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Group of Experts on safety at level crossings

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Note by the secretariat

This document provides background information and the draft terms of reference as submitted on 11 July 2013 to the UNECE Executive Committee for their approval for establishing a “Safety at level crossings” Group of Experts. The Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) is invited to formally adopt this document which reflects a minor change to ensure consistency with the fact that non-ECE member States can also participate.

Establishment of a Group of Experts on safety at level crossings

1. At its seventy-third session (Geneva, 1-3 March 2011), the Inland Transport Committee discussed the importance of addressing key issues related to enhancing safety at level crossings.
2. The Committee recommended that the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1), the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) and the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) consider creating a joint Group of Experts of limited duration to work on enhancing safety at level crossings, taking into account all relevant experience within other bodies such as the European Railway Agency (ECE/TRANS/221, para.50).
3. At its sixty-first session from 21 to 23 March 2011, WP.1 noted the Inland Transport Committee's invitation to WP.1, SC.1 and SC.2 to consider creating a multidisciplinary group of experts to work on improving safety at road and rail interfaces (level crossings). WP.1 has agreed to take part in this initiative (ECE/TRANS/WP.1/131, para. 21).
4. The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Safety at Level Crossings Expert Group has been prepared in line with the UNECE Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Teams of Specialists. The Expert Group, in general, will aim at bringing together safety specialists from the road and rail sectors so as to better understand the issues at this intermodal interface.
5. In accordance with the Guidelines, participation in the Expert Group would be open to all UNECE member States, the European Union, academia and the private sector. The Expert Group is also open to non-ECE member States. The expected duration of the Expert Group is until 31 December 2015, with a possibility of extension if necessary.
6. The Expert Group will be established without the need for additional resources. Support work will be provided within the existing capacities of the UNECE secretariat. UNOG resources will be used for interpretation and conference services.
7. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the establishment of the Safety at Level Crossings Expert Group and its Terms of Reference (attached).

Annex

Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts on Safety at Level Crossings

1. The Group of Experts (GE) on Safety at Level Crossings will provide an international discussion platform for increasing safety at the interface of road and rail systems, by bringing together specialists from the public and private sectors, as well as academia and independent research. A “Safe System” approach will be adopted by taking into consideration the five key elements (5E’s) typically used in level crossing safety: Engagement, Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Economics.
2. The Group of Experts, based on existing resources of the secretariat, and possibly with additional financial support provided by participating countries and in close collaboration with other international organizations, will take stock of available data to describe, assess and better understand the safety issues at a road/rail interface as well as to develop a multidisciplinary strategic plan aimed at reducing the risk of death and/or injury at level crossings.
3. Specifically, the Group of Experts will:
 - collect all relevant information with a view to describing and assessing the current safety performance at level crossings in UNECE member States and selected non-UNECE member States.
 - conduct, in a coordinated manner, a cross-country survey of prevailing national legislation and/or legal arrangements at level crossings.
 - describe and evaluate key factors contributing to unsafe conditions at level crossings in areas such as infrastructure, national legislation, user behaviour, management, education and enforcement.
 - develop a road/rail interface strategy with a supporting action plan that will contribute to achieving the goal of enhancing safety at level crossings.
 - develop and maintain a network of contacts in the relevant fields, including key stakeholders such as governments, enforcement agencies, academia, industry, road and railway stakeholders and users, with a view to exchanging information and best practices.
 - develop a general framework to guide and support a consistent implementation of initiatives that would set best examples in enhancing safety at level crossings.
 - explore the possibility of developing (pilot) projects that would aim to ensure that priority is given to safety initiatives based on a system approach.
 - consider organizing workshops intended to support the core objectives that will be developed in the strategic plan of action.
 - monitor and report on the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives deployed under the strategy, including recommending remedial actions in the areas of safety measures, emergency responses, risk management and training tools.
 - identify future strategic and operational research needs and mechanisms for delivery, taking into account, where possible, availability of existing resources.

4. Membership to the Group of Experts will be open to government appointed officials and experts from UNECE and non-UNECE member States. It will also be open to representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics and researchers, as well as representatives of the private sector.
 5. The Group of Experts will be assisted in its work by the UNECE secretariat and will report to the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety.
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