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Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics****Thirty-third session**

Geneva, 7–9 September 2020

Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

Development of transport networks and/or links:**Euro-Asian Transport Links****Inputs from relevant ECE Working Parties on operationalization of international corridors****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. At its thirty-second session, the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) invited the secretariat “To consult relevant working parties such as Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), Road Transport (SC.1) and Rail Transport (SC.2) on their ideas for the operationalization of the international corridors. The secretariat was asked to submit to the thirty-third WP.5 session as a working document “A compilation of the contributions from countries including the feedback from the sister working parties on possible ways forward and recommendations to the thirty-third WP.5 session.” The current document provides such an overview.

2. In 2000, in the framework of a United Nations Development Account project aimed at providing “Capacity Building through Co-operation in Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-Sea Transport Linkages” with the participation of all United Nations regional commissions, agreement was reached in WP.5 on the development of a comprehensive concept for Euro-Asian transport links. Furthermore, WP.5 requested the secretariat to undertake together with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) secretariat a series of tasks including the preparation of a common United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)/ESCAP vision for Euro-Asian Transport links as well as the preparation of a common questionnaire (TRANS/WP.5/28, para. 30).¹ At its next session (September 2001) the Working Party considered the Common ECE/ESCAP Strategic vision on Euro-Asian transport links as reproduced in document (TRANS/WP.5/2001/14²) and agreed on several actions (TRANS/WP.5/30, para. 31).³ Since then, WP.5 monitors the

¹ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2000/wp5/TRANS-WP5-28e.pdf

² www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/main/wp5/wp5docs/2001/wp50114.pdf

³ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2001/wp5/TRANS-WP5-30e.pdf



work and the development of the Euro-Asian transport links either through a task force and ad hoc informal group meetings in the beginning, the establishment of a project afterwards (Phase I (2002–2007)) and of a formal group of experts for the last two phases (Phase II (2008–2012) and Phase III (2013–2017)). Since then the working party organized four group of experts’ meetings, six national workshops and one ministerial for phase I; seven group of experts’ meetings, three national workshops and one ministerial for phase II; and nine group of experts’ meetings, and two informal meetings for phase III. In addition, in the framework of the Working Party as part of its agenda seven capacity building workshops were organized.

3. The Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) workflow has produced a solid set of concrete deliverables as illustrated in Figure I. The Phase III report launched at the ECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its eighty-first session in February 2019 identifies cargo for which the EATL inland routes could compete with maritime and air routes between Europe and Asia.

Figure I
Summary of the Euro-Asian Transport Links achievements

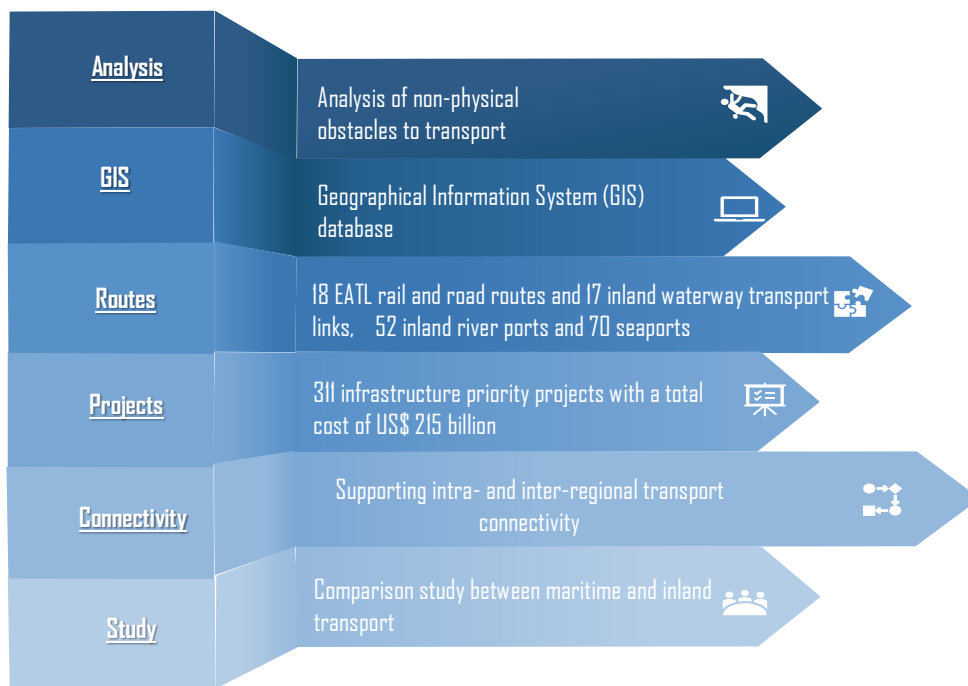
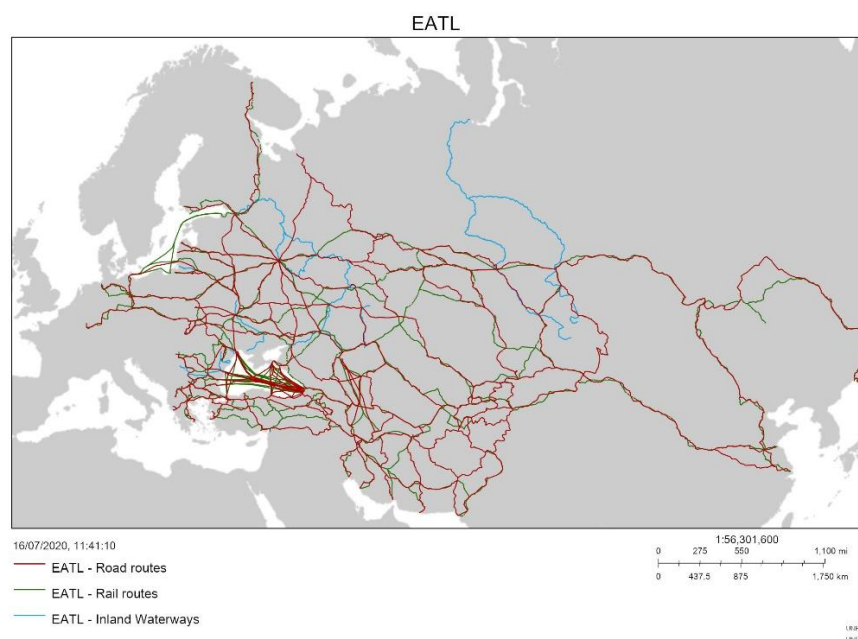


