

Distr.: Restricted
18 September 2020

English only

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

Sixty-third session

Geneva, 28–30 October 2020

Item 5 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda

Policies and measures in support of intermodal transport:

**Measures to promote efficiency of intermodal transport and
bottlenecks in intermodal transport services at the pan-European level**

Intermodal issues along Euro-Asian Transport Links

Input from the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) to the discussion on the enhanced operationalization of Euro-Asian Transport Corridors in the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)

Submitted by the Chair and Vice-Chair together with the WP.24 secretariat

This input was prepared further to the request expressed by WP.5 and transmitted to WP.24 by the secretariat at sixty second session of WP.24 (Geneva, 30 October-1 November 2019). This information was consulted with WP.24 between 27 April and 15 May 2020.

WP.24 has been discussing issues related to Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) operationalization further to the decision of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its 80th session (20-23 February 2018) who welcomed the work done in the phase III of EATL project and who requested WP.5 and WP.24 to include as relevant the operationalization of EATL on the agenda of their regular sessions.

WP.24 held at its 61st session in November 2018 a workshop on operational challenges of regional intermodal transport and innovative solutions.

The workshop was founded on the considerations that intermodal transport contributes to the realization of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development since intermodality supports economic, environmental and social sustainability.

The workshop noted that sustainable transport can be better achieved in current technological conditions when freight is transported as far as possible with rail/inland waterways/maritime and collected or distributed by road, with the road legs being as short as possible.

The workshop also noted the different operational challenges to intermodal transport. These challenges, which vary between regions, were discussed together with possible solutions as far as such were available.

The information on the challenges and solutions discussed is available in the report of the 61st session of WP.24 – please see ECE/TRANS/WP.24/143, section III, available at: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2019/wp24/ECE-TRANS-WP.24-143e.pdf>. Presentations made at the workshop are available at: <http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-themes/2018.html>

WP.24 believes that this information can be considered as a part of its input to the process of EATL operationalization.

WP.24 also continuously considers issues on intermodal transport terminals and promotes technological development in intermodal transport. This work is also important to EATL operationalization, especially due to their practical impact.

Moreover, in accordance with the decision of the UNECE ITC Bureau and in line with the decision of the 81st ITC session a Forum on Sustainable Transport Connectivity between Europe and Asia was held on October 30, 2019 in the framework of the WP.24 meeting (62nd session), which was jointly organized by the UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats.

The Forum resulted in the exchange of information on efforts undertaken in countries to strengthen interregional sustainable transport connectivity in the context of intermodal transport and logistics, including infrastructure connectivity, operational connectivity, as well as safety, security and environmental concerns of integrated intermodal transport and logistics.

The participating countries were able, in particular, to inform about their efforts in establishing conditions for improving intermodal transport and logistics in international inland transport supporting the Euro-Asian connectivity.

The exchange of information further indicated what the necessary basis for work in enhancing operationalization is as well as where the challenges lie.

The necessary basis in the operationalization work and enhancement of transport connectivity are the United Nations transport legal instruments. However, for these instruments to yield results, it is important, that countries accede to and implement them fully, i.e. all countries along a whole railway route would observe the same international legal provisions.

The Forum also stressed that the Unified Railway Law can be instrumental in improving rail competitiveness, laws such as on contract for carriage of goods by rail between Europe and Asia or seamless crossing of borders by rolling stock were referred to.

Digitalization of transport documents and various phytosanitary and veterinary certificates and acceptance of such along the whole railway route are considered as the key challenges to further the corridor operationalization.

