Summary of key points

ITF virtual meeting on transport data and the covid-19 crisis

Agenda, 4 June 2020, 14.30-16.30 CEST

Welcome to the Webinar, housekeeping (Jari Kauppila, ITF)

Opening remarks

Young Tae Kim, ITF Secretary-General

Patricia Hu, Director US Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Country presentations

Canada

Denmark

Estonia

India

Slovenia

Switzerland

USA

Open discussion

Conclusions and next steps

Summary of Key Points

Background:

The lockdown of countries generated an unprecedented decline in transport activities and consequently an urgent need for transport data to set the required policy measures to face the Covid-19 crisis. At the same time, most established data collection networks became unavailable and could not provide the required information. Governments had to find new ways to gather the necessary transport data to fulfil their needs.

The aim of the meeting was to share current challenges countries are facing to fulfil decision makers' needs for transport statistics and exchange on new, innovative solutions. Participants were asked to share information on newly developed indicators, their collection methods, lessons learned during this crisis and also identify what measures could be sustained post pandemic.

Over 70 participants representing 27 ITF member countries, European Road Federation, European Union, International Road Federation, OECD, International Rail Union and UNECE joint the meeting to discuss common challenges and solutions.

Discussion:

- **Urgency of data:** Meeting highlighted the importance of good transport data for decision-making, all the more during the Covid-19 crisis, where the need for data evidence becomes critical to monitor the situation and design policy answers. In response to crisis, there is a need to provide more data and at much faster pace than before. Country presentations showed that the lockdown response to the covid-19 pandemic created a series of challenges that needed to be solved urgently.

- **Flash indicators:** All presentations showed creative solutions with multi-faceted responses that help monitor the crisis, either from demand or supply side. Restrictions put in place also resulted in difficulties to carry out surveys and use of other traditional data collection methods. New methods have been developed by several statistical offices and resulted in the production of flash indicators, and use of non-traditional, open source data (automatic traffic counts, customs data, tolls...).

- **Private data:** Countries have also looked for private sources to produce complementary indicators needed to monitor the Covid-19 impacts on the transport activity. In some cases, public-private partnerships have been created to analyse and use critical data (such as mobile phone data). Developing partnerships to access private data was highlighted as a promising way forward, but some concerns were also made, especially in relation to representativeness, comparability and sustainability of private data sources for statistical purposes.

- **Relevance and credibility:** In all cases, while there is much value in new data and indicators, balance needs to be drawn between relevance and credibility. Key issues / concerns related to "Experimental statistics" vs "traditional statistics" were:
    - Maintaining the stability of open source / private data also during a crisis to avoid disruptions.
    - Quality and representativeness of new data sources.
    - To what extent new approaches can replace old methods or are new indicators complementary to traditional statistics.
    - Comparability of new indicators across the countries as inevitably these have been developed using different methods in different countries.
    - Financial sustainability of maintaining both traditional and new indicators.

- **Prospective analysis:** Covid-19 crisis was seen as a catalyst to develop a more perspective approach on transport statistics. During the pandemic, public transport use dropped severely, new cycle lanes were designed and there was a boom of micro mobility. Statistics and modelling could move together to better understand future mobility patterns, for example those linked to "distancing" rules affecting public transport or air travel. Prospective analysis of the new mobility patterns would be a useful input for policymaking.

- **Institutional challenges:** Several statistical offices were not prepared to disruptive challenges and constraint environments such as those posed by the Covid-19 crisis. New approaches are needed for statistics to be able to answer quickly to new data needs using alternative approaches. In order to respond future challenges, institutional agility and adaptation to rapid changes is crucial. A new paradigm is emerging, which could be formulated as "*Let's get data out now. Let's refine them later on*" – while not risking the quality of data.

- **Next steps:** There was a call from the participants to continue this type of dialogue in order to benefit from experiences around the world, exchange views and to provide a better and coordinated response to current or future crisis. It was suggested that the ITF:
    - Continues providing a platform for the member countries to exchange on these critical issues through the ITF's annual statistical meeting.
    - Develop common approaches to some of the challenges through a series of more targeted on-line meetings related to Covid-19 crisis and data.
    - Provide a platform to discuss and develop joint approaches and methodologies in relation to new flash indicators in order to ensure comparability across the countries.

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