Figure II
EATL GIS maps



4. Inter alia, the EATL Phase III report concludes that:
 - Economic growth and growth in international trade are not the drivers of Euro-Asian freight flows as in the past. Hence, a more logistics-market-oriented model for enhanced operationalization of EATL inland routes is required.
 - Even if the inland routes can never compete in volume of freight with maritime routes, they can be increasingly used for high value and time-sensitive freight.
 - Markets create new opportunities, e.g. e-commerce, that can increase freight flows on inland routes. Inland routes to compete for high-value and time cargo need to respond to the requirements of modern supply chains.
5. The report also identifies several remaining challenges:
 - Missing road & railway and inter-modal/transshipment infrastructure links on some EATL segments, outdated border crossing infrastructure and equipment in other places.
 - Cumbersome border crossing, customs and transit procedures, lack of access to & implementation of United Nations legal instruments.
 - Missing unified railway regimes along EATL railway routes – absence of one contract of carriage, one liability and one consignment note decreases reliability of the services.
 - Lack of harmonized operating and technical inter-operability standards for railway infrastructure & rolling stock (railway gauge, signalling and radio systems, train length and weight standards, block train intervals etc.) require further improvement. Other technical, administrative, linguistic and cultural barriers remain.
 - Poor Information and Communication Technology (ICT) connectivity and ICT interoperability on EATL corridors as a result insufficient attention paid to impact of intelligent transport systems, digitalization of transport documents, computerization of border crossings, satellite track and trace services, introduction of autonomous vehicles on EATL routes efficiency.
6. Yet, despite these remaining obstacles Euro-Asian inland transport connectivity by rail has grown much stronger over the last few years.

- Container volumes increased by almost 30 per cent year over year to 324,700 TEU in 2018.
 - 59 Chinese cities connect forty-eight European cities in 15 countries. 6,300 container block trains travelled between Europe and Asia from 2011–2017, including 3,200 in 2017 alone.
 - Transport costs for a 40 ft. container reduced from US\$ 9,000 in 2010 to US\$ 4,000 now, transit time from ca. 36 days in 2006 to 16 days or less today.
7. Also, the Euro-Asian road transport flows are gaining in relevance thanks to:
- Activation of the TIR system in China, India and Pakistan.
 - Test runs from China to Europe showcase that customs/ border clearance time can be reduced by 80 per cent and road freight volumes could double according to World Bank.
 - Accelerated implementation of eTIR digitalization efforts will further boost the potential of the road sector for long-distance.

II. EATL Operationalization – Way ahead from the perspective of ECE working parties in the field of road, rail, inter-modal and logistics

A. Introduction

8. Further to the request of WP.5 at its thirty-second session to consult relevant working parties (as per the above), the WP.5 secretariat have turned to these working parties on the following occasions:

- SC.1 at its 114th Session (Geneva, 16–18 October 2019)
- WP.24 at its sixty-second session (Geneva, 30 October – 1 November 2019)
- SC.2 at its seventy-third session (Geneva, 25–27 November 2019).

9. In preparation of this working document, the WP.5 secretariat has also held consultations with the secretariats of other relevant working parties:

- Working Party on Customs Questions Affecting Transport (WP.30)
- Working Party on Inland Water Transport (WP.3/SC.3)

10. The working document also contains inputs gathered during a workshop on strengthening security and inter-operability along Euro-Asian inland transport corridors co-organized by the WP.5 secretariat with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (in Tbilisi, on 12 and 13 December 2019).

B. Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics⁴

11. WP.24 has been discussing issues related to EATL operationalization further to the decision of the ITC at its eightieth 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.

⁴ 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, from 30 October to 1 November 2019). This information was consulted with WP.24 between 27 April and 15 May 2020.

