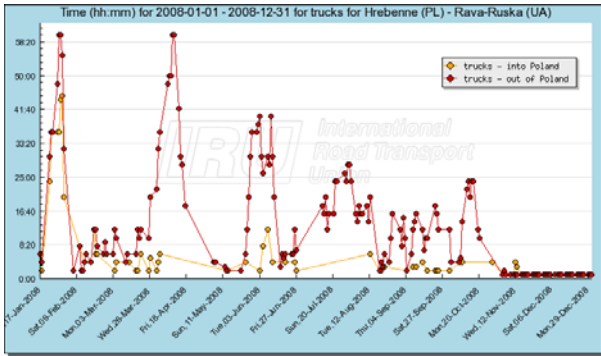
- Available border crossing throughput capacities are underutilised at certain posts on the Ukrainian side – a fully functioning border post should be ensured
- Lack of joint border controls with neighbouring countries – joint controls must be introduced
- 9 (nine) different control services involved in checking vehicles and cargo on the Ukrainian side – the number of controlling services should be significantly reduced
- Full or quasi full customs and other controls conducted by UA customs officers at borders despite an earlier UA Government Resolution (No. 269 dated 13 April 2005) requiring only preliminary document control at borders and full controls at customs points within the country
- Separation of traffic by types of cargo by the RF customs authorities at the UA-RF, and by the UA customs authorities at the UA-PL borders, causing significant detours for vehicles – review and eliminate traffic separation by cargo types as much as possible; by contrast introduce separate traffic lanes for empty vehicles
- Access roads to borders are in a poor state, terminal and throughput capacities of control points are insufficient – roads and control points should be repaired / extended / newly built (e.g. between Rava-Ruska and Yagodin on the UA-PL border) in accordance with an UA Government Resolution (No. 831 dates 13 January 2007).

7.2 Hrebennie (PL) – Rava-Ruska (UA)

A similar trend as for Dorohusk (see above) with 2 days wait being reported at this border crossing in January and April, as well as 40 hours wait in the summer. There has been a relatively calm period since then with stagnating times often above 10 hours for traffic moving into Ukraine (Graph 13).

It is important to note that the reconstruction of this border crossing point had recently taken place and the new crossing facilities were opened on 21 October 2008. Reconstruction was financed by the *European Union's TACIS* programme. The through-put capacity has doubled, which means that the daily transit of 120 trucks has increased to 250. This is considered to be important for the bilateral Polish / Ukrainian traffic, as well as the general EU trade with its eastern neighbours, due to the location of Hrebennie - Rava-Ruska on a road leading from the major industrial town Lublin in Poland to the important city L'viv in the Ukraine.

Graph 13

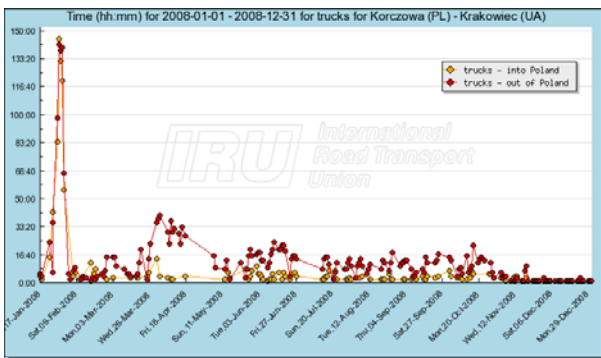


For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1 and 7.1.

7.3 Korczowa (PL) – Krakowiec (UA)

Almost 150 hours (!!) were faced in January in both traffic directions. Since then, times have become much more acceptable with the exception of April with times exceeding 30 hours. (Graph 14)

Graph 14

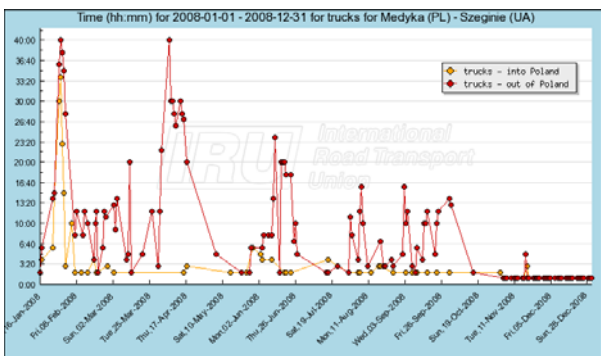


For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1 and 7.1.

7.4 Medyka (PL) – Szeginie (UA)

Fluctuating waiting times of up to 40 hours were experienced on the European highway E40 between Krakow (PL) and L'viv (UA) for traffic into Ukraine in January and April. Since then the trend has been gradually decreasing. (Graph 15)

Graph 15



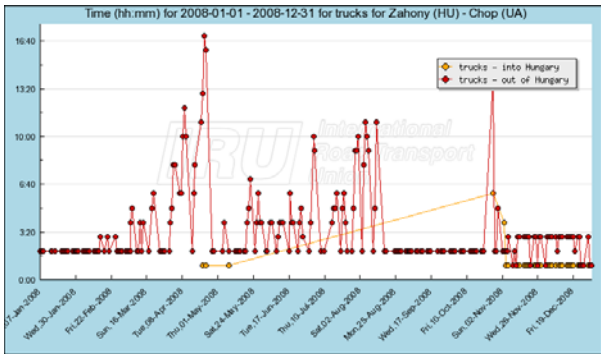
For further information on the causes of problems and the proposed improvement measures, see item 5.1 and 7.1.

8. Hungary – Ukraine

8.1 Zahony (H) – Chop (UA)

Apart from peaks of 16 hours in April, 10 hours waiting time has periodically been exceeded for traffic entering the Ukraine in 2008. (Graph 16)

Graph 16



Main reasons for waiting times:

Traffic has increased unexpectedly; neighbouring country's border police service procedures are too cumbersome, says the IRU Member in Hungary.

