



**REPUBLIC of TURKEY**  
**PRIME MINISTRY**  
**UNDERSECRETARIAT of CUSTOMS**

**BRIEF PAPER**

It is obvious that surmounting the constraints in relation to transit transportation requires international co-operation. International harmonized arrangements, common product of all countries, is essential for providing a non-stop transit flow. Essentially, rules, standards and documents effecting transit transportation should be set up with participation of as many countries as possible, since dissimilar national procedures or arrangements constitute an obstacle for transit flow. Therefore, it is deemed to be very important that activities on designing transit trade agreements are conducted under the auspices of the international organizations related with transit trade as UN, WCO and WTO. Acceding to the international conventions on transportation and Customs transit, drawn up within these organizations, should be the first step towards improving transit trade.

On the other hand, there are different leading problems in every region depending on heavy transit traffic, serious deficiency in infrastructure, situation of land locked countries and so forth. These problems specific to certain regions require to be dealt with in a special manner and make formation of regional transportation arrangements inevitable.

Turkey, a country on the transit flow between Asia and Europe, faces with a heavy transit load and has to take all measures in order to avoid from hindering international transportation and trade. Therefore, while improving its legal, technical and administrative infrastructure internally, Turkey takes every possible opportunity for international co-operation towards facilitating transit transportation.

Turkish Customs Administration completed its modernization project comprising computerization of all Customs offices and procedures in 2001. The objectives of the Project were ensuring better service to the trade community, uniform implementation of customs legislation, more effective tax collection and selective but more effective customs control. Besides, it has launched Security Systems for Customs Checkpoints (GUMSIS), including sub- systems as vehicle and container scanning and nuclear detecting etc., to prevent illegal goods, vehicle and human trafficking. Computer systems are used also for risk assessments via Data Bank of Smuggling that is connected to WCO's Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO), and Denunciation Program.

Turkey implements almost all of the international key transportation instruments. Transit transportation is carried out within the framework of international arrangements, but there is also a national transit system as an alternative. This structure enables non- stop transit across

Turkey. However, Turkey do not content with these arrangements for facilitating transportation in its region. Turkey is a founding member of many initiatives, as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), set up in the region connecting the continents of Asia and Europe, and a participant of the Transport Corridor Europe- Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) Program of the European Union. All these co-operative initiatives have made considerable contributions to development of transit transportation. Thus, they have provided sound basis for interaction between the public and private authorities of contracting countries, which allowed effective solution of the constraints faced during transit transportation in the region.

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Turkey has experienced important practices within the regional organizations and with its neighbors. A few examples stated hereinafter are deemed to be valuable means for getting rid of the problems that may be encountered by any country. We are of the view that exchange of experiences will enhance our struggle towards establishing a faster, safer and less costly international transportation.

**Cooperation on border crossing formalities**

Today, harmonization of regulations and their implementation are not adequate for facilitating transit transportation in parallel with the speed of international trade. Similar with the trade sector, public authorities have to utilize from the latest technological means in operation. Also, settlement of border crossing problems requires cooperation and effort of two sides of the border.

In this regard, Turkey has gone into co-operation with Bulgaria aiming at solving the problems at the Kapikule (Turkey) - Kapitan Andreevo (Bulgaria) border point. Kapikule is an important border point in Asia- Europe transit flow and has a heavy work load especially with regard to TIR vehicles. Although Turkey and Bulgaria are Contracting Parties to the key international tools on transportation, periodically there occurs kilometers of queue in front of borders. Thus, both countries have decided that border crossing at this point requires further facilitation and new arrangements.

Turkish and Bulgarian public authorities and representatives of transporters' associations have made several examinations and meetings at the two sides of the border in 2003 and 2004. In accordance with the conclusions of this study, it is decided to rearrange the area of the border offices similarly and even constructing a new road for TIR vehicles. In addition, two countries have decided to use Information Technology (IT) at this border by setting up an advanced information system. In the end of 2003, Turkish and Bulgarian IT experts met at the border offices and examined the technical infrastructure of both countries to make a feasibility study for establishing a computer system that will allow exchange of information. They have concluded to examine their national legal and administrative processes required to set up such a system, and surmount some technical problems with regard to the computer system, before holding the next session.

In such an advanced information system, when the formalities on a TIR Carnet is completed at one side of the border (i.e. Turkey), the information about the TIR Carnet, vehicle and driver will be sent to the other side (i.e. Bulgaria) via electronic means. Thus, the officer on

the other side will have required information on his computer before arrival of the TIR vehicle, and will make further checks and, if necessary, controls on the documents and vehicle. Considering that hundreds of TIR vehicles pass from this border on a daily basis, it is obvious that any time that may be saved at each vehicle will provide remarkable extra time to the officers.

