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## **Working Party on Inland Water Transport**

### **Sixtieth session**

Geneva, 2–4 November 2016

Item 11 (a) of the provisional agenda

### **Workshop “Recreational navigation and water tourism”**

## **Proposals for supporting and promoting the development of recreational navigation and water tourism in the framework of UNECE**

### **Transmitted by PO “Road from Varangians to Greeks”**

## **I. Combining the E waterways in a single European system as an integral part of inland waterway transport in Europe historically developed as the Road from Varangians to Greeks**

For combining the E waterways in a single European system a feasibility study should be done for the integration of recreational navigation and water tourism routes at a pan-European level as a system for the development of infrastructure and employment of coastal regions.

The waterway from Brest to Kherson is the most prepared for the integration of the European waterways E 30, E 40 and E 70 in a single system. A recreational navigation and water tourism program is mostly realized at this section. While passing along the European waterways that can be the basis for the development of a new tourism product called “European River Cruise” and enjoying a leisurely trip, tourists will get an opportunity to visit the most beautiful European cities and historical places, to get to know the culture, history and local customs of various European countries.

Another perspective is the promotion of fishing tourism and underwater hunting. Furthermore, at the appropriate infrastructure level, river beaches of the E waterways could successfully compete with sea resorts.

The project “Dnieper as the river of friendship” is an international cruise line intended for voyages on board river cruisers, hydrofoils, daily passenger vessels, yachts, catamarans, row and sailing boats, kayaks and canoes. By integrating such routes in the program “European River Cruise” the number of its participants will be increased, furthermore, it will give a possibility for students, families with children and elder people to participate in the

programme and will promote interregional and international communication and cooperation as well as education, scientific research and consulting.

The Government of Belarus is going to launch the cruise route from Brest to Kyiv in April 2017 with a new passenger vessel built in Belarus specially for this purpose.

The section of E 40 from Brest to Gdansk can be used for recreational navigation and water tourism purposes even before the restoration of the whole waterway is completed. The Administration of Poland has developed the programme “Popular rafting”; in June 2017 a rafting on rowing boats on the Vistula is planned as a mass action.

Integration of the E 30 and E 70 routes and waterways of the Volga-Don system and the Caspian Sea in the single recreation navigation network in the framework of UNECE.

## **II. Development of a unified system for planning European touristic routes**

The development of a unified system for planning European touristic routes will allow to create a large number of jobs and ensure the communication between Eastern and Western Europe. In our opinion, the following activities should be addressed for this purpose:

- Priority shall be given to the education and training for the maintenance and operation of necessary equipment and facilities as well as activities related to recreational navigation and water tourism.
- A plan shall be prepared in order to transform the growing interest of the population of transboundary regions to these activities into tourist flows through the territory from the Baltic region to the Black Sea along the E 30 and E 40 waterways and further to the Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia and Turkey. An algorithm for the realization of other European touristic routes can be elaborated on the basis of the Brest–Kyiv touristic route. To achieve this, it is necessary to:
  - review the existing hydrological conditions at the chosen route sections;
  - determine the appropriate vessel types in terms of the waterway parameters and conditions and the respective criteria for completing tourist groups;
  - assess the necessary infrastructure and identify the necessary measures for its development to ensure quality of services for tourist groups;
  - conclude preliminary cooperation agreements on joint activities with local authorities, public sector and business entities, and
  - develop a touristic route start-up programme.

## **III. Addressing social issues when creating a system for planning recreational and touristic routes and evidence of its economic importance and benefits for the European economy**

In this area, we propose to consider the following activities:

- (a) Creation of pre-fabricated and easily mountable prefabricated infrastructure facilities on pontoons for nearly all recreational and touristic water routes with both active and inactive movement modes. Creating the design system for recreational navigation and water tourism infrastructure objects.

- (b) Creation of bareboat chartering centres for recreational navigation and water tourism in coastal recreational zones for tourist collapsible canoes, kayaks, rafts, collapsible sailing catamarans and other accessories for water tourists.
- (c) Organizing a pan-European strategic dialogue on recreational navigation and water tourism issues on the permanent basis to promote contacts between River Commissions and river basin administrations on issues related to recreational navigation and water tourism. Organizing international forums to exchange best practice.
- (d) Updating the map of the European recreational navigation network as a valuable source of information for boatmen and pleasure craft operators.
- (e) Development and adoption of a unified system of documents for united European routes.

#### **IV. International and interregional partnership between the Commission on the Restoration of the E 40 Waterway, UNECE and Google aimed at the creation of unified water routes in Europe**

Public organization “Road from Varangians to Greeks” proposes to the Commission on the Restoration of the E 40 Waterway and UNECE in cooperation with Google to elaborate a cooperation programme for European countries-riparian states of the E waterway routes with the main purpose of promoting the development of unified recreational navigation routes in Europe.

The first stage of the cooperation programme will allow to select its participants possessing the experience and being interested in this programme in the context of commercial transport and touristic routes.

The start-up of Brest–Kherson section of the E 40 waterway will provide Belarus with an access to the Black Sea both for commercial and touristic transport.

The programme of coordinated actions shall aim to increase the attractiveness of the E waterway routes by using modern technologies offered by Internet with a special focus on the environmental and touristic components of the routes. As a part of this project, Google Map Maker and Google Street View can be supplemented with the location of the relevant objects of touristic, cultural, social and public importance including hotels and camping sites, places of interest etc. making accessible photo spheres and photo tours of the landmarks of the E waterways and thus enabling virtual tours. A presentation of the project “Digitalization of the E 40 Water Routes using the Google technology” will undoubtedly contribute to the attractiveness of the route “Road from Varangians to Greeks”.

This work should be resulted in the creation of a website dedicated to the most important landmarks of the European waterways. This website should contain photo- and video materials, photo spheres created by Google Map Maker and Google Street View and touristic routes shown on online Google maps. We hope to find initiatives and support of local communities that will allow to finalize Google maps and establish local communities of mapmakers. One of important components of the project should be a series of capacity building workshops for civil servants and business representatives dedicated to efficient use of state-of-the-art digital technologies and Google services.

The E 40 route with its huge nature reserve and attractive for tourists, if supported by modern digital approach may become a nature and medical tourism centre in Europe. We will make every effort to ensure fruitful results from the cooperation with Google in order to boost the development of unified water routes in Europe.

## **V. Establishment of an international body on recreational navigation and water tourism issues**

To address the aforementioned issues at the workshop on recreational navigation and water tourism a dedicated expert group could be established. The next steps might include:

- the development of the work plan for the expert group;
  - the development of a calendar of events for the expert group;
  - the establishment of a unified education and training system for recreational navigation and water tourism in Europe.
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