

11. FERRY TERMINALS: BAKU and TURKMENBASHI

Geographic Focus:	Azerbaijan Republic and Turkmenistan
Project Budget :	EURO 1,550,000
Contractor :	Ramboll
Implementation timetable:	March 1996 through February 1998

Background

The majority of rail cargo traffic between the Caucasus region and Central Asia uses the ferry service between Baku (Azerbaijan) and Turkmenbashi (Turkmenistan). The alarming rise of the Caspian Sea level since 1977 creates major difficulties in operating the service. If persistent, the present rate of rise of the water level would cause both ferry terminals to stop activities within some 3 years. The ferry ramps are in any case nearing technical obsolescence.

Objectives

The initial objective of the project was to produce a feasibility study to determine potential traffic, identify technical solutions and to assess appropriate levels of investment. The EBRD has shown serious interest in following this project with investment and so it has been extended to provide feasibility study documentation matching the EBRD project approval cycle, and to cover also the general cargo and container handling facilities. The project has to produce the design and the international tender documents, for the reconstruction of the ferry terminals in Baku and Turkmenbashi.

Key Issues

The ports are key points of transit along the TRACECA route. The present level of service provided is low, and this is a principal disincentive to usage of the route.

Achievements

Traffic forecasts, capital cost estimates, financial and economic analysis have been carried out to determine the most viable scale of investment appropriate. Technical drawings and specifications and tender documents to the required standards of the EBRD have been produced.

New terminals are being designed to a specific set of standards which include; the ability for two ferry boats to be able to berth at the same time, to be able to accept the existing ferries as well as similar boats of the same capacity, to be designed to accept both rail wagons and road trucks.

Negotiations between the EBRD and the Government of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are making progress.

A small additional investigation and pre-feasibility are being carried out at the Port of Aktau to examine the possibility of reopening the ferry terminal there.

The project is being carried out in close co-ordination with the TRACECA Baku Maritime Training project, and with separate consultancy projects financed independently by the EBRD.

The urgent need for container handling facilities was revealed during the study. Therefore TA components necessary to launch investment project IP3 were provided within this project.