



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 October 2019
English
Original: English, French and
Russian

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Sixty-third session

Geneva, 6–8 November 2019

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Current situation and trends in inland water transport:

Revision of the White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable

Inland Water Transport in Europe

General overview of the information included in the draft of the revised White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe

Note by the secretariat*

Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with cluster 5: Inland Waterway Transport, paragraph 5.1 of the programme of work 2018–2019 (ECE/TRANS/2018/21/Add.1) adopted by the Inland Transport Committee at its eightieth session (20–23 February 2018) (ECE/TRANS/274, para. 123).
2. At its fifty-fifth session, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) was informed about the ongoing revision of the White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe (the White Paper) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/110, paras. 77–78).
3. The annex to this document contains a brief overview of the information included in the revised White Paper. The Working Party on Inland Water Transport may wish to include this overview in the White Paper as the executive summary.¹

* The present document was submitted after the deadline because of the need to take into account consultations with member States.

¹ Details and clarifications on the consolidated version of the White Paper can be found in Informal document SC.3 No. 4 (2019).

Annex

Executive Summary of the White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe

The UNECE “White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe” is the third edition of a policy paper on the current situation, trends and challenges in Inland Water Transport (IWT) on European inland waterways of international importance in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).² This third edition follows from the International Conference on Inland Water Transport (18 and 19 April 2018, Wrocław, Poland) and particularly from the Ministerial declaration “Inland Navigation in a Global Setting”, which was supported by ITC resolution No. 265 “Facilitating the Development of Inland Water Transport” of 22 February 2019 of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC). The overall objective is to assess the current situation of IWT in Europe, review progress since 2011, identify current trends and challenges, and propose recommendations in key areas of pan-European cooperation to promote the development of the sector. Guidance was provided by the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) for the draft.

Inland waterways can provide a sustainable complement to the shipping of goods by road and rail. Transport by water is beneficial in terms of improving safety, reliability and reducing congestion, and it offers lower energy consumption and better environmental performance. The comparative advantages of IWT in transporting large quantities over longer distances include sustainability, and cost-efficiency in terms of overall transport costs, the energy consumption per ton-kilometre and a low rate of accidents. IWT remains a cost-effective and sustainable mode of transport and could improve the multinational trade-based economic area that is the ECE region.

In 2015, 6.7 % of total goods transport in the 27 European Union countries was performed on inland waterways. Road and rail transport carried 74.9 % and 18.4 % respectively. In the Russian Federation, IWT accounted for less than 2 % of total goods transport. The IWT share continued to vary significantly between and within countries, reflecting a strong influence of national and regional transport policies as well as economic and geographical factors, including navigation conditions. Road transport continued to dominate over rail and inland waterways. As compared to the preceding years (2007–2011), the share of IWT has been slightly declined in most of the countries and is subject to fluctuations. General trend of scaling up of vessel’s size over the last decade has brought to an increase of the total gross tonnage of the fleet navigating on the European inland waterways.

The UNECE White Paper describes the current status of the E Waterway Network in accordance with the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), the progress made and highlights the ongoing and planned major infrastructure projects. From 1998 to 2016, the total length of the E waterway network grew from 27,711 km to 29,238 km and the share of E waterways that comply with the AGN standards increased from 79 to 83 per cent. This is the result of coordinated activities of member States and ongoing work on major infrastructure projects, including the TEN-T Network which is overseen by the European Commission corridors. The increase in the use of inland waterways is also supported by the increasing number of Contracting Parties to AGN, which now stands at 19.

The UNECE White Paper highlights the evolution of the institutional and regulatory framework for inland navigation since 2011, recent programmes and activities of UNECE, the European Union, river commissions and the European Committee for drawing up common standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI). The overview of the existing inland navigation regimes shows a significant degree of harmonization through constant coordination and cooperation among the institutions involved. However, there is still a need for further development of the IWT regulatory framework and for synergy between the inland navigation institutions both at policy and expert levels.

² Previous editions were published in 1996 (TRANS/SC.3/138) and 2011 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189).

The ongoing work and priorities for the coming years at the international level focus on major challenges the European IWT sector: modernization and greening of the fleet, resilience to climate change, smart shipping and automated navigation, digitalization, the development of River Information Services (RIS) and other information technologies in the sector, the proper management and disposal of wastes, a growing shortage of available staff, the unification of education and training standards and a need to make the sector more attractive for young qualified personnel. Responses to these challenges are closely connected to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Wroclaw Ministerial declaration. Continued and strengthened international cooperation with other transport modes at the pan-European and global level is therefore important to secure a future transport sector that strongly contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The overview of UNECE activities aimed at the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, given in this White Paper, relates mainly to IWT, but should be considered in conjunction with other transport modes and, in the framework of UNECE, other relevant working parties under the ITC purview and the implementation of the ITC strategy to 2030. Therefore, the White Paper identifies seven priority areas to make IWT in the ECE region more sustainable and competitive, and comes up with policy recommendations for UNECE actions for each of them.

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 1: Increased coordination in the development of modern, sustainable and resilient E waterway network (continue promoting and facilitate accession to AGN; strengthen the monitoring mechanism and continue support of the ongoing infrastructure projects and initiatives; facilitate actions to ensure the resilience of the sector to climate changes).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 2: Renewed focus in building up a solid regulatory framework aimed at increasing the efficiency and safety of inland water transport (continue the promotion and monitoring of the implementation of international conventions relevant to inland navigation and UNECE resolutions; assess potential new legal instruments to further facilitate the growth and use of inland waterways, pleasure navigation and tourism).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 3: Identifying and assisting member States in applying measures to increase the modal share of IWT, and improve its integration in multimodal transport and the logistics chains through the promotion of multimodality (raise awareness of the competitive and complementary advantages of IWT; facilitate integration of inland water transport in multimodal transport and logistics chains and continue cooperation with other inland modes; promote international agreements relevant to combined transport).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 4: Encouraging the modernization and greening of the fleet and infrastructure to better tackle environmental challenges (exchange best practices, support programmes and pilot projects aimed at modernization and greening of the fleet, low and zero emission propulsion systems, the application of alternative fuels; develop European regulations on the management of IWT-related waste, continue to harmonize the technical prescriptions for inland vessels and river-sea vessels; support the initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 5: Promote the development and pan-European application of RIS and other information technologies (cooperate with other international institutions on the implementation of RIS and other information technologies; regularly update UNECE resolutions on RIS; encourage other uses of IT to facilitate IWT operations and inspections of inland vessels and elaborate and promote the harmonized rules and criteria in this area).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 6: Promote the development of automation, digitalization and other innovations in the IWT sector (promote the development of automation in inland navigation; encourage and support the development of a harmonized international legal framework for smart shipping; support the developments in the digitalization of transport documents and operations).

UNECE Policy Recommendation No. 7: Address labour market challenges at the pan-European level, make the sector more attractive and increase the mobility of workers (contribute to the ongoing work of the European Union, CESNI and River Commissions to address labour market challenges; continue harmonizing the approaches for issuing and the recognition certificates for boatmasters and crew members, training and education principles at a pan-European level; encourage activities aimed at ensuring the equal rights and opportunities for women in inland navigation, make the sector attractive for younger workers; support the development of modern educational and training programmes).
