Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Fifty-seventh session
Geneva, 16–18 October 2013
Item 11 (c) of the provisional agenda
Draft programme of work, biennial evaluation and work plan

Introduction of a theme topic for SC.3 sessions

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1.   At its forty-third session, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) proposed to introduce, in addition to the traditional work of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3 or the Working Party), specific policy themes of importance to inland water transport at the annual SC.3 sessions (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/86, para. 55). It believed that this would further strengthen and streamline the work of UNECE in the field of inland water transport as mandated by the Inland Transport Committee and in line with the White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe (ECE/TRANS/236, para. 31).

2.   The Working Party is invited to consider selecting a theme for introduction at its fifty-eighth session based on the proposals formulated below. In doing so it may wish to note that SC.3/WP.3 suggested that the role of recreational navigation in a pan-European perspective could be an interesting subject, bearing in mind that no intergovernmental forum deal with this topic (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/86, para. 56).

II. Proposed procedure and themes for SC.3 sessions

3.   To enable SC.3 to take stock of new developments arising in inland navigation at the pan-European level, as well as to evaluate the work of SC.3 in a policy context, it is proposed to organize theme discussions at the annual SC.3 sessions.

4.   To guide the discussions, the Working Party could determine a specific theme for each session. The themes could be determined by the Working Party at the end of the previous session on the basis of a permanently updated list.

5.	The discussions under each theme could be prepared and moderated by a lead country or organization, in cooperation with the secretariat and the Chair. The duration of such thematic sessions should not exceed 3 hours and could be presented in a separate programme.

6.	The theme could be introduced by one or two short presentations by eminent experts from UNECE member countries, the European Commission, River Commissions, intergovernmental organizations, non-Governmental organizations or by industry representatives. These presentations could be followed by a moderated discussion and terminate with conclusions drawn by the Chair. Flexibility should be shown to address newly emerging issues and developments.

7.	A selection of tentative themes is presented below.

## A.	Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS): Opportunities and challenges for inland water transport

8.	In the field of inland water transport, ITS have been developed in the form of River Information Services (RIS). These are harmonized information services that support traffic and transport management in inland navigation, including interfaces to other modes.

9.	To ensure the harmonized introduction of RIS at a pan-European level, comprehensive UNECE Guidelines for RIS have been established that describe the principles and general requirements for planning, implementing and operational use of RIS and related systems. These Guidelines have been adopted by SC.3 as Resolution No. 57, which was revised in 2011.

10.	The RIS Guidelines are used in conjunction with a number of international standards and recommendations established by UNECE in close cooperation with the European Union and River Commissions. They are as follows:

- Recommendation on electronic chart display and information system for inland navigation (Inland ECDIS) — Resolution No. 48;

- International Standards for Notices to Skippers and for Electronic Ship Reporting in Inland Navigation — Resolution No. 60;

- Guidelines and Criteria for Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways — Resolution No. 58;

- International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT) — Resolution No. 63.

11.	Possible discussions under this theme heading could include:

(a)	Opportunities:

(i)	Overcoming linguistic difficulties of boatmen in the course of international transport by inland waterway (five-language UNECE Standardized Vocabulary for Radio Communications in Inland Navigation, Resolution. No. 35, revised);

(ii)	ITS solutions facilitating inland water transport (freight service providers);

(iii)	ITS and supply chain efficiency.

(b)	Challenges:

(i)	Mixed traffic (cargo and passenger vessels with recreational craft and seagoing ships);

(ii)   Confidentiality of information requirements (inspection vessels masking certain tracking and tracing information);

(iii)   Legal issues (obligation to use Inland AIS when handling dangerous cargo).

B.   The role of recreational navigation in a pan-European context

12.   Recreational craft represents the majority of the fleet navigating on European inland waterways. To ensure safe and smooth traffic on inland waterways, the Working Party has addressed several aspects relating to recreational navigation through the following resolutions:

• European Recreational Inland Navigation Network (AGNP) — Resolution No. 52;

• Small Craft Used Exclusively for Pleasure Navigation — Resolution No. 41;

• International Certificate for Operators of Pleasure Craft — Resolution No. 40;

• International Certificate (international card) for Pleasure Craft — Resolution No. 13.