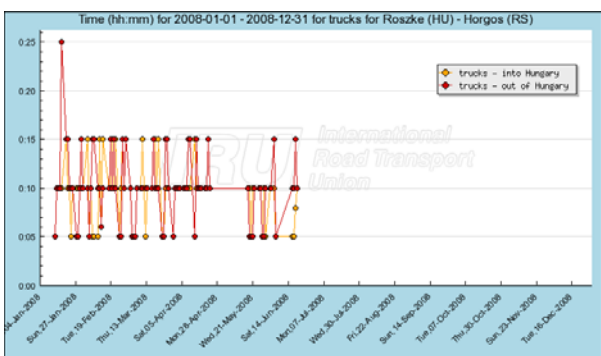
This border crossing is the most problematical one in Hungary. It is a serious matter that the Hungarian Customs do not allow access to genuine and accurate information on waiting times. Usually, 0-2 hours waiting time can be seen on its website (<http://www.vam.hu/viewBase.do?elementId=6720>), while Members of the Hungarian road transport association and their truck-drivers report on 20-36 hours. "To cross the Hungarian-Ukrainian border? It takes a day!" - say Hungarian drivers, adding that "the Ukrainian officers are very slow and that's intentional. Nobody knows why. Many kilometres of lines all the time, no water, no toilet, you have to crawl 20 hours without sleeping."

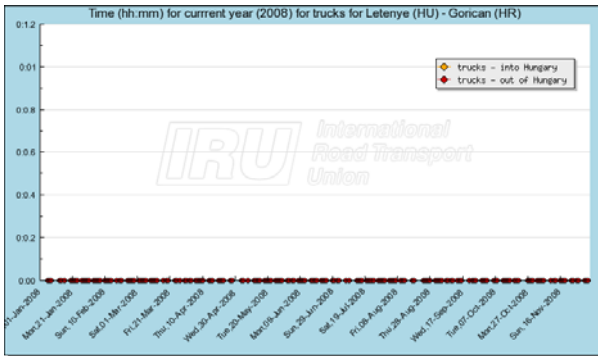
9. Hungary – Serbia; Hungary – Croatia

9.1 Roszke (H) – Horgos (SR); Letenye (H) – Gorican (HR)

These borders represent two positive examples. (Graph 17)

Graph 17





10. Romanian external borders

According to BWTO data, these borders seem to be calm with waiting times of less than an hour reported in 2008.

Main reasons for waiting times:

However, one of the Romanian IRU Members reports on waiting lines of 5-7 kilometres on certain days for traffic entering Hungary due to driving and rest time controls (EU Regulation 561/2006) conducted by the Hungarian authorities at the border crossing points.

Improvement Measures needed and Proposed EU-National Action:

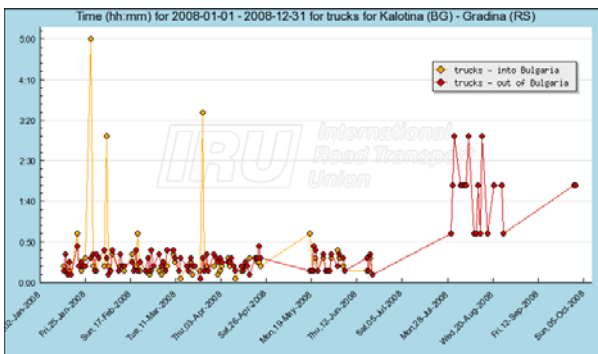
Driving and rest time controls should be eliminated at borders or at least based on risk management techniques, as requested by the IRU Member in Romania.

11. Bulgaria – Serbia

11.1 Kalotina (BG) – Gradina (SR)

No significant problems have been reported to the BWTO (Graph 18). See however comments under 12.1 below.

Graph 18

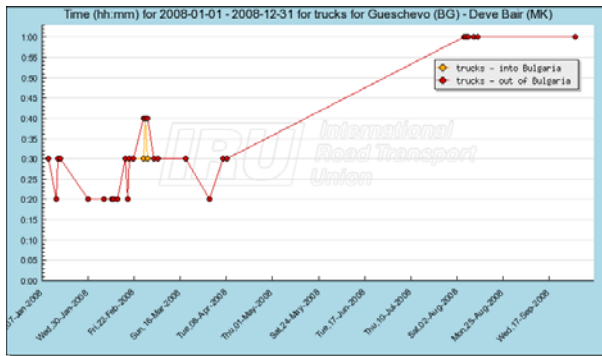


12. Bulgaria – FYROM Macedonia

12.1 Gueshevo (BG) – Deve Bair (MK)

Smooth traffic has been characteristic for this border crossing. (Graph 19)

Graph 19

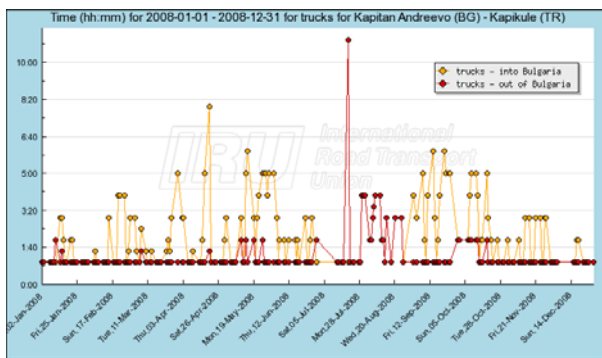


13. Bulgaria - Turkey

13.1 Kapitan Andreevo (BG) – Kapikule (T)

Reasonable waiting times have been reached and reported to BWTO after turbulent times in earlier years. Times however increased above 10 hours in July. (Graph 20)

Graph 20



Main reasons for waiting times:

Higher waiting times are perceived by the IRU Member in Bulgaria, who says that the most problematic Bulgarian border crossing points are Kapitan Andreevo – Kapikule (with Turkey) and Kalotina – Gradina (with Serbia). Turkish traffic to Europe starts growing on Thursday of each week. From Thursday to Saturday, waiting times at Kapitan Andreevo, and subsequently at Kalotina are increasing to 48 to 56 hours on a few critical days, while the usual time for crossing lies between 2 and 6 hours.

