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Group of Experts on Benchmarking Transport Infrastructure Construction Costs

Ninth session

Geneva, 30 September and 1 October 2019

Report of the Group of Experts on Benchmarking Transport Infrastructure Construction Costs on its ninth session

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I. Attendance

1. The Group of Experts on Benchmarking Transport Infrastructure Construction Costs (hereafter called the Group) held its ninth session on 30 September and 1 October 2019. In the absence of the Chair, Mr. A. Maciejewski (Poland/ Trans-European Motorway (TEM) Project), the session was chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Group Ms. Leyla Ünal (Turkey).
2. Representatives of the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States participated: Cyprus, Finland, Poland, Russian Federation and Turkey.
3. A representative of the International Union of Railways (UIC) attended the session as well.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.4/17

4. The Group adopted the agenda.

III. Transport Infrastructure Construction costs: Presentations of good practices at national levels for evaluating and calculating them (agenda item 2)

5. The secretariat informed that since the last session of the Group only a very limited number of additional ECE member States had submitted, in writing, information about their national good practices for evaluating and calculating transport infrastructure construction costs, several had however indicated that they would submit such inputs at a later stage. In this connection, the Group decided to issue (through its parent body WP.5 on Transport Trends and Economics) and through designated mailing lists of road and railway infrastructure managers one more final request to all ECE member States with an appeal for responses to be submitted to the secretariat by 16 December 2019. The Group also committed to share the set of 4 open questions for the collection of good practices with the relevant departments in their home administration and collect as many inputs as possible by the envisaged deadline. The Group decided to add a footnote to the set of 4 open questions indicating that answers could be provided from two different perspectives: (a) in case the standard procurement procedure is followed and (b) in case the construction work takes place in the framework of a Public Private Partnership. Recipients could choose to respond to the questions using one or both perspectives. The secretariat informed that it would share the set of open questions with representatives in the following ECE working parties: Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1), Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2), Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) as well as Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) on Intermodal Transport and Logistics. Finally, it was agreed to strengthen efforts of the Group aimed at seeking synergies with the work being undertaken in the framework of other initiatives and frameworks, such as the UIC RailLexic, the TEM and Trans-European Railway (TER) transport infrastructure master plans, the work done by the Asian Investment Bank etc.

6. The Group took note of the comprehensive presentation delivered by the representative of Finland about its “Iku Infrastructure Cost Management System Alliance Project”. The full presentation is available on the webpage of the ninth session of the Group: www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2019/wp5/Finland_WP5_GE4_9th_session_30_Sept-1_Oct_19.pdf.

7. Following the presentation by the representative of Finland, the secretariat called upon the Group to deliver similar-style presentations on relevant national practices at its forthcoming tenth session to be held in January 2020. The secretariat also called upon the Group to submit timely written inputs as well (in addition to Powerpoint presentations). Several representatives, including from the Russian Federation and Poland indicated they stand ready to do so.

IV. Transport Infrastructure Construction costs: Presentations of terminologies used (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.4/2019/1

8. The secretariat recalled that following a decision taken by the Group at its eighth session in July 2019 it had prepared a consolidated list of terminologies (including road, rail, inland waterways and intermodal terminals construction costs) which had been distributed as Working Document No. 1. The secretariat informed that based on intermediate feedback received, it had prepared a revised version of the list of terminologies which had been issued as Informal Document No. 1 (WP.5/GE.4(2019) No. 1) ahead of the ninth session of the Group.

9. The Group agreed to review Informal Document No. 1 and several suggestions for amendments and improvements made by national experts and the secretariat were discussed and endorsed by the Group. The Group decided not to amend the list of inland waterway infrastructure terminologies since this had already been officially adopted by the Working Party on Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (WP.3) at its fifty-fifth session (Geneva, 19–21 June 2019).

10. For reasons of consistency, and in order to avoid overlap and repetition, the Group decided to create a separate list of general terminologies grouping those terms that are common to all (or several) modes. A representative of the Russian Federation mentioned that it would like to compare the (Russian) translation of the railway terminology list with its own list of terminologies and would inform the secretariat should there be any discrepancies to be addressed. The Group agreed to submit any additional comments they may have to the secretariat at the latest by 23 October 2019 enabling the secretariat to review Informal Document No.1 accordingly and propose further editorial/ linguistic improvements to the terminologies for consideration and adoption by the Group at its tenth session in January 2020.

V. Transport Infrastructure Construction Costs: Overview of main concerns and considerations (agenda item 4)

11. The Group continued to discuss the challenges which it has been facing in delivering on its mandate and attempted to identify ways for addressing those challenges.

12. The Group reviewed the final changes that had been made by the secretariat to the road and rail questionnaires following its discussion at its last session in July 2019. The Group agreed to these changes but requested the secretariat to add one additional column to the part on projects, asking respondents to indicate whether the project at hand is of a Public Private Partnership, a Concession, a Build-Operate-Transfer (B-O-T) or a Design-Build-Operate (D-B-O) nature.