1. Workshop on operational challenges of regional intermodal transport and innovative solutions

12. Held at the WP.24 sixty-first session in November 2018, 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 sixty-first session of WP.24 – please see ECE/TRANS/WP.24/143, section III, available at: www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2019/wp24/ECE-TRANS-WP.24-143e.pdf.
- Presentations made at the workshop are available at: www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-themes/2018.html

13. 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.

2. Forum on Sustainable Transport Connectivity between Europe and Asia – Geneva – 30 October 2019

14. In accordance with the decision of the ECE ITC Bureau and in line with the request of the eighty-first session of ITC, a Forum on Sustainable Transport Connectivity between Europe and Asia was held on 30 October 2019 in the framework of the WP.24 sixty-second session, jointly organized by the ECE and ESCAP secretariats.

15. 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 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.

16. 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.

17. 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 among key challenges to further the corridor operationalization.

- The summary on the Forum is available in the report of the sixty-second session of WP.24 – please see ECE/TRANS/WP.24/145, section III, available at: 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 www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-themes/2019.html.

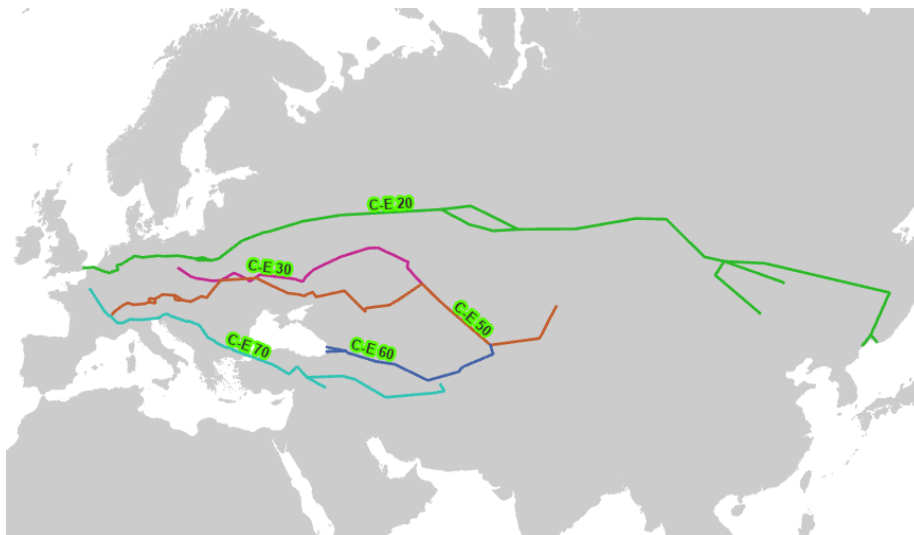
3. Implementation of the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations

18. 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).

19. 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 Members of the United Nations which are members of ECE 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 since 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 III below). Nonetheless, application of the provisions of the AGTC Agreement by the non-ECE Asian countries and key to the transit of cargo between Europe and Asia would certainly render additional benefits to these routes' operationalization.

Figure III

AGTC lines connecting Europe and Asia



20. 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)

21. WP.24 would like to note that some ECE 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

4. Conclusion

24. In conclusion, 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 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.

C. Working Party on Road Transport

25. SC.1 promotes the development and facilitation of international road transport by offering a platform for harmonizing and simplifying rules and requirements.

1. Administering legal instruments

26. To meet this objective, SC.1 draws up, manages and updates international legal instruments such as the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) and as of 2008, the Additional Protocol to CMR concerning the electronic consignment note (eCMR). SC.1 also functions as a parent body to technical expert groups such as those concerning the regulation of driving times and rest periods of professional drivers and the control devices (called tachographs) that are used to control those periods. These matters are covered by the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR). SC.1 also promotes third-party motor vehicle liability insurance law (Green Card system) and the international regular transport of passengers by coach and bus through its work on drafting a global multilateral agreement on the international regular transport of passengers (OmniBUS).

27. In addition, SC.1 administers the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (or E-road network) providing the international legal and technical framework for developing a coherent international road network. It consists among other things of a numbering system based on a north-south and west-east orientation for roads in Europe (including motorways, express roads and ordinary roads). The network is numbered from E 1 up and its roads cross national borders. It also reaches countries in the South Caucasus (Armenia and Azerbaijan) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). All these instruments contribute significantly to the operationalization of Euro-Asian transport.

28. Relevant agreements and instruments include inter alia:

- Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road of 19 May 1956 (CMR)
- Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road of 5 July 1978

- Additional protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) concerning the Electronic Consignment Note (2008) (eCMR)
- European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries of 15 November 1975 (AGR)
- European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport of 1970 (AETR)
- International Motor Insurance System (Green Card)

2. Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road and its Additional Protocol concerning the Electronic Consignment Note

29. In terms of further operationalization of Euro-Asian road transport, the use of CMR and eCMR are of the highest relevance.

