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Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

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Promotion of River Information Services (RIS) as well as other Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in inland navigation: Cooperation with the GIS Forum Danube

Proposal for the cooperation with the GIS Forum Danube on the patronage of the Danube Information Service Conference (DISC) and related aspects*

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with Cluster 5: Inland Waterway Transport, para. 5.1 of the programme of work 2016-2017 (ECE/TRANS/2016/28/Add.1) adopted by the Inland Transport Committee at its seventy-eighth session on 26 February 2016.
2. At its sixtieth session, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) took note of the proposal of Germany about the patronage of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) over the Danube Information Service Conference (DISC) organized annually by the GIS¹ Forum Danube (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/203, paras. 30-31). Following the decision of SC.3, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) asked the secretariat to investigate the possibilities for the cooperation with the GIS Forum Danube in regard of the involvement of UNECE in DISC, including the resource implications of any support, in

* This document was submitted late due to delayed inputs.

¹ Geographic Information System.

consultations with the secretariat of the GIS Forum Danube (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/100, para. 74).

3. The present document summarises, in Chapters II and III, the main points of the letter sent to UNECE by Mr. Romeo Soare, the Chair of the GIS Forum Danube (River Administration of the Lower Danube Galati) requesting that UNECE takes patronage of DISC. This information has been complemented by the secretariat to give a broader understanding of the goals and activities of the GIS Forum Danube. Chapter IV presents general information about the GIS Forum Danube data warehouse for Danube waterway, and Chapter V proposes a number of options for the cooperation between the GIS Forum Danube and the secretariat and assesses possible implications.

II. General information about the activities of the GIS Forum Danube

4. The GIS Forum Danube was founded in 1997 as a trilateral working group by the waterway administrations from Austria, Germany and Slovakia.² As common goals, those members have set the development of intensive exchange of geographical data and a close cooperation in the field of waterway management along the Danube waterway. The common objective was to propose the standardization and collection of basic geo data, as a basis for the provision of river information services (RIS). Initial activities soon developed, and spread to a broad working group, including members of all riparian Danube states, as well as the Russian Federation and observers from the Czech Republic, the Danube Commission and the International Sava River Basin Commission. The GIS Forum Danube proved to be an innovator and a recognized leader in the field of geo data and its utilization for waterways management. Within a short period of time, a geo-related data warehouse called D4D was established, which has been a very innovative idea, ahead of the time.

5. The goals and tasks of the GIS Forum Danube include:

- Ensuring the implementation, operation and further development of a cross-border D4D as a basis for RIS and trans-national applications including:
 - Development of electronic navigation charts according to the Inland ECDIS standard³
 - Development of paper navigational charts
 - Provision of digitally available geo-related information through the web portal for broad public.
- Definition of basic rules for the generation of geo-related data and the definition of minimum quality standards for sounding, chart and hydrological data
- Exchange of information and experiences concerning the usage of digital terrain models as well as hydrological models, as well as definitions of links to international applications
- Ensuring permanent communication and cooperation of the member States on the subjects of interest for waterway management, regardless of nationality or regional and political attribution, financing schemes and ongoing projects

² The official website of the GIS Forum Danube: <http://gisforumdanube.org>.

³ Electronic Chart Display and Information System for Inland Navigation.

- Ensure permanent communication and cooperation of the partners when creating project proposals or executing common projects, regardless of financing models, as appropriate.

6. Members of the GIS Forum Danube are partners in ongoing projects in the field of the waterway infrastructure, such as FAIRway Danube (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia), FAST Danube (Bulgaria, Romania), or Danube Stream, which is a follow-up of NEWADA⁴ actions (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia), in the field of RIS, as RIS COMEX (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Romania, Serbia and Poland as observer), funded by the European Union.

7. Even though the future of the GIS Forum Danube is supported by other projects, including those mentioned above, it will be in the interest of a pan-European audience to continue work on the annual DISC. This activity is in line with the new strategy of SC.3 to promote the use of intelligent communication and transport systems in inland navigation, including RIS and providing a platform for information exchange on developments and best practices and as a forum for exchange between East and West.

III. General information about the Danube Information Service Conference (DISC)

8. The goal of DISC is to bring together authorities, waterway users and the industry that provides services both for authorities and waterway users and to provide the discussion and exchange of up-to-date technology and new developments. As such, DISC provides a platform for presenting ideas, activities and results achieved by the stakeholders to a broader professional audience and undertakes an important role for reaching a synergy between the participants.

9. DISC is held annually since 2010. DISC 2016 took place 6-7 December in Regensburg (Germany). Numerous participants from Norway in the North to Bulgaria in the South, from the United Kingdom in the West to the Ukraine in the East and other nine European countries took part at the latest DISC.

IV. The GIS Forum Danube data warehouse — D4D

10. Data warehouse for Danube waterway, or D4D, is an online GIS funded by several Danube countries and the European Union. It aims at ensuring a single and internationally harmonized implementation of European directives and standards in a close cooperation with the Danube Commission and other international platforms relevant to the waterway transportation.⁵ D4D presents waterway-related information for the rivers Danube, Main, Mosel, Sava and Tisa, including the waterway distance, the depth range, signs and signals, radio communication, terminals, bridges, the waterway axis and profile, berthing places and other parameters.