The major problems at these two border crossing points have so far been related to the lack of appropriate infrastructure, i.e. the insufficient number of lanes for processing the necessary documents, narrow access roads, the insufficient number of safe parking areas with appropriate sanitary and communication facilities for ensuring minimum comfort for the drivers and, last but not least, the slow procedures applied by border control officers.

An IRU Member Association in Turkey has informed the IRU of some recent major changes to the Kapitan Andreevo – Kapikule border crossing point. TOBB has been closely involved in the modernisation of the customs zone at this border, along with PPP (Public Private Partnership). The project began in early 2007 and will be completed in January 2009. The infrastructure at this border point has been updated with the specific aim of reducing waiting times. There has also been the construction of a new, high-capacity parking area in Kapikule, which will provide essential services for drivers and their trucks.

According to the IRU Member Association in Turkey:

- On both sides of the border customs authorities have implemented certain actions which have occasionally caused an increase in border waiting times, while an inadequate number of staff in the customs office exacerbates the situation

- A serious problem is corruption at the border, where Turkish drivers are often the victims
- From time to time, Turkish vehicles are considered as “non-conforming to required technical standards” despite being in conformity with internationally recognized standards
- A common problem for all border crossing points between the EU and Turkey is that long waiting times exhaust the already scarce driving time; waiting time is counted as “driving time” (in line with the AETR rules); an appropriate amendment of AETR and EU rules is necessary to ensure “waiting times” are not counted as “working time”

Improvement Measures needed and proposed EU/National Action:

Proposed improvement measures include:

- Enlarge and modernise border crossing points by building additional lanes and better access roads; use World Bank credit and the national budget for this purpose – work is well underway on the modernisation project in Kapikule as mentioned above
- Build parking areas with a capacity corresponding to the increasing number of trucks; equip these according to the current standards for security, communications tools and comfort – we can see an example of improvement measures coming into force with the new construction of a high-capacity customs zone in Kapikule
- Improve the organisation of control agencies through staff training and decrease the number of border control bodies by ceding the necessary authority to a minimum number of agencies
- Improve the communication and processing formalities with neighbouring control authorities

How can the European Commission particularly contribute to reducing waiting times?

The insufficient number of safe parking areas is a very serious problem especially after the implementation of the new rules on the compulsory rest and driving times of the drivers. It will become even more serious when the Bulgarian Parliament imposes a driving ban on heavy vehicles during weekends and official holidays. The following measures are therefore proposed:

- Expand the EU project for building safe parking areas at the external EU borders to include other EU external borders, other than just the borders between the EU and Russia – again, as mentioned above, we can see an example of improvement measures coming into force with the new construction of a high-capacity customs zone in Kapikule
- Foresee new similar parking area development projects and programs to be implemented along major inland corridors

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CALL FOR RESUMPTION OF THE DOHA ROUND TRADE FACILITATION NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

The IRU has relentlessly urged governments to resume WTO negotiations on trade facilitation.

This document contains a short list of major existing barriers to the further development of international road haulage, as well as a brief outline of the relevant international legal framework.

Introduction

In Europe, international road haulage is governed by a vast number of international conventions usually agreed under the aegis of UNECE. We rightfully consider any practice which departs from these conventions as a breach of the legal framework.

The framework governing road transport in the rest of the world is far less comprehensive. This is why, although some non-European countries may accept a “European” legal solution (such as e.g. a number of CIS countries), they should not be criticised if they decline to do so or choose to act otherwise.

As for international road transport, the GATT and GATS are the only really global legal acts common to Europe and the rest of the world. The legal framework resulting from these agreements, although of consequence, remains relatively modest.

In any case, for a sector providing services such as international road transport, whose very mission is to support trade, it is essential that both the GATT – freedom of trade in goods – and GATS – freedom of trade in services – be applied.

It may be difficult to find legal grounds to support some motions in this document. It is often impossible to assert that non-compliance with them amounts to a breach of *WTO agreements*. Rather, non-compliance may go against other conventions or simply constitute bad practice contrary to common sense.

During the WTO negotiations on trade facilitation, which have been suspended since July 2006, several countries suggested extending the obligations arising from WTO agreements. Some problems raised in this document as barriers still impeding the development of international road transport cannot be referred to a specific provision of the present GATT or GATS and rather echo new ideas put forward by several WTO Members to widen the scope of the GATT.

Existing barriers

- **Long waiting times at the borders** for trucks:
 - *Administrative delays and restrictions* (in breach of GATT Article V § 3)
 - *Burden of national documentation requirements* (which may be contrary to GATT Article V § 4 unless the documentation requirements are “reasonable”, as well as to GATT Article VIII, § 1 c/. However, one still has to reach a consensus as to the meaning of “reasonable”).
 - *Non application of EDI and use of paper-based documents*, which often do not comply with the UN Layout Key. (Although this does not go against any international convention, this measure – advocated by several governments in their new proposals to WTO – makes eminent sense.)
 - *Discrepancies between the opening times* of the sanitary, phytosanitary, veterinary and other services and those of Customs (neither GATT nor GATS require this. However, this measure – advocated by several governments in the framework of the suspended negotiations – makes sense and results from the Kyoto Customs Convention and the Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Controls of Goods (UNECE, 1982), although a vast majority of WTO Members have not yet acceded to the latter.)
 - *Understaffing, human factors* (this may amount to not directly complying with the commitments laid down by WTO and other agreements where understaffing and human factors – in particular through lack of or inadequate training – does not make it possible to meet the requirements of international legal instruments.)
 - *Lack of appropriate infrastructure*, lack of facilities at terminals, no specific lanes dedicated to the transport of dangerous goods (Common sense requires that controls be separate for goods which, by their very nature, call for specific checks – be they either faster or lengthier than usual. Minimum infrastructure requirements have been identified in Annex 8 of the Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Controls of Goods (UNECE, 1982). However, this does not directly result either from GATT, or from GATS.)
 - *Breach or non application of international agreements and conventions* in relation to border crossing (non application may be due to the fact that a given State is outside the scope of legal instruments facilitating border-crossing. In that case, there is no breach of said instrument. However, if a State has ratified a convention – e.g. on the harmonisation of frontier controls – and does not comply with it, this amounts to a breach of the said convention. Nevertheless, such a breach cannot be reprobated in the framework of the GATT or GATS, but only in the framework of those instruments violated by the States having ratified them).
- **Transport quotas and licences** for bilateral and transit transport operations, which are usual practice or even the rule for a majority of bilateral agreements between governments on international road haulage (leading to an infringement of GATT Article V, § 2), impose restrictions on the performance of international services and, indirectly, restrict the flow of international trade (infringement of GATS Article I, § 1 and Article XVI, § 2);
- **Non-compliance with most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment** (infringement of GATT Article V, § 5 and of GATS Article II) in bilateral arrangements based on reciprocity, often leading to *discrimination* between the various national flags and means of transport (infringement of GATT Article V, § 2);
- **Requirements for transshipment** from the trucks of certain countries to those of other countries in bilateral or transit transport (this goes against GATT Article V and GATS Article

