About the work done on digitalization within the TRACECA corridor

During the chairmanship of the Republic of Bulgaria in the Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) TRACECA, the Permanent Secretariat (PS) of the IGC TRACECA focused on the implementation of the Action Plan for 2022-2026 for the implementation of the Strategy and the Digital Concept of the International Transport Corridor TRACECA (Digital Concept) in two main areas: piloting electronic transport documents together with international organizations and preparing detailed recommendations for the development of the TRACECA information system in order to implement digitalization initiatives.

1. Piloting of electronic transport documents.

e-TIR: 7 TRACECA countries (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan) became the first to pilot e-TIR digital projects. Previously, it was proposed to perform pilot transportation along the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-Iran route using the offshore section, but due to the lack of a ferry service between Iran and Kazakhstan, this pilot project was not implemented. Therefore, together with the IRU, work will continue to implement pilot transportation along the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan route. If all Parties agree, this project will be implemented in 2023.

e-CMR: 9 out of 13 corridor countries (Bulgaria, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Türkiye, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan) have acceded to the Additional Protocol to the CMR.

In order to implement pilot transportation, in May 2022, the PS IGC TRACECA initiated the launch of a pilot project at one of the checkpoints located on the border between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The main goal is to test the existing prototypes of information systems for working with e-CMR in the TRACECA countries, since the systems used in the EU countries do not have the functional of work for customs authorities. So, in May-June 2022, two meetings of the Working Group were held, after which the information system provider refused to finalize the existing solution regarding the addition of functions for customs authorities.

In this regard, together with the IRU, the possibility of using e-TIR data when generating an electronic consignment note and transferring data between customs authorities is being explored. In parallel, the PS IGC TRACECA takes part in dedicated expert meetings organized within the framework of the UNECE. Work in this direction will continue.

CIM/SMGS: On 16 June 2022, together with the CIT (CIT), OSJD and UIC, a Joint Workshop on the Use of the CIM/SMGS Consignment Note on the TRACECA railway routes passing through the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye and Kazakhstan was held, on the basis of the previous work carried out by the above organizations with these countries. Taking into account the readiness of the main connecting countries of the region to apply the CIM/SMGS consignment note, on 18-19January 2023, the second Joint Workshop on the Use of the CIM/SMGS Electronic Consignment Note on TRACECA railway routes was held

with the participation of all interested countries. Work in this direction will be continued in order to pilot the electronic analogue of the consignment note.

The PS is also actively working with the UNECE and UN/CEFACT, which has developed a standard (Terms of Reference for Business Requirements), as well as support tools: data set, data structure and XSD schema for rail consignment notes, including the CIM/SMGS consignment note (together with standards for the SMGS consignment note and other modal documents)[1]. Within the framework of the above Workshop, it is planned to demonstrate the results of the work done in order to ensure compatibility between different formats, modes of transport and sectors.

GTrD: In 2022, 3 meetings of the Working Group on piloting the Global Transit Document (GTrD) were held with the participation of representatives of state bodies, customs departments of interested states-participants of the MLA - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

On 17 August 2022, in Turkmenistan, the inauguration of the GTrD Pilot Project took place, and from 7 October to 13 October, 2022, TradeLens Training was held.

On 18-19 October 2022, an international scientific and practical conference "Logistics and its advantages in the development of transport communications between Tajikistan and the states of the region" was held, within the framework of which the ceremony of launching GTrD pilot transportation was held. The first three shipments were successfully delivered in November 2022 from Tajikistan to Georgia. GTrD piloting work will be reviewed and presented to interested countries for consideration in 2023.

2. Preparation of detailed recommendations on the development of the TRACECA information system.

Throughout 2022, the PS also worked closely with an independent consultant on information technology to develop practical steps to implement the Digital Concept. Thus, as of today, draft Recommendations on the launch of the digital corridor and Technical recommendations (minimum technical requirements) of the digital corridor have been prepared, which require a detailed discussion and development of a common position of the MLA Parties on the following issues:

- harmonization of the overall functional architecture and technical infrastructure;

- adoption of minimum requirements for the information system;

- defining functionality and user interface for users;

- harmonization of methods of data transmission and their processing;

- development of a unified position regarding data storage (on a server or in the cloud) in terms of availability, safety and security;

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[1] https://unttc.org/documents/cimsmgs-consignment-note-standard-package

- adoption of a unified position regarding the definition of methods for the use of electronic signatures and their recognition, as well as methods for authorizing users;

- determination of the regulations that are necessary for the functioning of the digital corridor both at the international and national levels, and other aspects.

In this regard, guided by paragraph 9.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the IGC TRACECA and with a view to ensuring the necessary coordination in the implementation of the TRACECA digital corridor, the PS proposes to establish a Working Group on digitalization of the TRACECA corridor (WG) with the involvement of representatives of the competent authorities of the TRACECA countries, international organizations, representatives of possible private partners/investors in the implementation of the Concept and other interested parties. The results of the work done will be annually submitted for consideration by the Meetings of the IGC TRACECA.

The main task of the WG will be to review and finalize the draft Recommendations on the launch of the digital corridor and the Technical recommendations (minimum technical requirements) of the digital corridor, as well as to coordinate the cooperation of the MLA Parties with international organizations and digitalization partners.

At the initial stage, within the framework of this activity, it is planned to carry out the following work:

- preparation of a draft international agreement on digitalization within TRACECA, which will determine the volume, composition and methods of data transfer between countries;

- development of common approaches to the implementation of pilot projects aimed at testing digital analogues of transport documents, including work with international organizations and institutions;

- coordination at the national level in the preparation of terms of reference for the implementation of each component of the Digital Concept;

- development of proposals for the exchange of experience and harmonization of national digitalization projects, as well as approaches to integration, if necessary.

In 2022, there was also held a meeting with Enterprise Singapore and CrimsonLogic to find a modern solution to ensure the exchange of information between the state bodies of the MLA Parties. In addition, a list of potential partners that can be involved in the implementation of the provisions of the Digital Concept is being prepared. Proposals from potential partners will also be considered jointly at WG meetings.

In addition, in 2023 it is planned to hold a two-day conference on digitalization issues with the invitation of all interested participants from both MLA Parties and international organizations to raise awareness of international progress in the field of digitalization of international transport, as well as determine further steps for cooperation and project implementation.

In general, it is expected that the WG will allow coordinating the actions of the MLA Parties in order to implement practical steps for the digitalization of transport along the TRACECA corridor. Particular emphasis will be placed on the electronic exchange of information between the state bodies of the MLA Parties, since the introduction of electronic transport documents and the creation of an information platform are not possible without an appropriate data exchange.