



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 August 2014

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

Fifty-seventh session

Geneva, 10–11 November 2014

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Preparing National Master Plans for freight transport and logistics

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Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document has been prepared in line with the output/activities of cluster 6: Intermodal transport and logistics of the programme of work of the transport subprogramme for 2014–2015 (ECE/TRANS/2014/23) as adopted by the Inland Transport Committee on 27 February 2014 (ECE/TRANS/240, para. 100).
2. The Working Party may wish to recall that during its fifty-first session (19–20 March 2009) it had addressed the topic of modern transport chains, national logistics master plans and the role of governments in the design and management of freight and intermodal transport. The secretariat, in cooperation with a virtual expert group on transport chains and logistics and contributions from Austria and the Groupement Européen du Transport Combiné (Informal documents WP.24 Nos. 5 and 6 (2008)), had prepared a study on the design and management of freight and intermodal transport and the role of governments (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/4).
3. A brief description of topic as well as suggested further steps is provided below.

II. Background

4. At its forty-ninth session, the Working Party analyzed the underlying reasons and requirements of logistics determining transport demand, transport quality and land use (location of logistics centres and intermodal terminals). It stressed that Governments need to better understand the requirements of such modern supply and logistics chains as they

often extend beyond national borders. National transport policies must take account of and respond to these global challenges and must be coordinated and harmonized at the international level. Without such actions, the impact of transport policy decisions and public financing may otherwise be marginal, ineffective and even counterproductive. If, on the other hand, transport policies provide the appropriate regulatory framework, adequate transport infrastructures and the required skills for private and public actors in this field, they will then be able to provide the basis for efficient, sustainable, safe and secure freight transport and mobility and will ensure a level playing field for all industries involved.

5. The design and management of national freight transport and logistics policies and strategies is a necessary task to be undertaken by governments. Governments need to set and maintain the institutional framework as well as the rules of the game to ensure that the design and management of freight transport and intermodal transport services are carried out both in line with national transport policy objectives and with respect to other economic, social, environmental and spatial policies, rules and regulations set and enforced by public authorities. Governments are also generally responsible for the provision of adequate infrastructures, such as roads, railway lines and inland waterways, though the construction and operation of such transport lines can be and is already being done in some countries through public-private partnerships (PPP).

6. According to the UNECE Transport Trends and Economics Review of 2011-2012,¹ in thirty-seven UNECE countries analyzed there were more than 144 freight villages or logistic centres. Twelve Governments replied that they have already developed a master plan for their logistics industry and eleven Governments reported they have a master plan for their intermodal transport. One of the most important issues that surfaced through the responses was a country's geographical location as a logistics competitive advantage. Twenty-three Governments stated that their country had a logistics – transport competitive advantage and six said that the logistics advantage of the country is directly connected with private sector initiatives and investments.

7. In general, the freight transport and logistics master plans developed by Governments set the framework of objectives and strategies that will lead to the achievement of two targets: to become freight transport and logistics hubs of their regions and to enhance the freight transport and logistics profession and market. The development of such master plans appears to bring multiple positive results to the states implementing them: growth of freight transport and logistics market, increase of GDP, increase of tax income, increase of transit cargo, increased development of transport related infrastructure and hinterland connections, additional robust investment schemes, etc.

8. The Working Party in its study identified three fields where governmental action was needed. See in ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/4:

(a) Transport policies that set the appropriate regulatory, institutional and administrative framework conditions at national (also provincial and municipal) and international levels;

(b) Transport infrastructure for efficient modal and intermodal transport services. This includes adequate land use planning that allows the industry to establish and develop adequate port facilities, intermodal terminals and distribution centres in line with economic, social, environmental and spatial requirements;

¹ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2013/wp5/TRANSPORT_TRENDS_AND_ECONOMICS_2011_2012.pdf

(c) Research, education and awareness to better understand the impact of supply chain management and logistics on transport demand and modal choice, to provide for adequate know-how and experience of industry professionals and to provide information and transparency about the role of freight transport and logistics to the general public.

9. Some governments have already prepared and implemented national master plans on freight transport and logistics or have established national coordination councils that operate as advisory boards to the Government on strategic issues of national freight transport and logistics.

10. Germany has prepared the National Freight Transport and Logistics Masterplan under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs and approved by the Federal Cabinet in July 2008. The German Master Plan for Freight Transport and Logistics² has demonstrated the utility of such plans. This master plan focuses on possible improvements in six major areas:

- (a) Making optimum use of transport infrastructure;
- (b) Avoiding unnecessary journeys;
- (c) Shifting more traffic to the railways and inland waterways;
- (d) Upgrading more transport arteries and hubs;
- (e) Environmentally friendly and climate-friendly transport;
- (f) Good working conditions and good training in the freight transport industry.

11. This plan both identifies areas where improvements can be made and also provides concrete goals for how these improvements can be achieved. Notably, the master plan also takes a holistic approach where individual policies are pursued while taking into account overall goals for the country's freight transport and logistics sector.

12. The government of Netherlands has developed the “Connekt” network which is a public-private initiative made up of 110 members from national, regional and local governments (including road administrators, policymakers, suppliers), industries (including transport suppliers and users, telecom companies, private road administrators), transport users (transport companies, automobile associations, interest groups), universities and consultants. “Connekt” provides a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience and for the identification of strategies, such as in the field of freight transport and logistics. The objective of the Dutch Freight Transport Strategy developed by “Connekt” is to ensure access to and from the main ports, to reconcile mobility and environmental objectives and to stimulate the industry to optimize supply chain management.

13. Thailand's Logistics Development Strategy (2007-2011)³ also shows how such a plan can help to formulate policy. In creating this master plan, the Thai government took a critical look at the current status in the country and identified areas needing improvement and through comparisons with other countries noted examples of best practices that could be adopted. Like Germany, Thailand also divided goals and actions in the logistics sector into more precise domains:

- (a) Business Logistics Improvement;
- (b) Transport and Logistics Network Optimization;

² Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs (Germany), Freight Transport and Logistics Masterplan (September 2008).

³ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (Thailand), Thailand's Logistics Development Strategy (2007-2011), (February 2007).

- (c) Logistics Service Internationalization;
- (d) Trade Facilitation Enhancement;
- (e) Capacity-Building.

14. It may be noted that while there is some overlap between the principle areas identified by Germany and Thailand, there are differences in their approaches. Some are due to the differences in the economic development levels of the two countries, but others represent varying perspectives on the purpose of the master plan.

III. Guidance by WP.24

15. The Working Party may wish to further discuss the role that WP.24 could play on the development of national freight transport and logistics master plans as a platform for the:

- (a) Exchange of good practices in the preparation and implementation of national logistics action or master plans;
- (b) Monitoring and analysis of national measures that influence the design and management of freight transport with a view toward enhancing the use of intermodal transport.

16. Some possible actions that the Working Party may wish to consider and decide as further steps based on the above-mentioned analysis and review could be the:

- (a) Preparation based on national experiences and experts advises of a framework of guidelines on how to prepare a national freight transport and logistics master plan and;
- (b) Preparation of a tool-box of policy measures and mechanisms that, depending on national circumstances, could be utilized to this end.

17. The Working Party may wish to consider the proposed further steps and provide guidance to the secretariat on further action.