I which are based on the right of Member States' means of transport to enter the territory of another Member State in transit or to deliver or pick up goods for transport.)

- **Mandatory convoys** for foreign trucks traversing or entering certain States (This practice is not prohibited by GATT and GATS. However, the TIR Convention only authorises mandatory convoys in certain very specific cases. One cannot blame 2/3 of WTO Member States, not parties to the TIR Convention, for escorting trucks; however, one may request them to forego this practice).
- **Mandatory use of certain commercial services** such as those of cross-border forwarding agents. (This mandatory use of the services of customs brokers may result from complex documentation drawn up in a national language incomprehensible to foreign carriers, which leads to an increase in their transport costs and penalises them in relation to local operators. (In the latter case, these measures then become incompatible with GATT Article VII, § 1 c/ and GATS Article I.)
- **Problems in obtaining visas for professional drivers**, where no special treatment exists for the category of drivers (which would cover multiple-entry and long-term visas, reasonable documentation for visa applications, reasonable fees, simplified procedures e.g. through national transport associations, etc.); professional drivers are often treated worse than other professionals (seamen) or tourists travelling for leisure. (The problem of driver visas is settled only indirectly by GATS Article XXVIII and the Annex on movement of natural persons supplying services under the Agreement as well as in very general terms by Annex 8 of the Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Controls of Goods (UNECE, 1982). Any Member is entitled to regulate the entry or temporary stay of natural persons provided that such measures do not nullify or impair the benefits accruing to other Members under the terms of a specific commitment made by the latter. Further, one may consider that differentiating between seamen and drivers leads to a discrimination between transport modes, which is prohibited by GATT Article V, § 2).
- **Transit or quasi transit fees** still in force in certain States under the pretext of environmental protection (*restriction in disguise*) although the rates have no relation to the real costs of road wear or environmental protection. The real objective is to protect national means of transport or to fulfil tax purposes (which is contrary to GATT Article V, §§ 3 and 4). The same may apply to the latest wave of new road user charging systems, the rationale of which to calculate rates and taxes is often uncontrollable. Such systems are introduced without consulting professional organisations of carriers abroad. (This lack of consultation cannot be considered as breaching a commitment under the GATT or GATS. However, several governments have suggested such a procedure as part of their proposals during the last round of WTO negotiations).
- **Introduction of new measures to improve security**: although these are generally necessary, there is a risk of their turning into a considerable barrier (*restriction in disguise*) to international road transport (and trade) unless they afford real benefits to the certified and approved transport operators and are implemented together with modern tools (e.g. joint and coordinated controls at the borders, single window, pre-notification systems to customs that are actually operational, etc.). (Only if these “new measures” proved “unreasonable” or led to “discrimination” between persons and transport modes could one invoke a breach of the GATT or GATS).
- **Introduction of new governmental measures without prior notice or with too short a notice**, sometimes only in the national language; operators are taken by surprise and drivers are only informed of sudden changes when on their way to their destination. (One may reproach non-compliance with GATT Article X and GATS Article III since measures relating to or affecting transport require prior publication).
- **Non-accession to international conventions facilitating transport or – if acceded to – lack of harmonisation in applying such conventions** relating to various aspects of international transport such as national highway codes, road signs and signals, customs and trade regulations, technical standards and/or vehicle approval certificates, driving

licences, insurance required, enforcement of the law and sanctions, etc. (Non-accession to a convention does not constitute any breach of the GATT or GATS. Similarly, neither does the application of customs or trade regulations which are incompatible with conventions such as the TIR or CMR or those on road traffic, constitute a breach of the GATT or GATS, but only a breach of the above-mentioned conventions, provided that the country in question has acceded to them).

- **Establishment of regional transport and/or transit agreements** between Member States by neglecting, or even overriding existing (UN) multilateral arrangements, which also leads to discrimination against carriers from countries not included in such regional agreements. (If such is the case, this is a breach of GATT Article V. However, one then has to solve a conflict between this article and GATS Article I, § 3 since it allows, subject to certain conditions, measures incompatible with the GATS and GATT).
- **Deadlines too short to appeal** against sanctions imposed by administrative or criminal law on international carriers/drivers en route, which *de facto* deprive foreign carriers wishing to pursue the transport operation to meet contractual deadlines of means to appeal against unfair decisions. (Here again, there is no violation of the GATT or GATS. Nor is there even any formal discrimination against foreigners in relation to national carriers since the rules are identical for both. In this case, foreigners are however at a disadvantage since, from a practical point of view, the fact that they are only briefly staying in the country where the infringement was established may make it difficult for them to appeal in a timely fashion.)

