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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

##### Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links

##### Sixteenth session

Geneva, 16 and 17 May 2017

## Report of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links on its sixteenth session

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## **I. Attendance**

1. The Group of Experts on Euro-Asia Transport Links (EATL) held its sixteenth session on 16 and 17 May 2017 in Geneva. Representatives of the following member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe participated: Azerbaijan, Poland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Russian Federation and Turkey.
2. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC).
3. At the invitation of the secretariat PLASKE JLC and consultant from the Russian Federation also attended the meeting.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/31

4. The Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links (Group of Experts) adopted the session's agenda as contained in ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/31.

## **III. Report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project (agenda item 2)**

5. The Group of Experts considered the draft report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project (Informal document No. 1) as prepared by the Scientific and Research Institute of Motor Transport (NIIAT) from Moscow with the support of the secretariat. Chapters I through III were discussed in general while chapters IV and V were revised in detail.
6. The Group of Experts requested the consultant, with support of the secretariat, to introduce the following changes to the report:

(a) To modify the existing text by clarifying how the issues discussed in the Chapter I impact the operationalization of the EATL routes, in particular:

(i) Subchapter I.1:

Explain how the economic and trade situations described impact the operationalization of the EATL routes.

(ii) Subchapter I.2:

a. Comment the trade flows between the various trading partners in Europe and Asia as contained in the trade flow tables and elaborate on these flows in the context of operationalization of the EATL routes (sub-subchapter I.2.1);

b. Discuss first the commodity groups before offering comments in the context of operationalization of the EATL routes (sub-subchapter I.2.2).

(iii) Subchapter I.3:

a. Offer insight into what the shares are for maritime, inland and air transport of the overall flows (sub-subchapter I.3.1);

b. Discuss the liner shipping situation only in the context of operationalization of the EATL routes, i.e. impacts from the shipping industry, competition from shipping industry for commodity groups suited for inland transport (sub-subchapter I.3.2);

- c. Discuss railway transport in general before focusing on block-container trains (sub-subchapter I.3.3);
  - d. Add analysis on the table of the Committee of the Organization for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD) regular container rail operation (sub-subchapter I.3.3);
  - e. Explain the role of the projects described in the sub-subchapter I.3.3;
  - f. Discuss the air transport situation only in the context of operationalization of the EATL routes, i.e. competition from air transport for commodity groups suited for inland transport (sub-subchapter I.3.5).
- (iv) Subchapter I.4:
- a. Make sure that the chapter focuses on discussing the physical infrastructure rather than infrastructure management or transport flows and that such is discussed along the EATL routes as much as possible showing missing links, or sections of lesser capacity;
  - b. Discuss air transport, sea ports and hinterland connections only in the context of operationalization of EATL routes.
- (b) To modify Chapter II, in particular:
- (i) Elaborate on Trans-European Railway and Trans-European Motorway (TER and TEM) projects specifically on investments within TER and TEM projects contributing to the operationalization of EATL routes;
  - (ii) Add information on Via Carpathia and Europe-Western China Routes;
  - (iii) Add information from Turkey regarding the European Union Trans European Transport Networks (TEN-T) project.
- (c) To adjust the wording in Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) tables in Chapter IV to make it consistent with the wording revised during the meeting;
- (d) To review and redesign maps and graphs and verify the numbering of tables throughout the report;
- (e) Edit the text also making sure that text flows from one para to another and that consistent expressions are used throughout the report.
7. Taking into account the internal United Nations procedures for processing of documents, the Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit chapters IV and V of the report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project as formal document translated into all official United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) languages to the upcoming session of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) in September 2017. The secretariat was further invited to submit the whole report with the agreed modifications as an informal document to the WP.5 September session.
8. The Group of Experts further requested the secretariat that the formal document containing chapters IV and V is circulated for final review by experts between 25 May and 9 June. This expert review should mainly focus on confirmation of language used in the SWOT table. The informal document containing the full report should be shared for final review between 4 and 18 August. It should be then finalized and submitted to WP.5 members before the end of August.
9. The Group of Experts requested its Chair to present the full report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project at the WP.5 September session on its behalf.

10. With the endorsement of the report by WP.5 and in particular its recommendations, the Group of Experts invited the secretariat to inform of the recommendations to UNECE bodies working on specific issues: Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2), Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP. 24) and Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30).

11. The Group of Experts discussed the modalities for the organization of the international conference launching the “operationalization of Euro-Asia Transport Links”.

12. The Group of Experts agreed:

(a) The conference should focus on achieving practical outcome, such as an elaboration of a plan of voluntary actions by governments and business implementing the recommendations contained in report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project;

(b) The conference should see numerous and active participation of representatives from governments, business, scientific institutions, international organizations and other stakeholders;

(c) It should be organized in a format of round tables (3-4 round tables) held in ‘Davos style’ including panellists from governments, business, scientific institutions and international organizations, possibly at a high-level to discuss in an interactive way, and with a support of a moderator, the actions needed to implement the recommendations;

(d) It should preferably be held as 1,5-2 days meeting with interpretation in the second or third quarter 2018;

(e) The full official report concluding phase 3 of the EATL project available at least in English and Russian should be disseminated during the conference.

13. The Group of Experts requested the Chair to present its recommendation to WP.5 for the format and timing of the international conference launching the “operationalization of Euro-Asia Transport Links”.

### **3. Other business**

14. There have been no other issues of interest raised at the meeting.

### **4. Summary of decisions**

15. The Group of Experts adopted its decisions of the sixteenth and final session of the phase 3 of the EATL project as stipulated under this report's section III (agenda item 2).

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