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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

(Forty-eighth session, 19-21 October 2004
agenda item 5)

**EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON MEASURES AIMED AT
PROMOTING TRANSPORT BY INLAND WATERWAYS**

Note by the secretariat

It is recalled that the Working Party, at its forty-fifth session, requested the secretariat to approach Governments concerned with a view to exploring possibilities for launching two studies on the establishment of inter-basin waterway connections mentioned in the Plan of Action for the implementation of decisions of the 2001 Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport, i.e. : Danube-Oder-Elbe and Rhine-German Canals-Vistula-Dnieper (TRANS/SC.3/158, para. 13(v)). A relevant questionnaire addressed by the secretariat to all the member Governments concerned was circulated by the secretariat on 11 August 2003. Due to the limited number of communications received from the Governments in response to the questionnaire by the forty-seventh session of the Working Party, the secretariat was requested to issue the letter as a working document of the Working Party. Governments, which had not yet done so, were invited to transmit to the secretariat **before 1 June 2004** their reaction to the letter of the secretariat (TRANS/SC.3/161, para. 21).

Reproduced below is the text of the questionnaire circulated by the secretariat in accordance with the instructions of the Working Party.

It is recalled that the UNECE Working Party on Inland Water Transport, at its forty-fifth session, requested the secretariat to approach Governments concerned with a view to exploring possibilities for launching two studies on the establishment of inter-basin waterway connections mentioned in the Plan of Action for the implementation of decisions of the Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport (Rotterdam, 5 and 6 September 2001), i.e. : Danube-Oder-Elbe and Rhine-German Canals-Vistula-Dnieper (TRANS/SC.3/158, para. 13(v)).

As you may know, the two above-mentioned water connections are part of the E waterway network established by the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) of 1996. The Danube-Oder Elbe Connection is part of trunk waterways E 20 and E 30, while the Rhine-German Canals-Vistula-Dnieper Connection is part of trunk waterways E 70 and E 40.

In this connection, it should be recalled that already in 1959, while considering the establishment of a unified European waterway network, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport agreed that, if such a waterway network had to be set up, the west European and east European waterway networks would have to be connected by high capacity links to form an all-European waterway system. To this end, the Working Party decided to have economic studies carried out for the following three links: Rhine-Main-Danube, Danube-Oder-Elbe and Dnieper-Vistula-Oder (TRANS/SC.3/148, paras. 2-5).

The Economic Studies of the Rhine-Main-Danube and Danube-Oder (-Elbe) Connections were prepared by the relevant Groups of Rapporteurs in 1970 and 1981, respectively. The Study on the D-O-E Connection was later updated (document TRANS/SC.3/R.160). This latest version of the D-O-E Study of 1992 takes into account the then state-of-the-art environmental concerns and contains recommendations on technical, economic, financial and legal aspects of the construction and operation of the future water link based on the situation preceding the transition of the central and east European countries concerned to a market economy that had followed just after the establishment of the Study. The Group of Rapporteurs on the Dnieper-Vistula-Oder Connection so far has not been convened.

In accordance with the request of the Working Party, I should be grateful if you could inform the secretariat of the position of your Government with regard to: (i) the need and possibility for launching a study on the establishment of the Rhine-German Canals- Oder-Vistula-Dnieper Connection; and (ii) the need for another updating of the Study on the Establishment of the Danube-Oder (-Elbe) Connection.

With regard to question (i) above, you may wish to keep in mind that the Government of Germany has informed the secretariat that, as a result of work of a joint German-Netherlands study group, it does not intend to follow the project concerning the construction of the Twentekanaal – Mittellandkanal link (E 70). As to question (ii) above, I would like to inform you that, according to Mr. Jaroslav Kubec, Director of the Danube-Oder-Elbe Association, the

Study of 1992 is still relevant and, instead of its updating, the issue of financing of a stage-by-stage construction of the D-O-E Connection may be studied.

It would be appreciated if your response to this letter could reach the secretariat before the commencement of the forty-seventh session of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (7-9 October 2003), so that the session could be informed accordingly.