(a) Legal context

30. The CMR and eCMR relate to various legal issues concerning transport of cargo by road. As stipulated in article 1, the Convention applies to every contract for the carriage of goods by road in vehicles for reward if origin and destination are situated in two different countries and at least one of them is a contracting party. It is one of the very few Conventions at UNECE that relates to private law rather than to public law. The CMR Convention concerns the contract conditions, the contract document (consignment note) as well as the carrier's liability limits in case of total or partial loss of the goods carried, or in case of delay. The Convention also defines the content of the consignment note (also known as CMR consignment note), which confirms the contract of carriage.

(b) Digitalization efforts

31. The electronic version of the CMR consignment note, the e-CMR, is the subject of an Additional Protocol to the CMR Convention which entered into force in 2011.⁵ Accession to the Additional Protocol concerning the e-CMR is possible only for countries that are Contracting Parties of the CMR Convention. At present, the e-CMR has 26 contracting parties (signatories 8 and parties 26).⁶

32. With the increased interest by countries in utilising electronic consignment notes, transport operators may soon be able to input electronically and store logistics information as well as exchange data, in multiple languages, in real time via a mobile phone or tablet. The application of the eCMR will bring transport cost reductions (with handling costs up to three to four times less expensive), faster administration and invoicing, and a reduction of delivery and reception discrepancies. Using the e-CMR consignment note is also expected to increase data accuracy and would be linked to real time information on progress of shipments, including proof of delivery.

33. Testing the feasibility of e-CMR in practical applications is the object of pilot projects between France and Spain, in Belgium — for national transport operations, and in the Benelux region — for transport between the three countries of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The pilot concerning e-CMR between Spain and France started in January 2017. The accession, in past years, of the Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Turkey, Estonia, Romania, Finland and Belarus as well as, more recently, Poland, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (in 2019) and to date in 2020, Sweden and Norway only further strengthens the e-CMR's road transport facilitation potential for Euro-Asian road transport.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XI-B-11-b&chapter=11&clang=_en

(c) Capacity building

34. In the second half of 2020, the SC.1 secretariat is planning to embark on a capacity building project with the Economic Cooperation Organization, financed by the Islamic Development Bank, with the aim of promoting e-CMR and facilitating its implementation within Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Project activities will be comprised of two capacity building workshops as well as the recruitment of an international consultant who will undertake work on technical aspects between the workshops.

3. Conclusion

35. In conclusion, SC.1 believes that the legal instruments and practical tools under its purview are highly relevant to the operationalization of Euro-Asian road transport. Whether it be through harmonized infrastructure standards (AGR), the promotion of the use of CMR and eCMR, the use of the tachograph (AETR) or its support for the Green Card system (which facilitates crossing of borders and claim settlements in case of road accidents across 48 member countries in the Euro-Asian region) the instruments provided by SC.1 have a significant impact.

D. Working Party on Rail Transport

36. SC.2 supports rail industry and transport policy makers in areas such as: Pan-European rail infrastructure standards (AGC Agreement); Facilitation of border crossing in international rail transport; Operational aspects of international rail transport (infrastructure capacity, productivity, interoperability, new transport technologies) etc. SC.2 also serves as the parent body to the Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law (cf. supra) and the Group of Experts on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock.

37. Relevant agreements include inter alia:

- European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) of 1985

38. The AGC identifies the rail lines of international importance - the E-rail network - and defines the infrastructure parameters to which they should conform in order to facilitate the movement of passengers and freight by rail across international borders. Similarly, to the AGR it also extends across the ECE Region and into the South Caucasus.

1. Creation of a unified railway legal regime

39. Building further on the creation and gradual introduction of a CIM/SMGS Common Consignment Note from 2007 onwards ECE member States are in the process of finalising Unified Railway Law (URL).⁷ Through URL, operators will be able to carry out rail freight transport within a single legal regime along the entire East-West axis connecting Europe to Asia. The work is ongoing in the framework of a designated Expert Group which meets under the auspices of SC.2⁸ counting on legal experts from all interested Governments, international organizations such as the Organisation for Co-operation of Railways (OSJD), the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the International Rail Transport Committee (CIT), the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the railway and wider transport industry. In 2017, draft legal provisions of the URL contract of international carriage for goods by rail were completed. Testing of the provision took place: (a) through a virtual pilot test, in May 2017, along the corridor Germany – Poland – Belarus – Russian Federation, and (b) through a real pilot test in April 2019 along the corridor Azerbaijan – Georgia – Turkey. In 2020, the Group of Experts is to focus on the completion of text of the URL convention on the contract of international carriage of goods by rail.

⁷ www.unece.org/?id=32361

⁸ www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2_geurl_mandate.html

2. Conclusion

40. SC.2 believes that the infrastructure agreement under its purview and the ongoing work on the creation of a unified railway legal regime are key enablers towards the further operationalization of Euro-Asian rail transport. At the same time, as discussed at the recent workshop on rail freight competitiveness held at the November 2019 session of the Working Party, it recognises the need for member States to more closely coordinate at a Pan-European level to ensure that freight competitiveness can be increased to lead to a greater market share of rail freight along the corridor. The importance of increasing harmonisation and interoperability as well as reducing infrastructure deficiencies whether they are at border crossings, at bottlenecks in the network or as a result of poorly maintained infrastructure is another area for further focus.

