



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 May 2023

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

Group of Experts on cycling infrastructure module

Third session

Geneva, 23 and 24 March 2023

Report of the Group of Experts on cycling infrastructure module at its third session

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I. Attendance

1. The Group of Experts on Cycling Infrastructure Module (hereafter called GE.5) held its third session on 23 and 24 March 2023. The session was chaired by Mr. M. Eder (Austria) and held as a hybrid meeting with virtual participation through Webex platform and in-person participation.
2. Representatives of the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States participated: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
3. The following international organization participated: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).
4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Bike in Time, European Cyclists' Federation (ECF); Partnership for Urban Mobility; Energy Efficiency and Environment Protection Association (Enverçevko), Velo and Territories and World Bicycle Industry Association (WBIA).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/4

5. GE.5 adopted the agenda for the third session as contained in ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/4.

III. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe cycling network (agenda item 2)

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 1 and 2

6. GE.5 reviewed the data available on national and regional cycling networks made available in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) International Transport Infrastructure Observatory (ITIO). In doing so, GE.5 acknowledged the availability of national network data for Germany. GE.5 was also informed by Ireland that so far only EuroVelo routes were included in ITIO for Ireland, however, a new national network was at the stage of approval and so Ireland should be able to share its new national cycling network for inclusion in ITIO in course of the second quarter of 2023. Spain also updated on the progress in designating national cycling network which should be shared for inclusion in ITIO in the second half of 2023. With regard to the ITIO, the secretariat used the opportunity in the meeting to invite experts to use ITIO also in expert domain, and to register for a dedicated user account.
7. France presented its national cycling network and its practices adopted for coordinating the network's development as well as the degree of network completion or financing scheme. As part of the presentation, also the principles for designating a cycling route as a national route have been discussed. GE.5 appreciated the information shared by France.
8. GE.5 agreed then that clear principles or directives are needed for designating an ECE cycling network based on the designated national networks. These principles were considered important for devising a consistent network.
9. Following a discussion, GE.5 agreed on the following principles applicable to devising the ECE cycling network:
 - (a) Relevant EuroVelo route or routes can serve as a backbone for ECE routes on a territory of an ECE country if and as appropriate for the country,
 - (b) ECE network routes should be long-distance routes, and
 - (c) ECE network routes should enable cross-border connectivity.

10. GE.5 invited countries which designated their national cycling networks to consider the three agreed principles and, based on them, send to the secretariat their proposal for their national routes to form ECE cycling network. Such proposals should be shared before the next regular session at which GE.5 would discuss them and agree on the initial ECE cycling network.

11. GE.5 also agreed that further effort should be made to involve in the ECE cycling network designation also countries who had not been able to set up national cycling networks and so far had been absent in its work so that the ECE cycling network be relevant for the whole ECE region. In this regard, GE.5 agreed to seize the opportunities offered by international conferences on cycling such as the Leipzig VeloCity conference (May 2023) and the Izmir EuroVelo and Cycling Tourism Conference (October 2023) to promote its work and engage with such additional countries.

12. GE.5 discussed then Informal document No.1 which contains a revised draft guide for designation of national cycling network. It thanked the secretariat and ECF for incorporating comments made at the second session and in writing in the new version of the guide. GE.5 further appreciated the fact that the guide offers a high-level of information in concise format that should allow any interested country to set up an effective process for designation of a national network. GE.5 also agreed that signposting to/referencing detailed national guidance should be provided so that the guide's future users can easily consult specific construction details and other related design recommendations. To this end, experts were invited to provide information on the relevant national guidance if they would wish them to be signposted in the ECE guide.

13. Experts also provided additional comments, among them to refer to (i) the need for coordination among stakeholders in Step 1, (ii) environmental requirements or the need for environmental impact assessment as well as meeting of daily mobility objectives under issues for analysis in Step 5, and (iii) ways for funding mobilization in Step 8. Also, some additional editorial suggestions were provided.

14. GE.5 requested experts to send to the secretariat any additional comments in writing, if desirable, before the end of April 2023.

15. GE.5 considered then the Informal document No.2, which proposes classifications of cycle routes and user categories as well as related cycle route parameters. GE.5 thanked ECF and the secretariat for preparing this document. Based on the proposal, it agreed in principle with the concept adopted in the proposal for user and route classifications. At the same time, it was suggested that additional effort is invested to identify better terms for the different categories, as well as that detailed definitions or description of user categories are provided. GE.5 further agreed that the classification and parameter tables are incorporated in the ECE guide for designation of national cycling network. The values would remain for further consideration and adjustments at the next session. Also, the terms used in table 6 for surface quality should be defined.

16. GE.5 also agreed on additional parameters to be developed for consideration at the next regular meeting. These should concern crossings, separation with pedestrians, inclination (slopes) and shadow of cycling routes. ECF and the secretariat were requested to consolidate a proposal for the next session with these quality parameters while experts were invited to send their inputs. Austria volunteered to provide its inputs on inclination and shadow parameters and Switzerland on inclination parameters.

IV. Cycling infrastructure definitions and standards (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/2023/1, ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/2023/2, Informal documents Nos. 3 and 4

17. In the context of the agreed definitions for types of cycling infrastructure as provided in ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/2023/2, and proposals made to amend the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals, among others the proposed modification to provisions on light signals as provided in ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/2023/1, GE.5 discussed on possible

communication modalities with the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) or its group of experts. In this regard, the secretariat informed GE.5 that its sister group of experts on road signs and signals under WP.1 had concluded its mandate in 2022. The secretariat also informed GE.5 that WP.1 requested its secretariat to set up an informal intergovernmental road signs group in 2023. This informal group may serve as an important partner in 2023 to GE.5 on new signs, signals and markings relevant to cycling.

