

## **1<sup>st</sup> Working Group Meeting Cluster: Customer Relations 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

This working group aimed to discuss:

- the current situation of public transport in general terms;
- marketing and customer relations in public transport; and
- problems and challenges related to the future development of public transport, including options for future action.

In general, it seems that marketing of public transport is a new concept in transition countries, although a number of different marketing and customer relation tools are currently used, and not just simple advertising. However, the differences between different countries, cities and operators are quite significant, especially when comparing capital cities versus smaller cities. Operators in major capital cities usually have marketing departments using a range tools, while in medium- and small-sized cities, they often lack any employees at all dedicated exclusively to marketing.

Issues discussed during the meeting included:

- A lack of consistent marketing planning;
- Differences in transport policy between cities and the countryside;
- Lobbying for public transport as an urgent need; and
- Financial shortages as a general problem.

Suggestions of to how to improve the state of public transport included:

- Changing citizens' perception of public transport;
- Improving understanding among public transport customers;
- Lobbying for public transport;
- Improving the image of public transport;
- Increasing the quality of public transport services to keep customers and attract new ones; and
- More careful handling of customer complaints.