* * * * *

IRU BORDER WAITING TIMES OBSERVATORY (BWTO) AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANNEX 8 OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE HARMONISATION OF FRONTIER CONTROLS OF GOODS (1982)

Border waiting times should be reduced. The IRU BWTO is to contribute to this objective together with the implementation of modern border control technologies as foreseen by international conventions.

I. IRU BORDER WAITING TIMES OBSERVATORY

1. Background: Economic and Social Importance of Border Waiting Times

In an ideally working market environment the road transport company can pass on additional operational expenses due to waiting times at borders. We are however not living in an ideal world and even if losses are paid by another economic actor (and at the end of the day by the consumer), the pure loss at macro-economic level is undeniable. This is why the IRU has always emphasised that any burden on road transport is an even bigger burden for the whole economy.

The Hague Study¹ has demonstrated that in five countries analysed (UK, F, I, CZ and PL), barriers to road transport, including border waiting times, cost USD 8 billion annually in direct expenses.

An internal analysis conducted by the IRU in 2006 established that international road freight traffic under TIR carnets had suffered a direct loss of USD 3.5 billion if an average of one hour's waiting time is considered for each border crossing operation during the period of 1998-2005.

The joint IRU-ECMT (ITF) survey on attacks on drivers in international traffic², the risk of which increases in parallel with the duration of any immobilisation of trucks, such as at state borders often lacking appropriately secured parking facilities, has proven that on average 1 in 6 internationally employed drivers is subject to attacks involving theft of cargo / vehicle. The direct expenses related to such incidents reached Euro 7.1 billion in the whole of Europe during the investigated period of 2000-2005.

Thus direct losses only are measurable in billions. In addition, lost business opportunities due to idling at borders significantly increase these amounts and their consideration would practically double direct losses even according to conservative estimates.

A recent ILO (International Labour Office) report³ has identified a number of further negative impacts of border crossing difficulties including on the professional and private lives of the drivers involved as well as on border control staff and even the population living in the neighbourhood of over-congested border crossing points in a number of countries.

2. IRU Border Waiting Times Observatory (BWTO): Objectives and functioning

The IRU, supported by some of its Member Associations, has operated a unique international BWTO on its website for the last ten years in order to contribute to the reduction of the great losses described above. The purpose of developing and implementing such a system, now in its third updated version⁴, has been twofold:

- provide Associations and in particular their member operators with useful information for daily planning and conducting of transport operations, and

¹ Economic Costs of Barriers to Road Transport, Hague Consulting Group, 1998

² Attacks on Drivers of International Heavy Goods Vehicles, Survey Results, IRU, 2008

³ Labour and social issues arising from problems of cross-border mobility of international drivers in the road transport sector, ILO, 2006

⁴ See www.iru.org/index/bwt-app

- support IRU / Association lobbyists to address national Governments and international institutions as well as other decision developers and makers, in the interest of dismantling barriers represented by inefficient border crossing points

In practical terms, BWTO users can visualise daily data as well as select any period of observation as desired, they can choose traffic modes (buses and trucks), define the direction of traffic of their interest as well as produce highly useful graphs and statistics per selected criteria. Textual information on reasons for long waiting times can also be entered and consulted.

Everything depends, however, on availability of data.

Direct data input into the IRU website application is extremely simple and takes only a few minutes a day. For the time being, data supply is ensured on a regular (almost daily) basis by appointed competent staff members of Associations of countries situated mainly and almost exclusively at the outer borders of the European Union. Associations actively involved, in the order of data supply frequency, are: ASMAP, RF (automatic data transmission from the Association's website); AEBTRI, BG; BAMAP, BY; CSS-ATT, SR; ZMPD, PL; MKFE, H; LINAVA, LT; UNTRR, RO; ERAA; EST; UND, T; AMERIT (Macedonia, FYROM), CESMAD Slovakia, SK and LA, LV.

Finding correct and reliable national data source regarding border waiting times is not easy. Governments and Associations should work together closely to feed the BWTO with regular data input.

The IRU BWTO system is so flexible that any border crossing point newly proposed by data suppliers cooperating with or joining the system in the future can be integrated at short notice and reporting can start without any major delays⁵.

It is of particular concern that while the IRU is devoting more and more attention to problems of the industry in Eastern and South-East Europe as well as China and South-East Asia, the great majority of countries from these regions have not joined this IRU border data reporting system. How can road freight (and coach) transport first and foremost of regional interest between countries all along the Silk Road, including the isolated land-locked countries, be developed, if local border crossing problems are "kept secret" and non-transparent?

3. Results: Facts and Figures

Facts and figures at observed borders speak for themselves. Data and graphs are available on www.iru.org/index/bwt-app.

The most shocking waiting times have been observed mainly at the Northern EU external border sections, which the IRU also reported to the EU Transport Commissioner and the Directorate General Transport of the European Commission (EC) at the end of 2007. It is noteworthy that the European Commission has just published a tender with a budget of 3,500,000 Euro, to support the construction of *quality and secure parking areas at three border crossing points between the EU and Russia* (Vaalimaa/Finland, Narva/Estonia, Terehova/Latvia). This initiative may help to improve the situation of truck drivers and their vehicles at the said border crossings in line with former and ongoing projects of the Commission on secure and quality parking sites. In the justification of the EC project, IRU and trade union political initiatives as well as the results of the joint IRU-ECMT survey on attacks on drivers are highlighted. It should however be kept in mind that not even the best parking places contribute to diminishing border waiting times.

II. NEW ANNEX 8 TO THE HARMONISATION CONVENTION

1. Background

The International Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Controls of Goods sets the necessary legal environment for improving border crossing conditions in its almost 50 Contracting Parties. Its new Annex 8 entered into force on 20 May 2008. Before and after this date, the IRU

⁵ Another important feature is that data supply from any trusted sources other than Governments/Authorities or IRU Member Associations is also possible. Furthermore, the system allows an unlimited number of information updates at any time during the day.