The advanced information system and other precautions to be taken as a result of Turkish-Bulgarian co-operation are expected to accelerate the operation of border agents and moreover to end up the long queues at the borders.

### **Reducing border crossing delays via utilizing from information technology in transport/supply chain security:**

Facilitating transit transportation brings the risk of Customs frauds and illegal trafficking along with. This challenge urges the public authorities to take necessary measures in fight against crime. Furthermore, important developments occurred in recent years threatening worldwide security require improved cooperation among all countries in order to tackle with organized, cross-border, international crime. In accordance with these developments, Turkey has initiated to establish a data bank within the ECO<sup>1</sup>, which would provide exchange of information between ECO Customs administrations. ECO Council of Heads of Customs Administrations (CHCA) approved this proposal at its First Meeting on 27-28<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and decided to constitute an expert group to consider technical and legal details of establishment of this institution. The Expert Group Meeting almost completed its studies in 2004 and prepared a “Draft Agreement on the Establishment and Operation of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank” to be approved at the next meeting of the CHCA.

The Data Bank, namely the ECO Smuggling and Customs Offences Data Bank, envisages the integration and exchange, by means of the liaison offices and within a computer system, of the information on the goods, events, persons, means, smuggling methods and the trends regarding the smuggling and Customs offences that take place in the ECO region. The Center of the Data Bank shall be in Turkey and the computer system shall be operated by Turkish Customs Administration. The Data Bank shall provide the information necessitated by the Customs administrations for risk criteria and allow better struggling with the dishonest persons. Thus, while decreasing the risk of fraudulent in the ECO Region, the ECO countries will further facilitate transportation for honest transporters, and be able to prevent delays caused by Customs controls at the borders.

### **Cooperation between public and private sectors**

On the way towards a faster, simpler and more economic transportation, for transporters, who face with the problems personally, orienting the public sector is of utmost importance. Utilizing experience of transporters enables us to make solid policies. However, it is worth emphasizing that the exchange of information and cooperation with the private sector should be based on a permanent institutional structure. This institutionalization provides continuous exchange of views, and thus a control mechanism on the efficiency of the policies implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> ECO members are: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The institutional structure within the SECI<sup>2</sup> gives an influential mechanism to public authorities for cooperation with the private sector. The SECI is an initiative in which private sector is very effective. The significance of private sector is reflected especially via national PRO- Committees and SECIPRO (constituted of private sectors of SECI countries). In our national PRO- Committee, namely the SECI TurkPro, we hold monthly meetings with the participation of representatives from public and private organizations in charge of foreign trade and transportation. At the meetings, transporters submit the problems not only they encounter in the SECI Region but also problems that foreign transporters encounter in Turkey. All sides cooperate on the possible ways of solution for the problems and then the decisions taken here are reflected to SECI expert group meetings on different fields, such as road and railway transportation, for solution in the regional level via legal processes or SECI projects. Also, the TurkPro Committee allows a good base for informing private sector about the latest developments and occasions in foreign trade and rising trends with regard to transport arrangements.

Active participation of private sector in the SECI projects makes them more feasible and increase the level of success. We are of the view that the key point to the success of the SECI is the enhanced co-operation between public and private sectors.

### **Importance of training in improving transit trade**

Adequate training facilities should be provided for all parties concerned in transit transportation for exchange of information about latest developments, harmonization of regulations in different countries and uniform practice of international conventions. In this regard, arrangement of seminars by the international organizations is an important tool for national authorities to overview their implementation and interpretation of the conventions and to share best administrative practices. Moreover, each country should initiate to share its experiences with other countries, especially with the ones in the same region, which are possibly encountering same difficulties during the operations. Since it increases the quality of services generally, this activity has a win/win feature for all countries.

With this conscious, Turkish Customs Administration organizes training seminars and study visits for Customs officers within the Economic Co-operation Organization (ECO). The program of the seminars comprises training on Customs regulations (implementation of international conventions on Customs tariff, transit and value), Turkish Customs Automation System, regulations on fraudulent and drug trafficking, and visits to Turkish Customs offices. In 2004 (January- October) two seminars were arranged in Ankara/Turkey for Customs officers of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Tajikistan.

### **For Further Information:**

Asli GURATES

EU Expert

Unit of Transportation

Turkish Customs Administration

Tel : +90 312 3068286, ax : +90 312 3093737 gurates@gumruk.gov.tr

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<sup>2</sup> SECI members are: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro and Turkey.