E. Working Party on Customs Questions Affecting Transport

41. WP.30 serves as an inter-governmental platform which prepares, reviews, modifies and administers various United Nations conventions and agreements in the field of border crossing and transit facilitation, including most notably the TIR and Harmonization Conventions. The latter seeks to streamline administrative procedures and remove cross-border technical barriers. It applies to all goods being imported or exported or in transit, when they are moved across one or more sea, air or inland borders.

42. Agreements that are administered by WP.30 and are of relevance to Euro-Asian transport include inter alia:

- Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), of 14 November 1975;
- International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 21 October 1982;
- Customs Convention on Containers, of 2 December 1972.

Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), of 14 November 1975

(a) Unique transit facilitation tool

43. Most significant for the further operationalization of Euro-Asian road transport is the TIR Convention (of 1975) which is a unique transport facilitation tool. It is a global United Nations Convention that establishes and regulates the only existing and operational global customs transit system. It has a broad geographic coverage with 76 Contracting Parties, including the European Union. As of 2020, almost 34,000 operators are authorized to use the TIR system and around 1 million TIR transports are currently carried out on an annual basis. The TIR Convention facilitates the international carriage of goods from one or more customs offices of departure to one or more customs offices of destination and through as many countries as necessary. As a rule, the vehicle remains sealed throughout the TIR transport and, thus, goods are generally not inspected at border crossings. However, customs authorities remain entitled to perform inspections whenever they suspect irregularities or randomly. To cover the customs duties and taxes at risk throughout the journey, the Convention has established an international guaranteeing chain which is managed by the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

(b) Multi-modal applicability

44. The Convention applies to transports with road vehicles, combinations of vehicles as well as containers and allows for the use of the TIR Carnet across all modes of transport, including railways, inland waterways and maritime transport provided that at least one leg of the journey is made by road. In March 2020 a first intermodal transport between India and Afghanistan was completed, using TIR, carrying factory line products via Chabahar port in Iran (Islamic Republic of), taking only seven days in total (five by sea and two by road), cutting the journey short by three to four days. (IRU, 2020).

(c) Enhanced geographical scope

45. The latest TIR accessions, in recent years, of Argentina and Oman, and the activation of the TIR system in China and Saudi-Arabia open-up significant transit facilitation opportunities for landlocked developing countries. In May 2018, a 5,600 km long test-run has taken place from Dalian (Liaoning province) in China to Novosibirsk in the Russia Federation using for the very first time the TIR system which, according to the IRU, could potentially cut customs clearance time along that route with up to 80 percent. In April 2019, the first ever TIR transport from inland China to the Russian Federation conducted by a foreign operator travelled from Tianjin, China, to Tver, Russian Federation. The entire TIR transport covered a total distance of 9,300 km and took 12 days.

(d) Ongoing digitalization efforts

46. A significant milestone was achieved when, in February 2020, TIR contracting parties approved the legal basis for eTIR in the form of a new Annex 11 to the TIR Convention. In combination with successful eTIR pilots, carried out between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey, between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) as well as between Georgia and Turkey which were a first step towards the full computerization of the TIR procedure, the new Annex, which is expected to enter into force on 25 May 2021, brings new impetus to the digitalization of the TIR procedure. As a result of the eTIR pilot projects and of the negotiations on Annex 11, the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1) continued to improve the eTIR specifications, which will ultimately describe all technical details how national ICT customs systems, private sector systems and the eTIR international system will interoperate to ensure a seamless eTIR procedure. Some TIR contracting parties, e.g. at the level of the European Union, have already started considering how to best interconnect their ICT systems with the eTIR international system. Another important step in the course of 2020 has been the conversion of GE.1, as an informal group and working in English only, into the formal Group of Experts on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure, with the abbreviation WP.30/GE.1. The meetings of WP.30/GE.1 will be conducted with full interpretation and documentation in the three official languages of ECE – English, French and Russian.

(e) Conclusion

47. The TIR/ e-TIR accelerated implementation could potentially be at the heart of EATL operationalization efforts not just for road but given the multi-modal applicability of TIR across all inland modes. Together with the Harmonization Convention which aims at streamlining administrative procedures and remove cross-border technical barriers for transport between EATL countries a fuller implementation of the TIR Convention in the EATL region has a great potential to turn Euro-Asian transport more operational.

F. Working Party on Inland Water Transport

48. In EATL Phase I there was a section dedicated to inland waterways, in connection with the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) and the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC). At that time, sixteen EATL inland waterways and 48 EATL inland ports were identified for prioritization in terms of financing and development.

49. In particular, the following inland water links were mentioned:

- The Rhine-Main-Danube corridor, linking Western, Central and South-East Europe with the Black Sea and the Caucasus countries
- The Ural river linking the north-western parts of Kazakhstan with Caspian Sea;
- The rivers Ob and Irtysh linking Russia and Kazakhstan in the East.

50. Currently, the number of contracting parties to the AGN Agreement are 19, after the accession of Serbia in 2014 and Poland in 2017. The AGN network covers 29,260 km of European inland waterways and 440 ports of international importance extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains and connecting 37 countries in Europe and beyond.