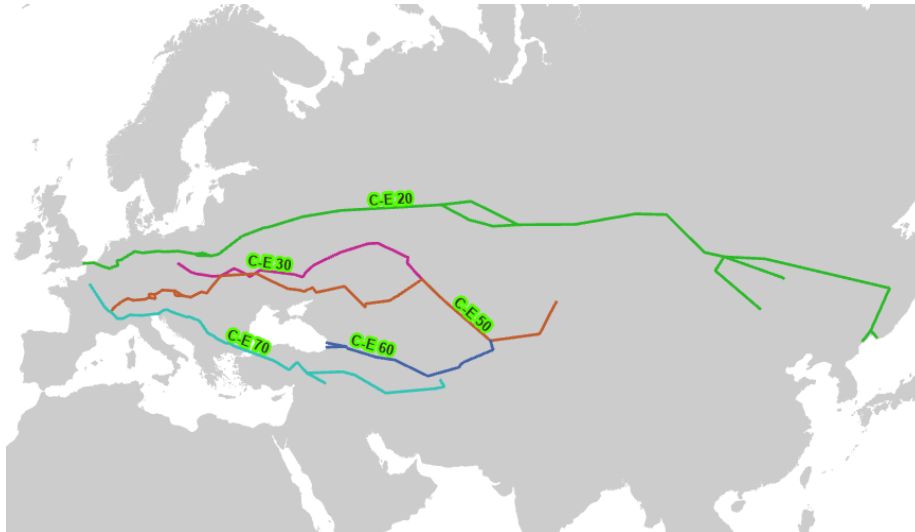
The summary on the Forum is available in the report of the 62nd session of WP.24 – please see ECE/TRANS/WP.24/145, section III, available at: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2019/wp24/ECE-TRANS-WP.24-2019-145e.pdf>. Presentations and statements made at the Forum are available at <http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-themes/2019.html>.

WP.24 also wishes to stress in the context of the information exchanged in the Forum that enhanced operationalization of Euro-Asia inland routes can be achieved building upon accession to and implementation of the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC Agreement).

WP.24 strongly believes that the implementation of the minimum standards for the international combined transport network and the fulfilment of the operational targets of the AGTC Agreement would surely strengthen the operationalization of the Euro-Asian transport routes. Such result can be achieved despite the fact that the AGTC Agreement is only open

for accession to the States of United Nations which are members of UNECE and those who have been admitted to the Commission in a consultative capacity in conformity with paragraphs 8 and 11 of the Terms of Reference of the Commission. This is due to the fact that the AGTC network reaches until the borders with China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea or Mongolia and crosses through Iran (Islamic Republic of) (see figure 1 below). Nonetheless, application of the provisions of the AGTC Agreement by the non-UNECE Asian countries and key to the transit of cargo between Europe and Asia would certainly render additional benefits to these routes' operationalization.

Figure 1: AGTC lines connecting Europe and Asia



To support its position on the importance of the AGTC Agreement in operationalization of the Euro-Asian connectivity, WP.24 wishes to recall a few of the parameters of technical characteristics and operational targets of the AGTC Agreement:

- Minimum speeds of freight trains: 100 to 120 km/h
- Length of trains: 750 meters
- Axle load: 20 tonnes at speed of 120km/h, and 22 tonnes at 100km/h
- Loading gages: those corresponding to UIC B or UIC C
- Stop over times to exchange wagon groups: below 30 minutes
- Border crossing stops: one stop at a joint border of not more than 30 minutes (border crossing checks to be done at stops needed for other technical and/or administrative reasons)

WP.24 would like to note that some UNECE member States lying on the routes between Europe and Asia have not acceded yet to the AGTC Agreement. Among them are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Their accession and implementation of the AGTC Agreement should be encouraged.

WP.24, as intergovernmental body in charge of the AGTC Agreement and one that is expected to monitor the implementation of the Agreement, agreed preliminary at its 62nd session to include in its workplan an activity for an elaboration of a monitoring instrument on the implementation of the AGTC Agreement. Such instrument should help interested countries to understand which are the standards/parameters of the technical characteristics and the operational measures that need to be reinforced to strengthen the implementation of the Agreement. As part of the monitoring instrument, a resolution (handbook) containing best

practice for the attainment of the technical parameters and the operational targets may be developed.

WP.24 also wishes to inform that it started a process to clarify the routing of the AGTC lines so that the Agreement contains the information on the network reflecting the completion of infrastructure projects undertaken in countries.

In conclusions, WP.24 believes that its additional activities of 2018 and 2019 have been very useful for countries in support of the EATL operationalization. WP.24 also considers that its regular activities – whether related to the work on the AGTC Agreement, on new developments in intermodal transport and logistics and/or on policy measures in support of intermodal transport, as well as other activities in accordance with the WP.24's Terms of Reference and the Programme of Work – do contribute in practical terms to improving international freight transport and so they support countries in the EATL operationalization. WP.24 will thus continue support EATL and other international/intercontinental links operationalization through its regular work in accordance with its mandate.