⁴ Network of Danube Waterway Administrations, for details see www.newada.eu/newada/. This project was finalized in April 2012 and is followed by the project “NEWADA duo” (www.newada-duo.eu).

⁵ <http://d4d-portal.info/>.

11. The D4D project has the following objectives:⁶

- To provide a common and harmonized implementation of European and international standards on the Danube and recommendations for inland navigation
- To network national GIS of participating countries and ensure an efficient exchange of electronic data between responsible waterway authorities
- To create digital navigation charts of the Danube in compliance with the European Inland ECDIS standard
- To set up an infrastructure to improve the accuracy of satellite-based positioning systems according to current international standards.

V. Possible cooperation between the GIS Forum Danube and UNECE in relation to the patronage of DISC and other activities

12. As mentioned by the Chair, the goals and tasks of the GIS Forum Danube and, in particular, DISC are in line with the strategy of SC.3 with regard to fostering RIS and other information and communication technologies in Europe. Therefore, the secretariat welcomes the proposal on possible cooperation with the GIS Forum Danube in regard of DISC and related matters that may bring added value for all UNECE member States. It would contribute to the goals and objectives established by SC.3 for 2016-2021, but entail both advantages and implications.

13. Support of the activities of the GIS Forum Danube could be provided by UNECE through:

- Organizing DISC under the auspices of UNECE
- Hosting DISC by UNECE
- Cooperation on D4D
- Including this item in the agenda of SC.3 and SC.3/WP.3
- Organizing jointly capacity-building events.

A. Organizing DISC under the auspices of UNECE

14. In terms of the participation of UNECE in international events, the patronage may be provided in the form of the event being undertaken “under the auspices” of UNECE.⁷ When a conference or a meeting, which is not a UNECE event, is convened by an outside body with the participation of UNECE, this usually entails the use of the UNECE logo on the documents of this conference/meeting as well as requiring UNECE representatives to attend the event and contribute to the discussion. In this specific case, this option is possible but must ensure that the use of the logo complies with the Rules of the use of the UN emblem on documents and publications.

15. In this case, the event would be organized by the third party and the implications for the secretariat would be minimal; its participation in the event would be subject to funds being made available for travel to the venue and subsistence.

⁶ <http://gisforumdanube.org/d4d/>.

⁷ An example of potential patronage can be found on the UNESCO website at http://en.unesco.org/about-us/name_logo; however, the specific UNECE conditions will be different.

B. Hosting DISC by UNECE

16. DISC could be organized in conjunction with one of the annual sessions of SC.3/WP.3. For this to occur, the following aspects need to be considered:

- A conference of one day or less could be integrated within the agenda of SC.3/WP.3. This may have an impact on the time available for the other agenda items during the meeting.
- A conference of more than 1 day could not be integrated into the agenda of SC.3/WP.3 but would need to be a stand-alone event back-to-back with the relevant session. This would require additional resources relating to the booking of meeting rooms, interpretation and other conference services. UNECE would not be able to cover these additional costs, which would need to be covered by extra-budgetary funding.

17. In all of the above cases, without extra resources, the secretariat would not be able to make the necessary arrangements for the conference and prepare documentation itself, and therefore the GIS Forum Danube should continue preparing it.

C. Cooperation on D4D

18. Regarding a possible cooperation on the D4D application, given that GIS is a stand-alone online application, which cannot be integrated with other online systems, possible solutions include:

- Host it in UNECE as is. (The secretariat would need more information about the infrastructure necessary, in terms of hardware and software). In order to maintain it, a group of focal points would need to be established to keep the data up-to-date.
- Export and integrate the data in the future online GIS maintained by the secretariat and establish a group of focal points to keep the data up to date, but the current D4D GIS functionalities will not be fully maintained and may be different.

19. Both solutions require ongoing, extensive support in terms of data maintenance as well as sufficient resources to purchase and maintain hardware and software. To this end, operational requirements in terms of human resources, information technology and data exchange procedures need to be clarified. It may imply also administrative and legal arrangements. The secretariat does not have these resources at its disposal and would need to seek extra-budgetary funding for this activity.

D. Integrating the GIS application in the agenda of the Working Parties

20. Including this item in the agenda of SC.3 and SC.3/WP.3 as a permanent item will allow member States to remain informed and monitor progress, exchanging best practices on GIS applications in Europe and encouraging those who have not introduced it to do so using the harmonized approach. To achieve this, a permanent communication will need to be maintained with the GIS Forum Danube secretariat, and the attendance of sessions by delegates representing the GIS Forum Danube from the secretariat or its members should be ensured.

E. Joint capacity-building events

21. Joint capacity building activities on GIS applications for inland waterway management are to be welcomed, but separate, ad hoc, administrative, financial and organizational arrangements will be needed.

VI. Issues for further consideration by SC.3/WP.3

22. The information in this document provides a preliminary review of possible ways of cooperation between the GIS Forum Danube and UNECE. They are intended to serve as a basis for discussion by the Working Party. Countries are encouraged to review the above provisions before giving guidance to the secretariat and recommendations for possible adoption by SC.3 at its sixty-first session (4-6 October 2017).
