



Economic Commission for Europe
Inland Transport Committee
Working Party on Rail Transport
Group of Experts on International Railway Passenger Hubs
Fifth session

Geneva, 19–21 April 2023

**Report of the fifth session of the Group of Experts on
International Railway Passenger Hubs**
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I. Attendance

1. The Group of Experts on International Railway Passenger Hubs (the Group of Experts or the Group) held its fifth session from 19 to 21 April 2023 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva.
2. The session of the Group of Experts was attended by representatives of the following countries: Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
3. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Passengers' Federation and International Union of Railways (UIC).
4. The representatives of the following entities attended the session: England's Economic Heartland, Serbian Railways, Trans-European Railway Project and TRA Consulting.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/1

5. The secretariat presented the agenda. The Group of Experts adopted the amended agenda as set out in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/1.

III. Information on other complementary activities across the ECE region (agenda item 2)

6. The Group was updated on the activities of the Platform on International Rail Passenger Transport by the Netherlands, UIC and England's Economic Heartland¹.
7. The Platform on International Rail Passenger Transport is based on the 2020 Ministerial Declaration on international railway passenger transport endorsed by 27 countries and intends to present its third progress report to Ministers in June 2023.
8. The Group noted the importance of intergovernmental deliberations and the exchange of best practice held at UNECE in rail transport. It highlighted that it is the leading space bringing together stakeholders from the wider pan-European Region and beyond to discuss the development of railways.
9. The Group of Experts thanked the Netherlands, England's Economic Heartland and UIC for their interventions and asked experts to update participants on developments on other complementary activities across the ECE region at the next session of the Group. Presentations will be made available to participants according to normal United Nations practices.

IV. Identification of stations on the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines network to be defined as an international railway passenger hub (agenda item 3)

Documents: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/3, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2022/8

10. The Group of Experts continued discussions on the identification of stations on the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) network to be defined as International Railway Passenger Hubs based on discussions at previous sessions. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/3 containing the new proposals for this session. The document highlighted the updated text of the definition for an

¹ The study referred to in this presentation is available at: https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Item_7_Annex_1_EEH_Mobility_Hubs_Strategic_Transport_Leadership_Board_03_March_2023_.pdf.

International Railway Passenger Hub as well as the proposed text in its final layout form as a potential amendment to AGC.

11. The Group discussed the definition of a hub and updated it further to reflect more recent discussions. It agreed to the new definition as follows:

“An International Railway Passenger Hub is a rail station on AGC network that provides passengers with connections to international destinations; and may connect to national rail services, to other hubs and to the services delivered by other modes. International railway passenger hubs may be defined as “primary” or “secondary” by member States and depending on the level of service offered.”

“The network of International Railway Passenger Hubs is provided in annex III of AGC. The technical and service parameters that member States are to work towards providing in “primary” and “secondary” international railway passenger hubs are identified in annex IV of AGC.”

12. Delegates also discussed how to address the issue of primary and secondary hubs in the definition and in the annex. While the Group noted that railway hubs can serve different purposes and therefore have differing requirements, it was also noted that, with the changes agreed in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/4, this distinction may no longer be necessary. The Group invited experts to inform the secretariat by 31 May 2023 whether the distinction between primary and secondary hubs was still needed in the text, so that the final amendment proposals can be prepared for the September 2023 session. In the meantime, it asked the secretariat to reflect the current situation in the table in the proposed new annex III through the inclusion of “To be determined” in the Classification column where member States have not identified their status.

13. The Group requested that the new definition be included also in the report of the Group to be discussed at the next session and then submitted to the November 2023 meeting of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

14. In terms of the list of hubs included in the proposed annex III, the following changes were requested:

- The station of Belfast Central, now known as Belfast Lanyon Place, should be added to the list.
- The station of Ebbsfleet International should be added to the list.
- The station of Bern should be added to the list.
- All current stations with international traffic within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should be categorised as primary hubs and the rest as secondary hubs. (Only relevant if the primary/secondary distinction is retained).
- All stations currently listed in the Netherlands should be categorised as primary hubs. (only relevant if the primary/secondary distinction is retained).

15. The Group asked the secretariat to update document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/3 to include these changes and to submit the updated version to the Group for review at its sixth session in September 2023. It asked the secretariat to share a first draft of this document to experts before 10 May 2023 to facilitate the decision-making process on the distinction between primary and secondary hubs.

16. The Group of Experts noted the importance of appropriate terminology and definitions for the rail legal instruments related to international railway passenger hubs. It requested that such terminology be included in the Guidance Note discussed under agenda item 4.

V. Identification of the technical and service parameters necessary for the definition of an international passenger railway hub (agenda item 4)

Documents: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/4, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2022/11, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/6

17. The secretariat introduced discussions on agenda item 4 by recalling discussions at previous sessions on the minimum technical and service parameters for international railway passenger hubs. The secretariat then introduced document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/4 incorporating the comments that had been received from experts since the previous session. The Group proceeded to discuss the different sections of the document.