Secretary General and the Secretariat have drawn attention to the importance of a rapid and appropriate application of this Annex's provisions in order to mitigate border crossing problems.

Furthermore, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Union of Road Transport Operators (BSEC URTA) and the IRU Liaison Committee to the CIS, covering some 20 countries of particular importance for border crossing matters, have recently adopted resolutions in the same sense.

2. Main focus

There has, however, been limited feedback on action undertaken by Associations towards their Governments which are the Contracting Parties of the said Convention. It seems that the benefits of Annex 8 on the facilitation of border crossing by road have by far not been exploited yet, although none of the Annex's provisions can be considered as insignificant, on the contrary, if properly implemented they can become real facilitation tools since this Annex encompasses the following issues:

- facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers (Article 2)
- operational measures to speed up border crossing procedures for goods, particularly for urgent consignments, such as live animals and perishable goods (Article 3)
- harmonised technical provisions relating to faster control of road vehicles (technical inspections) and equipment used for transport of goods under controlled temperatures (Article 4)
- standardised weighing operations and procedures to avoid, to the extent possible, repetitive weighing procedures at border crossings (Article 5)
- minimum infrastructure requirements for efficient border crossing points (Article 6)
- provisions on monitoring the appropriate implementation of Annex 8 in all contracting countries (Article 7)

Most of the above items require improvements in national procedural rules, while the most complex issue also covers the introduction of a full network of certified weigh bridges equipped with appropriate technical facilities and staffed by well-trained personnel. The implementation of this provision and that of Article 6 on minimum infrastructure requirements for border crossings would indeed necessitate special and well thought-over preparations by Governments.

In general, a high-level cooperation among Governments would be desirable since real improvements are achievable at least by bilateral efforts, which concern two sides of any border crossing, and even multilateral ones if trade and road transport facilitation of a whole region is targeted. It is an unfortunate source of risk that most of the Annex's provisions are vaguely drafted and contain more of a "wish list" than anything else. Therefore, if Associations are not attentive and persuasive enough, Governments may escape from the proper implementation of the new Annex 8. Thus, coalition building in the form of Private-Public Partnership between Associations and Governments is a must in order to prevent such a development.

Unique in the history of UNECE conventions is that Contracting Parties implementing Annex 8 have entrusted the UNECE Secretariat (Transport Division) with a monitoring exercise. Therefore, Associations should request their respective Governments to encourage such a monitoring activity, thus becoming the private industry representative in such an exercise at national level. Furthermore, Governments should initiate the convocation of the Convention's Administrative Committee at the next session of WP.30 (the UNECE Working Party on customs questions affecting transport).

III. ACTIONS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY MEMBERS, AUTHORITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

In order to ensure the best use of the IRU BWTO and the quick implementation of the new Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention, Governments and national Associations should therefore:

- (a) *encourage the use of the IRU Border Waiting Times Observatory, whereby the Governments and Associations*

- present to their member operators that they can increase operational efficiency by improved route planning duly considering up-to-date border waiting time information available in the BWTO; for this purpose, Associations create an appropriate link between their website and that of the IRU
 - use BWTO data and statistics in political and professional lobbying activities aimed at the betterment of border crossing conditions in their country
- (b) *join the BWTO as data supplier, whereby Governments and Associations*
- in south-eastern Europe and in Asia are in particular encouraged to join the system
 - identify reliable data sources concerning the real border waiting time situation at their borders
 - appoint a person in charge of delivering data to the BWTO
 - register with the IRU Secretariat General as a new or re-confirmed data supplier
 - start / continue with daily data supply upon appropriate information and training if necessary to be received from the IRU
- (c) *engage in a systematic implementation of Annex 8 of the International Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Controls of Goods, whereby they*
- build coalitions among authorities and users of border crossings (trade, motorists, etc.)
 - obtain the immediate publication of the Annex 8 in the National Official Journal
 - propose the elaboration and adoption of a national action plan to implement Annex 8 in Public-Private Partnership with the road transport industry including national border crossing monitoring activities
 - initiate information exchange with neighbouring countries and their Governments in order to jointly implement Annex 8 in as large geographic areas with improved border crossing conditions as possible
 - suggest the convocation of the Convention’s Administrative Committee at the next session of the UNECE Working Party on customs questions affecting transport (WP.30) in order to start the monitoring exercise by the UNECE, whereby available observation tools of the private industry should be put to use and supported, such as the IRU BWTO
 - support special private industry projects which serve as a test of the existing border crossing facilitation environment along a number of branches of the Silk Road, such as the IRU New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative (NELTI) in 2008 and the joint UNESCAP-IRU Truck Caravan in 2009.

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IRU RESOLUTION ON THE USE OF THE TIR CONVENTION TO IMPLEMENT WCO SAFE

*unanimously adopted by the IRU General Assembly in Istanbul on
15 May 2008*

IRU Resolution on the use of the TIR Convention to implement the requirements of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards including the AEO status

Whereas

- After 11 September 2001, security issues have become a top priority for all.
- To improve the security of the international supply chain of goods, the World Customs Organisation (WCO), under mandate of the G7, published, at the end of 2007, the WCO SAFE Framework which incorporated the technical guidance for the implementation of all AEO requirements to obtain the AEO status.
- All these new security requirements must be implemented, country by country, as from 1 January 2009.
- All IRU analyses, including the results of the Road Freight Transport Security Seminar held in Geneva on 17 September 2007, concluded very clearly that the TIR Convention is the best tool to fully implement, on the basis of Customs to Customs mutual recognition of the appropriate procedures and controls, all the security requirement standards set by the WCO SAFE Framework, including those for the implementation of the AEO status.
- A study* recently commissioned by the US Chamber of Commerce also came to the same conclusion that the TIR Convention, due to the fact that it is the only convention providing mutual recognition of all customs controls between all its 56 Contracting Parties, is the best multilateral legal instrument to implement all the security requirements of the WCO SAFE Framework, including those concerning the AEO status.