51. The ECE “White Paper on the progress, accomplishment and future of sustainable inland water transport”,⁹ the third edition of a policy paper on the current situation, trends and challenges in inland water transport (IWT) on European inland waterways of international importance issued in 2020, highlights the progress reached in the implementation of AGN and provides an overview of ongoing infrastructure projects.

52. In the framework of EATL, the following projects are worthwhile mentioning:

- The E40 waterway which would connect the Baltic Sea through inland waterways in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine to the Black Sea has recently gained political support in the three countries involved. If fully navigable, the E 40 waterway would allow freight to be transported from the Black Sea through Ukraine, Belarus and Poland to western European countries, and particularly the Nordic countries. Once the main bottlenecks on the Oder-Vistula section are removed and Class Va requirements met, it would also be possible to transport freight by river between Western and Eastern Europe, and South Eastern Europe via Poland. It is estimated that about 20 per cent of goods currently carried by rail and about 10 per cent of goods carried by road could be transferred to water transport on that route.
- The European Multiservice Meteorological Awareness system (EMMA) project, aimed to develop inland and river-sea navigation in the Baltic Sea region, as provided for in the policy paper “Strengthening Inland Navigation and River-Sea Shipping in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region”.

53. AGN also includes coastal routes, in particular:

- The E 60 waterway - coastal route from Gibraltar to the north along the coast of Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany, via the Kiel Canal, along the coast of Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Russian Federation to St. Petersburg – Volgo-Baltijskiy Waterway, Belomorsko-Baltijskiy Canal, along the coast of the White Sea to Arkhangelsk.
- The E 90 waterway from Gibraltar to the south along the coast of Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine along the southern coast of the Crimea to Azov, via the river Don to Astrakhan, and
- The E 90-05 waterway in the Caspian Sea.

54. These are maritime waterways accessible for river-sea vessels, which precludes system-wide investments on these routes. It is nevertheless significant that investments continue or are planned in order to increase the efficiency or the potential economic benefits of these combined river-sea routes.

⁹ The UNECE White Paper is available here:
www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/main/sc3/publications/IWW_WhitePaper_ECE_TRANS_279.pdf

Figure IV
The E waterway network according to AGN



55. During the EATL Phase I, the share of inland water transport projects was estimated as 4 per cent, and they were excluded from the priority categories with confirmed funding. Therefore, EATL links have not been discussed at sessions of WP.3/SC.3. However, given the advantages of inland water and river-sea transport in terms of safety, reliability and reducing congestion, better environmental performance lower energy consumption and cost-efficiency in transporting large quantities over longer distances, inland waterway links could be addressed at later stages of operationalization of EATL.

IV. Proposal on Way ahead – Enhancing the operationalization of Euro-Asian transport corridors and other international corridors through increased coordination and management efforts

A. A need for increased coordination

56. As the above analysis shows the potential for more efficient interregional connectivity especially along the Euro-Asian inland transport links is tremendous. Over the past decade, Governments and the private sector in the region have continuously worked on addressing the remaining physical and non-physical inter-operability obstacles to international transport.

57. In doing so, Euro-Asian countries have benefited significantly from accession to and ratification of regional and international conventions and agreements administered by ECE that form the basis of regulatory governance for safe, efficient, socially inclusive and environmentally sound mobility and interregional/regional connectivity by inland transport, including road, rail, inland waterway and intermodal transport.

58. This in turn has produced good results with railway container volumes increased by almost 30 per cent year over year to 324,700 TEU in 2018, the number of container block trains between Europe and Asia witnessed a massive increase as well and their transit time was reduced by 50 per cent and more. In order to keep this momentum and untap its full potential the Euro-Asian inland transport sector requires more and better managed, economically viable and multi-modal transport corridors.

59. What the previous EATL analysis suggests is that while the Euro-Asian corridors are practically operational, they would benefit from further operationalization efforts to make

them truly competitive for the inter-continental transport of high-value and time sensitive cargo. Remaining challenges identified, including infrastructural gaps as well as administrative/ regulatory gaps need to be addressed effectively and collectively involving all relevant public and private sector stakeholders. Only then can Euro-Asian inland corridors meet the requirements of modern supply chains: reliability, safety, customer service.

60. In order to be effective and efficient such transit transport corridors need not only to have good and well-maintained transport infrastructure, they also require smooth implementation of agreed legal frameworks, transit rules and policies and transport and trade facilitation measures. Furthermore, coordination is needed in order to design and implement integrated services along specific corridors such as block trains. The good practice of the International Coordinating Council on Trans-Eurasian Transportation (CCTT) which gathers hundreds of stakeholders organizing and providing high value transportation services should be followed. Promoting and establishing efficient inland transit transport systems, including corridors, is especially important for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) as they offer the means to link them to international markets, regional and global value chains and increasing exports. Establishing well-functioning and efficiently governed transit routes will also contribute to reduction in time spent at borders and the costs of transport, increasing the reliability and predictability of transport.

61. What is needed now, more than anything else at this stage is corridor-based action, including through the development of corridor specific work plans and operational targets, the attraction of specific cargo types and volumes, regionally agreed key performance indicators, pooling of rolling stock, railway wagons, containerised transport units etc. Ultimately the performance of a transport corridor is only as strong as its weakest link.