13.   A special workshop on recreational navigation was organized by the European Boating Association (EBA) in 2010 during the thirty-seventh session of SC.3/WP.3 entitled "Recreational Navigation in UNECE Region: Its role and impact". Two presentations were delivered:

(a)   "Economic Benefits of Recreational Waterways – UK experience" by Martin Clarke, Director, Jacobs Engineering; and

(b)   "Funding of regional Inland Waterways" by Nicolaas van Lamsweerde, Director of Dutch Recreational Waterways.

14.   Possible further discussions under this theme heading could include:

(a)   Impact of recreational navigation on the environment;

(b)   Infrastructure development of inland waterway used for recreational navigation;

(c)   Promoting recreational navigation.

C.   Inland water transport as part of global container transport chains

15.   Over a third of the value of global trade is transported by container. There is a need for greater integration of inland water transport into the global container transport chains and to link important European sea ports with their hinterland.

16.   The UNECE Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (Blue Book), revised in 2012, contains, inter alia, the technical characteristics of inland navigation ports of international importance. According to this data, 179 of the 446 inland ports of international importance can handle 20 ft containers, of which 144 can also handle 40 ft containers. If more inland ports are equipped with container handling facilities, it would increase the competitiveness of the sector as a whole.

17.   Possible discussions under this theme heading could include:

(a)   Investing in inland port facilities for handling containers;

(b)   Transport and handling of 45 ft ISO and pallet-wide containers;

(c)   Cooperation between sea and inland waterway ports.

D. Prospects for river-sea navigation (harmonization of vessels and inland waterways)

18.   Mixed river-sea vessels hold a prominent place in inland water transport of certain UNECE member States, such as the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The use of river-sea vessels enables efficient transport operations between inland and sea ports avoiding transhipment. These vessels are particularly convenient for international transport as they can operate all year around. However, river-sea vessels experience problems when calling in certain European ports due to lack of international regulations on such types of vessels.

19.   In 2011 the Working Party adopted a new chapter 20b on special provisions applicable to river-sea navigation vessels for inclusion into Resolution No. 61 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2011/9/Add.2). This chapter gives the following definition of "river-sea navigation vessel": a vessel intended for navigation on inland waterways and suitable for restricted navigation at sea.

20.   According to the European River-Sea Transport Union (ERSTU), over 2,000 river-sea vessels are in use on the European continent.

21.   Possible discussions under this theme heading could include:

(a)   Sharing experience on the use of river-sea vessels in inland navigation;

(b)   Development of river-sea route in the context of the AGN (such as: River Don-Azov Sea-Black Sea-Dnieper-Danube; or Guadalquivir-coastal route E 60-River Douro-River Gironde-River Loire-River Seine (E 80), etc.);

(c)   Better use of the short distance traffic on sea including the river-sea shipping;

(d)   Overcoming legal issues related to the use of river-sea shipping in an international context.

E. Maritime ports and their strategies to promote inland navigation

22.   At maritime ports, inland navigation offers an environmentally-friendly alternative to road transport, also avoiding congestion on major highways. Rotterdam (Netherlands), Europe's largest container port, aims to move 40 per cent of its container traffic to and from its hinterland by barge.

23.   It is recalled, in this connection, that the Bucharest Ministerial Conference of 2006 invited the competent authorities to facilitate the establishment, in cooperation with the industry, of promotion and development centres and to nominate national focal points for promoting and supporting inland waterway transport and sea-river shipping (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2006/11, part II, para. 14).

24.   Possible discussions under this theme heading could include:

(a)   Congestions at sea ports and hinterland connections;

(b)   Optimitzation of port calls and consolidation of freight;

(c)   Reduction of port charges for inland and river-sea vessels to encourage their traffic.

F. Other

25.   The Working Party may wish to propose other topical themes for discussion.

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