Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Transport Statistics

Seventy-third session
Geneva, 15 – 17 June 2022
Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda
**Data collection, methodological development and
harmonization of transport statistics:
Common questionnaire**

Common questionnaire: areas to consider for streamlining

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1.	The common questionnaire allows countries to simultaneously provide inland transport statistics to three organizations – the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), International Transport Forum (ITF) and the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat). This exercise provides a rich collection of indicators, most of which are not available through other data collections at the international level.

2.	The common questionnaire was streamlined in 2019, removing indicators related to gas pipeline transport, bus journeys offered and seat-km offered, and combining the vehicle categories for compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas into one. Streamlining reduces the reporting burden on countries and allows a better focus on quality for indicators considered of most importance.

3.	This document discusses some preliminary potential areas for further streamlining, which WP.6 is invited to discuss at the session. Additional suggestions from countries are welcome. Based on member State and data user feedback, a more concrete proposal will be developed and discussed at a future meeting (either at Eurostat, ITF or UNECE) and implemented if agreed upon, hopefully in time for the 2022 data collection round towards the second half of 2023.

4.	The common questionnaire (as of 2022) requests 1038 indicators. This is made up of 33 indicators in the bus module; 87 in the inland water module; 35 in the oil pipeline module; 173 in the rail module; 362 in the road module and 348 in the road vehicle-km module. These figures are visualized in Figure 1, together with corresponding sub-groups.

Figure 1
The number of indicators collected in each module and chapter of the common questionnaire

II. Considerations for streamlining

5. The partner organizations base considerations for streamlining on a number of factors:

(a) Poor data availability. If data are not available for a sufficient subset of countries, then an indicator may be considered for deletion. There are exceptions to this, for example if a particular transport indicator was very important to just a handful of countries, then it should not be deleted, or if a new technology is still in its infancy, it would be expected that only a few countries collect data for it to start with.

(b) Lack of relevance. Common questionnaire data are collected to be of use to analysts and policy makers. If indicators have very limited value, either because they track something of low importance or they do not show trends across countries that are valuable, then this may be grounds to consider streamlining.

(c) Lack of methodological guidance. Countries need to understand exactly what is being asked for a particular indicator in order to have internationally comparable data series that are useful. If there is no guidance on what an indicator should represent, then this will likely create data comparability issues and provide data that are not useful.

(d) Data are too detailed/insignificant. If figures track concepts that are in very insignificant quantities at the international level, and are not expected to increase in the future, then this probably means that data granularity is too high.

6. The partner organizations are open to suggestions from countries on what may be considered for streamlining.

III. Road goods vehicle capacities

7. Document ECE/TRANS/WP.6/2022/2 discusses incorrectly reported load capacities for road goods vehicles and the proposed actions that the partner organizations will take to improve quality in this area of the questionnaire. A separate question relates to how useful

these goods vehicles load capacities are. Do vehicle capacities vary significantly across countries or over time? If not, and they are simply a function of the number of goods vehicles, then this dataset does not offer any insight.

8. Figure 2 shows the ratio of the total road goods vehicles capacity in tonnes against the number of goods road vehicles, therefore giving the average load capacity per goods vehicle.

Figure 2
Average load capacity of road goods vehicles, selected countries 2013-2018
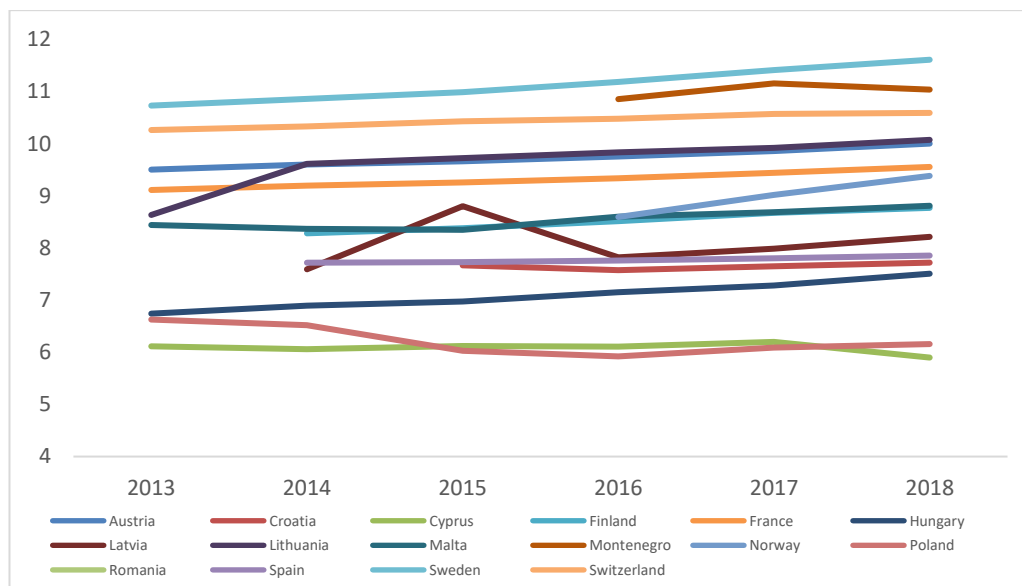
Source: **common questionnaire**

9. In most cases the data for countries over time are very flat, although there does seem to be a slight positive trend for heavier goods vehicles in these countries over the time period. Views on whether the differences between countries are due to genuinely different trends in fleet composition across countries, or due to differing methodologies, would allow an assessment of the value of these data.

IV. Road traffic vehicle-km

10. The road traffic vehicle-km was started as a pilot collection with the hope that odometer readings at road worthiness tests would provide a high degree of granularity. Therefore, different road vehicles are split into classes based on both age and fuel type. This means, for example, that 55 separate indicators are collected on vehicle-km for buses, coaches and trolleybuses, by their age and fuel type. To take an example, only one country (Latvia) is providing data on vehicle-km run by buses fueled by Liquefied Petroleum Gas LPG) (see Figure 3). It should be possible to streamline this questionnaire module significantly while still maintaining data collection for the more relevant indicators.

Figure 3
Screenshot of data availability for vehicle-km of buses running on LPG

Source: **Eurostat Road_TF_VEHAGE table**

11.   In addition to the high degree of granularity of the road vehicle-km module, there is also some overlap of these indicators with the vehicle-km data already collected in the road module, with ten indicators with the same definition repeated (see ECE/TRANS/WP.6/2022/2.)

V.   Conclusions

12.   Streamlining is not an exercise that should be considered every year, due to the time and resources costs associated with changing questionnaires and data transmission systems (both for countries and partner organizations). Based on discussions at WP.6 this year, partner organizations will make a concrete proposal for streamlining in Autumn 2022, which can be considered at the Eurostat meeting in November 2022. Any decision will be confirmed with member States through online consultations, and be subsequently enacted in time for the 2022 data collection in Summer/Autumn 2023.