62. It is with that in mind that the secretariat would like to suggest the establishment, under WP.5 auspices, of a pilot Corridor Management Group which would focus its efforts on improving coordination among a selected group of stakeholders from EATL countries on specific EATL corridors or parts thereof.

B. Successful concepts for corridor management

63. Taking as example good practices from the European Union, TEM or TER projects, CCTT, corridor management is established to set up corridor horizontal priorities, agree on corridor work plans and monitor the corridor operationalization progress in the context of international rules, standards and principles. The European Commission, for example, nominated a European Coordinator for each of the nine core network corridors. These coordinators act in the name of the European Commission and on its behalf.

64. Their mandate includes:

- Drawing up the relevant corridor work plan (together with the Member States concerned);
- Supporting and monitoring implementation of the work plan; as and when necessary, highlighting difficulties and looking for appropriate remedies;
- Regularly consulting the corridor forum (a consultative body bringing together Member States and various stakeholders);
- Making recommendations in areas such as transport development along corridors or access to financing / funding sources;
- Annual reporting to the European Parliament, Council, Commission and the Member States concerned on the progress achieved.

65. The ECE TEM and TER Master Plans, both administered by a Project Coordinator, provide a framework for intergovernmental cooperation towards the coordinated development of coherent international transport infrastructure networks in participating countries and their integration into pan-European networks.

66. TEM and TER are structured based on active participation and support of member countries through a Trust Fund Agreement, deposited with ECE. The projects' Steering

Committee its highest administrative and political body consist of national delegations from each participating country. The respective Project Coordinators are funded through the Trust Funds as are the various meetings held in the framework of the projects. The TEM and TER Project Coordinators report annually to the ECE Inland Transport Committee.

67. The Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation was founded by the Ministry of Railway Communication of the Russian Federation, Deutsche Bahn, the Group of European Trans-Eurasia Forwarders and Operators (GETO) and the Korean International Freight Forwarders Association (KIFFA). Presently the CCTT has more than 96 member societies from 23 countries, including railways of Europe, Asia and CIS states, leading shipping companies, operators and forwarders, ports and stevedoring companies, state organizations, administrations and municipalities, telecom and marketing companies, security services and mass media. For more than twenty years of history the CCTT has achieved a high international standing and has become an efficient international forum for networking and real cooperation between all parties involved in Trans-Siberian freight transportation. The Council has developed several groups that are working on the continuous improvement of services and cargo flows. These Working Groups are:

- CCTT WG on increasing the competitiveness of ITC East – West
- CCTT WG on increasing the competitiveness of ITC North – South
- CCTT WG on the development of Far East multimodal transportation
- CCTT WG on IT development (CCTT WG ITD)
- CCTT WG on harmonization of the International Transport Law (CCTT WG HITL).

68. As the above examples indicate, the entity responsible for corridor management needs to be established in the framework of an intergovernmental process. The entity should report periodically to the intergovernmental body in charge of the process. Corridor management thus requires a governance structure and institutional setup agreed upon by all stakeholders. WP.5 is ideally equipped to provide such a platform.

C. Establishment of Corridor Management Groups on selected EATL routes

69. The Corridor Management Groups (CMGs) objective would be to set up corridor interoperability priorities and monitor their implementation under the overall oversight by WP.5. CMGs should also set operational targets and monitor them, as well as propose corrective action.

70. To make CMGs succeed in attaining the objective, the following governance process is proposed:

- An intergovernmental body should monitor, guide and agree on which routes require corridor management and then on its program of work, objectives and priorities. WP.5 being the intergovernmental body that monitors this work since 2000 should undertake this role of the intergovernmental body overseeing the work of CMGs for international corridors agreed to fall under its purview, as part of its priority activity on the development of transport networks and/or links. In doing so, WP.5 with support of its secretariat will undertake all necessary actions in order to identify and if possible secure the required extra-budgetary funding to facilitate the CMGs operation.
- WP.5 should appoint/ elect Coordinators for each CMG on a rotational basis.
- WP.5 should advise CMGs horizontal priorities and work plans, in line with the work plans of all relevant working parties and ensure synergies with other international developments supporting corridor operationalization.

71. The necessary CMG's institutional set-up is suggested as follows:

- Main members: senior level Government representatives (i.e. Ministry of Transport/ Economy) of each of the countries along the corridor; Each country should formally nominate its CMGs representatives.

