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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics
(Eighteenth session, 15-16 September 2005)

FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING PARTY

Report of the Informal meeting on future activities
of the Working Party (14 April 2005, Geneva)

I. ATTENDANCE

1. Mr. R. Kellermann and Mr. P. Paeffgen (Germany), Mr. W. Zarnoch and Mr. K. Kulesza (Poland), Mr. V. Arsenov (Russian Federation) and Mr. M. Hantak (UNECE TEM) attended the meeting. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. W. Zarnoch (Poland).

II. MANDATE

2. Following the request made by the Chairman and the Vice-chairman of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics, the secretariat convened an informal meeting. The objective of the meeting was to discuss and consider possible ways of reinvigorating the work of the Working Party, to identify potential priority activities of common interest, formulate concrete proposals for the Working Party's agenda that may increase participation in its sessions, enhance their relevance, and increase their usefulness to member Governments.

III. BACKGROUND

3. It was felt that the functioning of the Working Party had remained unchanged for a number of years. In the past, its activities and contribution had been very useful for UNECE member countries and it also had a bridging function between Western and Central-Eastern Europe. However, from the beginning of the 1990s onwards, the political and economic context

of the European transport sector had changed very much. During the last decade, a number of countries have joined the ECMT, while 10 new countries took part in pre-accession and other activities which led them to a full EU membership in 2004. Two more countries will join the EU in 2007.

4. A significant decrease of interest in the Working Party activities could be observed since 2000, which resulted in decreasing attendance at meetings and participation of representatives of the permanent missions of the UNECE member countries instead of delegates and experts from capitals. In 2000 and 2002, there was an attempt by the Chairman and the Vice-chairman of the Working Party to revive activities of the Working Party by collecting information on possible future directions. Even though addressed to all member countries, only four member Governments replied and sent their proposals.

5. In the present context, it also has to be borne in mind that the scope of the Working Party's activities is very wide and covers almost all aspects of transport developments and transport economics, thus making it necessary to set concrete and clear objectives and tasks to be pursued at the sessions. Sessions are filled very often with presentations and reports from other organizations and institutions (European Union, ECMT, UIC, etc.) and part of its Programme of Work is overlapping with activities of other UNECE working groups. The collection of various kinds of information through questionnaires, although sometimes necessary and useful, is not always efficient and it takes considerable time and resources to produce the final report.

6. Taking into account the situation as described above, the Chairman and Vice-chairman had a preliminary meeting in February 2005, at which they discussed the possible ways of strengthening the effectiveness and usefulness of the activities carried under the Programme of Work of the Working Party. The result of this preliminary meeting was the initiative for convening the informal meeting with the previous Chairman of the Working Party, Chairman of the Inland Transport Committee and the secretariat.

Possible directions for future work

7. The three options that were considered for the future included (i) termination of the Working Party and cessation of its activities: (ii) maintaining of the status quo, and (iii) modification of the Programme of Work and scope of its activities to adapt them to new requirements. The first option was excluded by the informal meeting, while maintaining of the status quo, it was felt, would lead to a gradual marginalization of the Working Party and its further loss of relevance and interest in its activities. Thus, the consensus was to consider in what ways the Working Party's relevance, the participation in its sessions and attractiveness to member countries could be strengthened.

8. The first step in reinforcing the Working Party's role was to critically review its Programme of Work in order to select the most crucial and critical areas and topics. It was felt that this might lead to higher interest in its work. After considering several options, the participants agreed that the activities as listed in the recommendations of this report should have priority.

9. In order to further stimulate sessions of the Working Party, the Informal Meeting agreed to propose that, on the occasion of the next session of the Working Party, a half-day session be organized, with a detailed agenda and time-framework, devoted to a concrete subject. Such a

session should be attended by invited experts and representatives of relevant organizations and institutions. The representatives of member Governments attending the session of the Working Party will be asked to consider proposing topics for future sessions, in order to consider their replies, at the next session of the Working Party in September 2005.

Recommendations

10. The Informal Meeting, considering the possibilities to strengthen the relevance of the Working Party activities for member Governments, have agreed as follows:

(a) The agenda of the eighteenth session of the Working Party (15-16 September 2005) will have the following topics as priority:

- Monitoring of the development relevant for the Pan-European Corridors;
- Study the relationship between the UNECE Agreements (AGR, AGC, AGTC and its Protocol, and AGN) and the UNECE Projects (TEM and TER) with Pan-European transport infrastructure network planning procedures with a view to:
 - identifying the major international transport routes to be improved and modernized, and to establish priorities and a timetable taking into account parts of the networks with bottlenecks and missing links;
 - assessing the costs of this infrastructure plan and making suggestions for its financing;
- Further elaboration of the elements of the joint UNECE/UNESCAP programme for the development of Euro-Asian transport links as well as the analysis of the results of the relevant international meetings;
- Financing schemes of transport infrastructure;
- Consideration of ways of strengthening cooperation with the Mediterranean Study and Training Centres to enable all UNECE countries to benefit from activities carried out, including the organization of workshops and seminars.

Other topics on the agenda, carried over from previous sessions, will include items for information.

(b) The future sessions of the Working Party could, in addition, have the following items on their agenda:

- Periodical review of new important developments relating to inland transport in UNECE member countries in order to make the medium- and long-term evolution of transport more transparent. The Working Party will examine all decisions, general and specific, recently taken in member countries likely to have implications in the organization of transport and take into account the findings arrived at during an international meeting focusing on salient issues of transport development;
 - Development of efficient management frameworks for transport infrastructure maintenance and operation, thus optimizing the need for new investments (linked to the development of the quality of service concept).
- (c) The Working Party is asked to critically examine, at its next session, its Programme of Work. The objective will be to assign adequate priorities to each element of the Programme of Work, which would be in line with a reprioritization of the activities.
- (d) The informal meeting also proposed that, at the next session of the Working Party, a half-day workshop be organized under the title: ***“Euro-Asian transport links – Feedback from users”***. It was agreed that Government representatives from Germany, Poland, Russian Federation and Ukraine will invite speakers for the workshop, including freight forwarders, transport organizations and other actors involved in the use of inland transport links between the two continents.

The Chairman and the secretariat informed the Director of the UNECE Transport Division about the outcome and the decisions of the meeting.