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<http://www.uschamber.com/NR/rdonlyres/efjsz3vcpcfsdqj46lllxxrgrss4rrf5c4mflxtevtzpvjhe4l6esvisabrcbh5twvcklk2cynwclbkvrey3qqxd/STUDY.PDF>

Therefore

The IRU and its Member Associations, recognising the paramount importance of effectively improving security, without penalising facilitation, of the international supply chain of goods globally:

- reiterate their full commitment to implement the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, to achieve this objective;
- insist that, in the interest of trade facilitation, it is essential to avoid the proliferation of restrictive regulations and uncoordinated national and regional security initiatives to implement the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, including the AEO status;

- call upon governments, competent authorities, and international institutions and organisations like the European Commission, the WCO, and the UNECE, as well as road transport's commercial partners, such as Chambers of Commerce, shippers and forwarders to:
 - Promote the use of the TIR Convention, as the best multilateral tool to fully implement the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, including the AEO status in an harmonised and effective manner, and
 - Promote the introduction in the TIR Convention and its annexes without delay the necessary minor adjustments to the TIR Convention to fully cover all the requirements of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, including those concerning AEO status.

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IRU TIR-EPD APPLICATION

(EPD = electronic pre-declaration)



IRU TIR-EPD APPLICATION




IRU TIR-EPD Application

As of 1 January 2009
TIR Electronic Pre-Declarations for the EU

As of 1 July 2009 or December 2010 (tbc)
Security Declarations for the EU

How will operators cope and comply with these new requirements?





IRU TIR-EPD Application

Allows TIR Holders to comply with the new EU requirements
FREE OF CHARGE

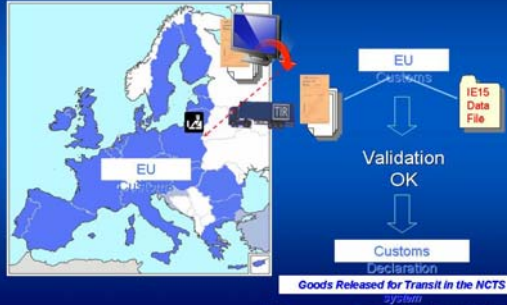

- Single Window
- Web-based Application

Already operational in 5 EU Member States:
Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia.


Thanks to Partnerships with National Associations and Customs


IRU TIR-EPD Application

IRU TIR-EPD Application Current Status



MANDATORY REQUIREMENT IN EU FROM 1 JANUARY 2009



IRU TIR-EPD Application

If the EU Commission does not support the implementation of the IRU TIR-EPD, all TIR Holders will have to :

- ➔ - Use and pay third parties at the borders
- ➔ - Provide confidential data to competitors
- ➔ - Absorb higher costs
- ➔ - Wait longer at the borders

But TIR Holders remain fully responsible to Customs Authorities and the Guarantee Chain for these third party declarations



IRU TIR-EPD Application: Next challenge

- The IRU and its Member Associations will achieve nothing without the support of the EU Commission.
- The IRU Team is ready to cope with this challenge

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IRU TIR-EPD Application: Next steps

- Discussions are underway with EU Customs and National Associations of **Bulgaria, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Spain** and, outside the EU, with **Belarus, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine**.

But support from the EU Commission
is slow in coming.

A lot remains to be done ...

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for a better future*



since 1948

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IRU POSITION ON THE NEED TO FACILITATE THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS TO PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS

IRU Position adopted by the IRU Liaison Committee to the CIS (IRU LC to the CIS) in Chisinau on 11 October 2007

I. BACKGROUND

Professional drivers of trucks and coaches play an indispensable role in the development of foreign trade and tourism in a globalised world. Therefore, to enter the territory of a foreign state where such visas are applicable, the necessity for professional drivers to receive visas by means of a facilitated procedure is undeniable.

By contrast, slow and bureaucratic visa issuance procedures regularly involving the physical presence of driver applicants, the submission of a high number of supporting documents, the restricted issuance of annual or longer multi-entry visas, limitations on the use of issued visas, etc., do not only cause economic losses at macro and company, including transport operators' levels and limit market access by transport operators contrary to the principles and legal provisions on free trade and personal mobility but also restrict the individual right to work.

II. IRU POSITION

Therefore, the IRU

- reiterates all previous positions adopted by the IRU over the last decade seeking facilitation measures from multilateral instances like the World Trade Organisation, the UNECE, International Transport Forum (ECMT), European Union institutions, International Labour Office, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc. according to which
 - the special status of professional drivers of coaches/buses and trucks should be recognised as one deserving facilitated visa treatment
 - the intermediary role of transport associations should be promoted as part of facilitation measures
 - long-term (minimum one year) multi-entry visas should be issued
 - the visa application procedures should be simplified (rapid delivery, reduced number of application documents, reasonable fees, limited need for application in person, etc.)
 - no limitations on the use of issued visas should be applied (as regards time or routes permitted)
- requests the European Commission (EU) and the EU Member States as well as other organisations and Governments not to turn visa issuance procedures into neo-protectionist and discriminatory barriers to transport operators
- welcomes the conclusion of bilateral agreements on the facilitation of visa issuance, including for professional drivers, between the European Union and non-EU States, such as the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova and States of the Western Balkans and in this context it requests
 - a rapid, smooth and harmonised implementation of these agreements by embassies and consulates of all the countries concerned

- IRU member associations to fulfil their intermediary role with due diligence thus helping professional drivers employed by their member operators to obtain their visas, maintaining the right of professional drivers to submit visa applications on an individual basis if they so wish.
 - requests the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council (EU) to introduce facilitation measures for professional drivers also in the new EU Visa Code under preparation
- invites other international organisations and Governments in other geographic regions and relations to seek bi- and multilateral solutions for improving the conditions of issuing visas to professional drivers. In particular, it encourages Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) region to sign, ratify and implement the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States as rapidly as possible.