- Corridor Coordinator: appointed from among the main CMG members.
 - Other members: various additional stakeholders including private sector operators at the invitation of the Coordinator.
72. Tasks of the CMGs could involve:
- Setting up appropriate, corridor specific interoperability priorities and operational targets.
 - Developing a corridor work plan for the implementation of priorities and targets (including Key Performance Indicators, envisaged cargo volumes, pooling possibilities of rolling stock, containers etc.).
 - Promoting accession to and implementation of the legal instruments on transport administered by ECE.
 - Setting up corridor-specific pilot projects such as block trains, truck caravans, intermodal connections, digitalization programs of ECE conventions such as eTIR and eCMR or draft conventions such as Unified Railway Law.
 - Monitoring implementation of the work plan; as and when necessary, highlighting difficulties and looking for appropriate remedies.
 - Identify and attract specific cargo flows, commodity types for which the specific corridor is well placed.
 - Formulating recommendations in areas such as transport development along corridors or access to financing / funding sources.
 - Advocating for regulatory and legislative reforms and piloting reforms in trade facilitation and logistics.
 - Monitoring individual country performance through Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN).
 - Marketing of the corridor, advocating for and promoting corridor use in line with the operational targets.
73. A proposed institutional set up is available in the annex of this document.
74. The setting up of such a CMGs would allow for synergies with an ongoing UNDA funded project regarding the development of a set of Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators SITCIN project. The main objective of the project is to develop a tool enabling countries to measure their degree of connectivity: both domestically and bilaterally/sub-regionally as well as in terms of soft & hard infrastructure. Inter alia, the SITCIN, once fully developed and tested in the five pilot countries, will provide an instrument (a measurable set of criteria) for Governments enabling them to evaluate/ assess:
- The extent to which they implement the relevant UN legal instruments, agreements and conventions effectively, and
 - The degree to which their inland transport systems are inter-operable with the systems within their respective (sub-)regions.
75. In doing so, it should enable policymakers to assess their country's degree of external economic connectivity in terms of efficiency of inland transport, logistics, trade, customs and border crossing facilitation processes. Governments could also use the SITCIN to assess and report on their progress in implementing the transport related Sustainable Development Goals (i.e. 2030 Agenda) and their commitments under the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (for the decade 2014–2024).
76. The indicators are structured within three pillars of sustainability and applied across the four inland transport sectors including, road, rail, inland waterways and inter-modal transport:
- Economic Sustainability (validating border crossing efficiency, time, and costs as well as quality of (inter-modal) infrastructure and the use of ICT and intelligent transport solutions).

- Social Sustainability (assessing adequacy of road traffic rules enforcement, road traffic infrastructure, vehicle regulations and administrative frameworks surrounding cross border transport of perishable foodstuffs and of dangerous goods).
- Environmental Sustainability (evaluating measures aimed at reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutants and noise emissions (investigates alternative fuel share and average age of the vehicle fleet etc.)).

77. The SITCIN could provide a sound methodological approach towards corridor performance management in the Euro-Asian region.

D. Preparation of a handbook on good practices for interregional transport connectivity

78. In order to facilitate the work of the CMGs as well as take advantage of WP5's long lasting experience on developing and facilitating interregional and regional transport connectivity, it is suggested that a handbook should be prepared that concentrates good practices implemented worldwide and especially in the regions where the work of WP5 was involved in the last twenty years. Such a handbook will further facilitate the identification and preparation of CMGs program of work and priorities, but it will also capitalize the value and knowledge that WP.5 brings on the topic under consideration for all these years.

E. Resource requirements

79. In its inception phase the setting up and operation of a pilot CMGs could be covered by the WP.5 secretariat within existing resources. If over time, the initial CMG would be expanded or additional CMGs would be established funding could be raised from different sources or options such as through in-kind contributions by the Governments, project trust funds as it is the case for the TEM and TER projects, or contributions from different International Financial Institutions already involved in transport corridors development.

F. Guidance by the Working Party

80. WP.5, in line with its mandate to work on the operationalization of the EATL and other transport corridors, is invited to consider the above-mentioned proposals and provide guidance.

Annex

Corridor Management Group Institutional Set-up

The necessary CMG's institutional set-up could look as follows:

- Main members: senior level Government representatives (i.e. Ministry of Transport/Economy) of each of the countries along the corridor; Each country should formally nominate its CMGs representatives.
- Corridor Coordinator: appointed from among the main CMG members.
- Other members: various additional stakeholders including private sector operators at the invitation of the Coordinator.
- Meetings: annual or bi-annual meetings in one of the countries along the corridor.

Tasks of the Corridor Coordinator could involve:

- Propose appropriate, corridor specific interoperability priorities and operational targets.
- Assess expected impact of actions to be taken.
- Identify, define and mediate between the interests of different stakeholders along a corridor (shippers, transporters, customs authorities, road authorities, security services, health authorities etc.).
- Identify and endeavor to remedy the capacity needs of the specific corridors (financial, human resources, infrastructure related etc.).
- Reporting annually to the WP.5 in cooperation with the WP.5 secretariat.

Tasks of the CMGs could involve:

- Setting up appropriate, corridor specific interoperability priorities and operational targets.
 - Development of a corridor work plan for the implementation of priorities and targets (including Key Performance Indicators, envisaged cargo volumes, pooling possibilities of rolling stock, containers etc.).
 - Monitoring implementation of the work plan; as and when necessary, highlighting difficulties and looking for appropriate remedies.
 - Formulating recommendations in areas such as transport development along corridors or access to financing / funding sources.
 - Advocating for regulatory and legislative reforms and piloting reforms in trade facilitation and logistics.
 - Monitoring individual country performance through COPR.
 - Marketing of the corridor, advocating for and promoting corridor use in line with the operational targets.
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