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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**WHITE PAPER ON EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE INLAND WATER  
TRANSPORT IN EUROPE**

Draft White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe

Note by the secretariat

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In 1996, the Principal Working Party on Inland Water Transport of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) published a “*White Paper on trends in and development of inland navigation and its infrastructure*”, which presented a bench-marking analysis of the situation of inland navigation in Europe. The paper examined performance of inland water transport (IWT) in individual countries and inland navigation fleets, regimes of navigation on European inland waterways and development of the network of European inland waterways.

2. In 2006 at the third Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport in Bucharest, Transport Ministers of the UNECE countries declared that regular publication of the White Paper, to be prepared in close cooperation with the European Commission, River Commissions and other interested parties, would contribute to overcoming the fragmentation of the IWT market in Europe and establishing the principle of free navigation on inland waterways at the pan-European level. The publication of a second White Paper was included in an action plan for

the implementation of the decisions of the conference and endorsed at the sixty-ninth session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in February 2007 (Resolution No. 258 entitled “Supporting Further Development of Inland Water Transport”).

3. The present document contains an overview of the content of the draft White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe, as prepared by the secretariat based on the decisions of the fifty-second session of the Working Party on Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/181, para. 53). The full paper will be published for the next session of the Inland Transport Committee on 23-25 February 2010.

## **II. UNECE WHITE PAPER ON EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE INLAND WATER TRANSPORT IN EUROPE**

4. The UNECE White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe comprises four chapters, namely:

- A. Present situation of inland water transport in the UNECE region;
- B. Institutional framework of inland navigation;
- C. European Regulatory architecture for inland navigation;
- D. A Pan-European vision for efficient and sustainable inland water transport.

5. The following paragraphs describe the scope and the draft content of each of the chapters.

### **A. Present situation of inland water transport in the UNECE region**

6. Chapter A presents the current situation of inland water transport in the UNECE region. The major focus is on the inland waterways of international importance, as described in the 1996 European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (the AGN agreement), as well as major Eastern European and Central Asian river basins.

7. The systemic analysis is conducted over radically different time scales, given the existence of a wide gap between the scale of planning the IWT infrastructure and the scale on which investment decisions are taken by the carriers, or commercial decisions taken by shippers. The levels of analysis include:

- (a) Infrastructure planning and development, especially where new connecting canals are needed, is on a time scale which can easily span half a century or more (Main-Danube Canal, E80 (1926-1992), Seine-Nord Europe waterway, E05 (1964-2014)). At the same time, given the increasing concern with climate change and carbon emissions and the reinforced interest in IWT as the most sustainable transport mode for freight, the lead times may in the future become shorter than the project times of the past 50 years.
- (b) Infrastructure maintenance and upgrading, where project lead times, although still long compared to those of other transport modes, are significantly shorter, and some interaction is possible between government departments or waterway authorities and the carriers.
- (c) The third level of analysis is that of the carrying fleet, where investment decisions clearly relate to the network as it is today, accepting the constraints of non-integration. At this level the effective distribution of the fleets of self-propelled

barques and push-tows or conventional tows, including river-sea vessels, is examined, with the goal to ascertain the relative importance of “inter-basin” flows, i.e. over long distances, beyond the range associated with transport from the seaports to their “natural” hinterlands.

- (d) The fourth and final level of analysis is that of the market or transport demand and supply. This looks at the reality of carrying capacity at the network level (broken down into national fleets according to available statistics), and how this is evolving in response to variation in demand.

8. These different levels of analysis are applied to the logical IWT networks and sub-networks, as penetration of IWT throughout the European waterway network is the *raison d'être* of the AGN agreement. The description of the network and sub-network is preceded by an overview of the intrinsic benefits of IWT, analyzing the current awareness of such IWT advantages. They include: environmental aspects, links with maritime transport, competitive position vis-à-vis road and rail transport, integration into intermodal logistic chains, role in port hinterland transport (reliability, flexibility, safety, etc.) and role in container and road vehicle transport.

9. The logical networks and sub-networks of European inland waterways, examined in the paper, include:

- (a) The main interconnected network (routes E10 - E80 - E70 - E20 - E30);
- (b) The Eastern interconnected network (routes E50 - E60 and southern part of E40);
- (c) The northern part of E40 (plus the missing link to connect with E40 south);
- (d) The strategic bottleneck on E20 and the missing links between E20/E30 and E80;
- (e) The southern part of E10 in France (Rhône-Saône);
- (f) The western part of E80 in France;
- (g) The maritime routes and connected inland waterways.

10. The chapter concludes by highlighting the traffic and IWT performance compared to 1994/95, as well as major policy trends and challenges ahead to be addressed by the industry, governments and international organizations with respect to infrastructure, inland fleets, market requirements and labour market.

## **B. Institutional framework of inland navigation**

11. Chapter B presents a brief overview of the institutional landscape of inland navigation in the UNECE region, composed of a variety of regional and international bodies, such as River Commissions, European Union bodies and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The descriptions highlight the commonalities and differences in the various mandates and regional scopes, as well as in the organizations' legislative power. The chapter also presents the policy debate on the shortcomings of the current pan-European institutional regime and their repercussions on the development of the inland navigation in the region.

## **C. European regulatory architecture for inland navigation**

12. Building on the analysis provided in the previous chapter, chapter C describes the key elements of the regulatory framework for inland navigation, such as standards and parameters of the inland waterways; access to specific inland waterways; technical and safety requirements

applicable to inland water transport; civil and public law aspects of inland water transport operations and environmental aspects of inland navigation. A summary table provides information on the content of the EU, UNECE and River Commissions' regimes, highlighting legally binding instruments where available.

13. The chapter presents the priorities in the further development of the regulatory framework, as identified by the most recent Pan-European Ministerial conference on Inland Navigation (Bucharest, September 2006), the European Union's NAIADES programme, as well as relevant expert studies, including the *Inventory of existing legislative obstacles that hamper the establishment of a harmonized and competitive Pan-European inland navigation market* (UNECE, 2005), the report on *A new institutional framework for the European Inland Navigation* (EFIN, 2004) etc.

14. Finally, the chapter highlights the most significant changes in the inland navigation regulatory framework since the first White Paper and, namely, the emergence of true pan-European rules in such areas as the identification of inland waterway network of international importance (the AGN agreement), transport of dangerous goods by inland waterways (the 2000 European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN)) and the unified rules on contract for the carriage of goods by inland waterway (the 2002 Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway (CMNI)).

#### **D. A Pan-European vision for efficient and sustainable inland water transport**

15. The goal of the final chapter is to identify a pan-European vision for the development of inland water transport in the areas analyzed in the previous chapters (inland water transport policies and institutional and regulatory frameworks), as well as to describe a process towards making this vision work.

16. As far as the inland water transport policies are concerned, the recommendations address the following items:

- (a) Priority IWT routes/missing links for the next decade;
- (b) Modernization of the inland fleet;
- (c) Existing and potential logistics solutions to solve the market requirements and ensure integration into the global supply chain;
- (d) Reinvigorating the labour market (strengthening the IWT profession, facilitating the circulation of the skilled human resources, harmonizing the crewmen training standards).

17. With respect to the institutional and regulatory framework for inland navigation, the White paper discusses the need for a Europe-wide organization to deal with inland navigation and examines the alternative solutions, such as reinforcing the legislative power of the existing institutions and increasing their resources (both financial and human), facilitating access of the third countries to the existing regional legal regimes and increasing inter-agency cooperation through joint technical working groups.

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