18. GE.5 welcomed the information provided and requested the secretariat to explore possibilities for holding an informal, online meeting with the new informal intergovernmental road signs group, preferably before summer 2023, to discuss GE.5 appraisal and proposals for modifications to the 1968 Conventions on Road Signs and Signals and on Road Traffic related to cycling infrastructure or cycling.

19. The secretariat informed then GE.5 about its communication with WP.1 secretariat and the chair of the former group of experts on road signs and signals related to advice asked on the preselection lane, two-stage turn and bike box. The communication confirmed that the issues raised are pertinent for discussion among experts on cycling infrastructure and road signs, signals and markings. GE.5 agreed therefore to bring these issues along other ones to the discussion with the informal intergovernmental road signs group.

20. GE.5 discussed Informal document No.3 which lists definitions for cycle and cycle highway in ECE countries who reported them as well as industry views on cycle definition.

21. GE.5 reviewed the reported definitions and the industry views. The discussion covered different types of cycles in use. GE.5 agreed that cycle definitions should help facilitate the issue of admission of various type of cycles on various type of infrastructure. GE.5 concluded that there are three factors on the basis of which a vehicle should be considered a cycle admitted to cycle infrastructure. These are: (i) design speed/electric assistance cut-off speed, (b) total gross mass, and (c) width. GE.5 requested the secretariat together with CONEBI/WBIA and ECF to prepare for the next session a proposal for the cycle definitions which would incorporate the agreed factors.

22. GE.5 discussed then the definition of cycle highway. To support this discussion, Belgium presented its perspective and work on cycle highways and the adoption of a definition from the European Union-funded Cycle Highways Innovation for smarter People Transport and Spatial Planning project (CHIPS). The importance of specific characteristics assigned to highways was explained, in particular that it does not consist of one type of infrastructure, its branding as a mobility product and wayfinding, the satisfaction that it should deliver to users and its coherence.

23. GE.5 appreciated the insight provided by Belgium. In a conversation, it agreed to continue discussing the definition of cycle highway based on the CHIPS proposal and, at the same time, consider minimum requirements/expectations. Such should in particular focus on priority of way, reduction of required stops at intersections, and aspects of accessibility, in addition to parameters covered already in the Informal document No.2 or to be covered as per paragraph 16 (above).

24. GE.5 returned then to the discussion started at the second session on the traffic-light exemption for cyclists. To this end, France shared its experience and good practice from applying traffic-light exemption. In particular, France explained the situation in which traffic-light exemption can be applied for cyclist, and which are the rules of the road to be observed in these situations by cyclists: yield to pedestrians/yield to other road users with priority to move.

25. GE.5 thanked France for the good practices shared and for the many examples showcasing the traffic light-exemption contributes to improving cyclist road safety as it decreases their difficult interaction with motor vehicles in specific situations. GE.5 noted at the same time that application of the exemption has to fit the purpose, and so its application should depend on the intersection design and traffic volumes of motor vehicles with which cyclists would need to interact when exempted from the traffic light.

26. GE.5 agreed then on the definition of the traffic light-exemption with a few modifications. It requested the secretariat to incorporate the definition in

ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.5/2023/2 and to table revised version of this document for the next session.

27. Finally, GE.5 discussed Informal document No.4 which contains an appraisal of the accepted definitions of the various types of cycle infrastructure in the context of the provisions of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and proposals for possible modifications to the Convention. GE.5 noted in this context the recommendations made for new road signs by the former group of experts on roads signs and signals. It discussed at length the recommendation of the group for the cycle crossing signs and opposing views of some of the experts. It agreed that the appraisal and modifications proposed should be the subject of discussion with the new informal intergovernmental road signs group. To prepare for this discussion, GE.5 requested experts to send their comments in writing on the appraisal and modification proposed in Informal document No.4 by the end of April to the secretariat.

V. Other business (agenda item 4)

28. Spain informed GE.5 about preparation of a new catalog of road signs and modification of traffic code in Spain. The new catalog would include new signs dedicated to cycling, some of which are referred in Informal document No.4.

29. The chair extended invitation to experts to the next meeting of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) Partnership and klimaaktiv mobil Conference in Vienna on 25–27 April 2023. He also informed about THE PEP Partnership on Active Mobility on Cycling in Leipzig on 8 May 2023 back-to-back with the VeloCity Conference on 9 to 12 May 2023. THE PEP Partnership on Active Mobility on Cycling meeting in Leipzig would feature a joint session with GE.5 on issues regarding the designation of the ECE cycling network and progress made on definitions for cycling infrastructure. Experts were kindly invited to join the meeting.

30. The secretariat shared its plans for holding a half-day workshop in the framework of the next session of the Working Party on Transport, Trends and Economics (WP.5) in September 2023 on urban mobility, of which cycling is an important element. Experts were invited to contact the secretariat should they be interested to contribute to this workshop and/or wish to propose a specific thematic angle. The secretariat indicated it would keep GE.5 informed on further developments regarding this workshop in the coming months.

VI. Date and place of next meeting (agenda item 5)

31. The secretariat informed GE.5 that its next regular meeting was scheduled to take place in Geneva on 6 and 7 November 2023.

32. Experts are also invited to attend THE PEP Partnership on Active Mobility on Cycling meeting in Leipzig on 8 May 2023, at which a joint session of the partnership and the GE.5 be held. An agenda of this joint session would be shared with GE.5 prior to the meeting.

VII. Summary of main decisions (agenda item 6)

33. The secretariat summarized the decisions taken by GE.5. The full report of the session, prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, would be shared electronically after the session for adoption.