18. The Group of Experts welcomed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/4 on further developments in relation to the development of technical and service parameters at hubs, in the structure necessary for amendment proposals. It agreed a number of changes during the session including:

- Additional text at the start of the annex to reflect the priority given to parameters in sections A and B.
- Additional text at the start of section C to cover areas related to infrastructure service facilities also for open access international operations.
- The movement of customs related aspects to section C.
- A number of supplementary changes to the provisions in sections A and B regarding security, waiting areas, toilets, languages and parking.

19. The Group asked the secretariat to finalise the document, incorporating these changes, in order for it to be agreed as a key output of the Group at its sixth session in September 2023. It asked the secretariat to share a first draft of this document to experts before 10 May 2023 to facilitate the decision-making process on the distinction between primary and secondary hubs.

20. The Group then recalled and discussed the Guidance Note set out in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2022/11 noting its importance going forward and the need to keep it updated. The Group asked the secretariat to update this document and to submit it as a first draft for the sixth session of the Group. The updated document should, in its first part, include only those areas of annex IV where clarification is needed (rather than a line item for each of annex IV). In its second part, terminology should be provided for the contents of annexes III and IV, where possible, to facilitate the understanding and interpretation of contents of these new annexes.

21. The Group also requested that reference be made in the final report of the mandate requesting that the Working Party on Rail Transport consider keeping this Guidance Note updated going forward.

22. Within this agenda item, the Group discussed ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/6 on the provision of passenger information. It noted the importance of appropriate passenger information in hubs to further facilitate modal shift to the railways and thanked the secretariat for preparing this document. The Group welcomed the important work done by UIC experts on User Information in Stations (IRS 10181) shared with delegates during the first session of the Group of Experts and included in Informal document SC.2/HUBS No. 2 (2021).

23. The Group requested that the secretariat review equivalent initiatives undertaken by the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization, as well as similar work done within the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety and within the Working Party on Inland Water Transport. In addition, it asked the secretariat to prepare a proposal aimed at asking the Working Party on Rail Transport to consider the creation of a new group of experts focused on passenger information in hubs for consideration by the Group at its next session. This proposal should contain possible terms of reference for the new Group of Experts on Passenger Information.

24. The Group requested UIC, at the next session of the Group, to present its approach to passenger information in stations, also in relation to other modes of transport and identify in what ways it could support the workings of the potential new Group of Experts. In particular, the Group invited UIC to present its foreseen calendar and governance approach to updating IRS 10181 in future.

VI. Identification of the legal instrument or tool to be used for international passenger railway hubs and drafting of the necessary legal provisions (agenda item 5)

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/5

25. The secretariat introduced this agenda item recalling that at the previous session delegates had agreed to focus their attention on the development of amendments to AGC. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/5 highlighting the actual text of amendment proposals that will need to be made to AGC so that the items discussed in agenda items 3 and 4 can be operationalized.

26. The Group discussed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/5 and noted the following:

- The Preamble amendment should be updated to reflect the common technical and service parameters.
- Article 3 bis should be updated to reflect the new definition of international railway passenger hubs, including the decision on whether to include or otherwise primary and secondary hubs following the consultation discussed under agenda items 3 and 4.

27. The Group of Experts welcomed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2023/5 containing the possible amendment proposal to AGC. The Group agreed with the text as amended and, subject to the changes set out in the previous paragraph, asked the secretariat to finalise it in preparation for its inclusion in the final report of the Group, which will be discussed at its next session. In finalising the text, it requested the secretariat to explore whether the proposed additions to article 12 could be streamlined.

28. The Group once again asked contracting parties to AGC to discuss with capitals the potential interest in proposing finalised amendments to AGC at the 2023 session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

VII. Measures to support international rail carriers in pandemics (agenda item 6)

29. The secretariat reminded participants that a publication had been finalised as part of the work for this agenda item and noted that it had been made available for dissemination at the February 2023 session of the Inland Transport Committee.

30. The Group of Experts once again thanked experts for all their hard work in preparing the study on measures to support international rail carriers in pandemics and asked the secretariat to continue sharing the report widely.

VIII. Other business (agenda item 7)

31. No other business discussed at the fifth session of the Group.

IX. Date of the next session (agenda item 8)

32. The Group of Experts noted that the sixth and final session of the Group would be held from 13 to 15 September 2023 (starting at 3 p.m. on 13 September) at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

X. Summary of decisions and reading of the draft report (agenda item 9)

33. Given discussions at the session, the Group decided to read and consider the entire draft report of the session, as prepared by the Chair and Vice-Chair, under this agenda item, rather than just the decisions. The Group of Experts adopted its report of the fifth session.