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IRU NEW EURO-ASIAN LAND TRANSPORT INITIATIVE (NELTI)

The IRU (International Road Transport Union) initiated the programme of establishing regular commercial haulage between Europe and Asia along the ancient Silk Road over 10 years ago. Since that time IRU has convened several international conferences (Irkutsk, Tehran, Beijing, Warsaw) conducted several studies and organised three international caravans (Vladivostok – Lisbon, Beijing – Brussels, Black Sea Ring Highway Caravan). The abovementioned activities provided concrete evidence that commercial deliveries by road of certain types of manufactured goods from China to Europe (and further to US via Atlantic) could be started today without any additional investments in infrastructure.

NELTI Routes

The ancient Silk Road was never a single caravan route, but covered hundreds of miles in width extending for over six thousand miles. In a similar way at the initial stage of the project 3 – 5 non-connected truck routes embracing three main directions – Northern, Central and Southern – have been launched.

From vision to reality

NELTI is an essential next step in the IRU strategy of interconnecting businesses in Asia and Europe and along the Eurasian Landmass, as well as increasing public and business awareness of the huge opportunities created by this land bridge. Supported by significant international organisations and national Governments, several independent transport operators will start commercial deliveries of industrial and consumer goods from Central and Western China to Europe and Turkey in September 2008 through NELTI.

16 September 2008 - the NELTI Project started from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, within the framework of an international conference on Euro-Asian road transport communications.

September 2008-February 2009 - commercial freight haulage operations and monitoring of the NELTI routes. Activities of the national coordinating centres in the countries participating in the project.

March 2009 - summing up preliminary results at a conference in Warsaw.

February-May 2009 - summing up the monitoring results and preparation of a road map in collaboration with the NEA Transport Institute of the Netherlands.

11-12 June 2009 - presentation of the NELTI Project's results at the 5th IRU Euro-Asian Road Transport Conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

News from NELTI routers

As of 03 February 2009, 28 vehicles of various road transport companies were taking part in Europe-Asia carriages within the NELTI Project. At present, 14 of these are on the move, and the rest are awaiting upload. Over 60 round journeys had already been accomplished as of the first days of February 2009. Below information is presented on the current situation in freight haulage within NELTI with a breakdown by company.

Southern Route

Two road-trains of the Buned Company left Bulgaria with a freight of medicines, and are heading for Tashkent. Two vehicles with freights from Turkey bound for Uzbekistan are at present at the border of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan.

The Oshmezhtrans Company's two road-trains carrying freights of fruit left St. Petersburg for the Kyrgyz Republic (city of Osh) and Republic of Tajikistan (city of Kalininabad). Yet another vehicle is

preparing to start from St. Petersburg. And two more vehicles of the company are crossing the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan carrying freights from China (consumer goods) on their way from Urumchi to Moscow.

Four road-trains of the Turkish Karadeniz Company are now in Almaty awaiting upload to start on their way westward. Two vehicles are waiting for a ferry at Novorossiisk (on their way from Kazakhstan to Turkey), and another one is in Istanbul awaiting upload.

Central Route

The Buned Company, which previously was not engaged in the haulage along the Central Route, has now announced that it may launch transportation of technological equipment from the ports of Poti and Baku to Tashkent as deliveries for one of the local plants. The company replenished its fleet of motor transport with new vehicles produced in Europe that may be used to carry freights along the Central Route.

The Central Asia Company has contracts for freight haulage from Turkey. The vehicles are ready to leave for Turkey along either the Central or the Southern Route.

The BK-Intrans Company is preparing for haulage operations from Dushanbe to Baku. The vehicles are ready to start from Tashkent to Dushanbe to take on the cargo.

Northern Route

Two vehicles of the AtrimLogistic Company are in Belorussia, one of these carrying a freight of medicines to Moscow and the other bound for Almaty. One more vehicle was unloaded in Germany, and is waiting for a freight to carry it eastward. And the fourth vehicle is on its way from Tashkent to Moscow with a freight of textiles aboard and is now about to reach the capital of the Russian Federation.

Two road-trains of the Azatika Company are on their way from Bishkek to Germany, and yet another road-train is in Omsk, Siberia, waiting for upload.

Five road-trains of the Janstrong Company from the Republic of Belarus are still waiting for upload in Italy, the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany and Republic of Belarus.

Monitoring

Monitoring of the project has been conducted throughout the entire course of its implementation and with application of internationally accepted methodologies. The monitoring takes in the quality of roads and infrastructures, the time in waiting at border crossings, administrative barriers, etc. The drivers keep logbooks recording the situation en route. The monitoring findings will be analyzed and summed up by the NEA – Dutch Transport Research Institute.

Problems and Barriers Registered during the NELTI Project Implementation

Practically from the first days of the implementation of carriages within the NELTI project, the carriers came up against various barriers and encountered a number of problems.

The NELTI project is a continuation of the IRU's consistent policy aimed to remove barriers in the area of international road transport haulage in the CIS region. It is intended to serve, on the one hand, as a test to show in practice the worse of the trouble spots along each of the Eurasian road transport routes and, on the other, as an instrument to remove these trouble spots by way of implementation of a Road Map that should be drawn up in spring 2009 on the basis of the results of the project's implementation.

This is going to be NELTI's most important mission, that is, preparing the ground and eliminate the obstacles in the way of mass-scale freight haulage by road transport that should be launched between China and Europe already in the nearest future.

As had been expected, the most serious problems and barriers have from the very outset of the NELTI project been revealed at the state border crossings, and the main source of the problems is

partiality or overt corruption of customs services in letting vehicles pass through road transport checkpoints. Serious problems emerged on the way of carriers at the Russian-Latvian and Kyrgyz-Uzbek borders. But of special concern are the facts of violations at the border between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Republic of Uzbekistan.

Yet another set of problems concerns the issue of visas for professional drivers and also certain actions by border guard authorities and transport inspectorate.

All of these problems and barriers will be analyzed and summed up after the pilot stage of the NELTI project is finished in spring 2009.

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*Working together
for a better future*



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