13. The Group noted that, despite the re-issuance by the secretariat of the (revised) road and rail questionnaires in August 2019 to all ECE member States, and despite the fact that several options and clarifications had been offered to Governments regarding the way through which to submit data (i.e. in excel format, or only project based data, or raw data sets in any form) the actual response rate had remained quite low. Additional data had only been received from the following countries: Bulgaria (road and rail), Poland (rail) and Turkey (rail). The Group noted that further to these national inputs, excel data sheets had been shared by the UIC representative containing relevant renewal (and maintenance) costs data from 20 Europeans railway infrastructure managers. The secretariat informed that due to confidentiality of data, country names had not been specified in this list, but that relevant cost categories could be extracted from the table and used for the Group's efforts.

14. Recognizing the remaining low response rate to the questionnaires, the Group decided to make one more final attempt at re-issuing the road and rail questionnaires and requested the secretariat to conduct as soon as possible a series of targeted mailings to relevant groups of recipients requesting the filled-out questionnaires or any other relevant inputs by 16 December 2019. In order to maximise the quantity and quality of inputs to be received the

secretariat suggested to allow for information to be submitted in any of the three ECE working languages.

15. The Group also recognised the necessity to proceed with finalisation of the remaining questionnaires. In this regard the Group agreed to share the remaining draft questionnaires on intermodal terminals, inland waterways and ports respectively with the relevant colleagues in their home administration(s) and/or with counterparts in other competent Ministries/ Agencies or Government structures for feedback. The Group decided that at this stage only general feedback would be requested relating to the overall structure of the questionnaires, the type/ nature of questions being asked, the feasibility of data collection requirements etc. The Group agreed to submit this feedback to the secretariat no later than 23 October 2019.

16. Based on this feedback, the Group decided that the secretariat should then revise these questionnaires accordingly and submit them as informal documents to the relevant mode-specific working parties for more specialised inputs and eventually for data collection purposes. The secretariat announced that they would facilitate this process by attending forthcoming sessions of each of these mode specific working parties (i.e. SC.1, SC.2 and SC.3, as well as WP.24), present the mandate and work of the Group and encourage the sharing of relevant data.

17. In this regard, the Group took note of the presentation by the SC.3 secretary who presented on some of the challenges related to the collection of data on construction costs of inland waterways. The Group requested her to share the draft questionnaires on inland waterways and port terminal infrastructure costs as an informal document for possible discussion at the SC.3 sixty-third session taking place in Geneva on 6–8 November 2019. Based on additional guidance received the secretariat could then revise the questionnaire and at the next SC.3 session in 2020 it could be adopted as a working document and disseminated for data collection purposes. The full presentation of the SC.3 secretary is available on the webpage of the ninth session of the Group: www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2019/wp5/UNECE_1_WP5_GE4_9th_session_30_Sept-1_Oct_19.pdf.

18. Given the remaining obstacles, the Group requested the secretariat to explore the feasibility to host one additional Expert Group meeting between the forthcoming tenth session and the concluding eleventh session which will take place in May 2020. The secretariat noted the budget impact that this would have (particularly if interpretation in the three ECE working languages is to be foreseen) but indicated that it would explore this option and report back to Group in due time.

VI. Discussions on the structure of the final report of the Group of Experts (agenda item 5)

19. The Group took note of the presentation made by the secretariat on the ample opportunities that availability of adequate data would provide, if this data could be geocoded and uploaded into a GIS environment. Past, current or future transport infrastructure works would become coloured lines on a map and by clicking on the specific rail/ road/ inland waterway routes, the associated construction costs, duration of the respective projects and all other technical and operational parameters and connected data would become visible.

20. The Group noted the lack of data received so far, and the fact that no responses had been received to the 4 open questions designed to collect good practices at national levels for evaluating and calculating transport infrastructure construction. In this regard it emphasised that the structure of the final report should be kept flexible in function of the actual data and information received.

VII. Other business (agenda item 6)

21. The secretariat invited all Expert Group members to join a forthcoming ECE-led international conference on adaptation of transport infrastructure to climate change impacts

that will be organised in Athens on 18 and 19 November 2019. The conference is expected to shed light on how the effective use of climate projections can serve as an instrument to assess future climate impacts on transportation systems and help identify necessary and cost-effective adaptation measures for preventing future transport disruptions.

VIII. Date and place of next meeting (agenda item 7)

22. The Group took note that the tenth session is scheduled to be held in Geneva on 30 and 31 January 2020.

IX. Adoption of main decisions (agenda item 8)

23. The Group adopted the list of main decisions of its ninth session and requested the secretariat and the Vice-Chair to prepare the full report to be circulated to the members of the Group for comments on items other than those contained in the list of main decisions.
