



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
6 December 2023

Original: English

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Inland Water Transport

##### Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

###### Sixty-fourth session

Geneva, 14–16 February 2024

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

###### Workshop “Increasing the Modal Share of Inland Water Transport”

## Background and Main Objectives of the Workshop

### Note by the secretariat

#### I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with the proposed Programme Budget for 2024, part V, Regional cooperation for development, section 20, Economic Development in Europe, Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe (A/78/6 (Sect. 20), table 20.5).
2. At its sixty-seventh session, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) agreed that the theme topic for the sixty-fourth session of the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) will be agreed between the Chair and the secretariat after the session. Taking into account Policy Recommendation No. 3 of the *White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport*, the Wroclaw Ministerial Declaration and the ongoing revision of the Council Directive 92/106/EEC of 7 December 1992 on the establishment of common rules for certain types of combined transport of goods between Member States (Combined Transport Directive), the Chair and the secretariat agreed that the theme topic will be increasing the modal share of inland water transport.

#### II. Background

3. Inland water transport is beneficial in terms of safety, efficiency and reliability and can be a substitute for road transport for large quantities of cargo over longer distances, but it has still untapped potential in the integrated logistics chain. A modal shift towards inland water transport is considered a key measure for achieving a sustainable transport system using its potential as an environmentally friendly transport mode.
4. In the Ministerial declaration “Inland Navigation in a Global Setting”, adopted on 18 April 2018 in Wroclaw (Poland), Transport Ministers endorsed fostering the role of inland

water transport as safe, environmentally sound and economically efficient by promoting an appropriate balance among all transport modes as one of the main objectives. They:

(a) Recognized a strong need for ensuring the appropriate balance among all transport modes, agreed to undertake measures to achieve this following objectives and actions and invite countries and all parties concerned to develop action plans for their implementation;

(b) Invited countries and international organizations to facilitate free movement of cargo and passengers on inland waterways, and

(c) Welcomed efforts aiming to ensure that the main inland waterways of international importance are fully integrated into international transport networks in order to facilitate access to financial resources of international financial institutions for their development.

5. Actions proposed in Policy recommendation No. 3 “Identifying and assisting member States in applying measures to increase the modal share of Inland Water Transport, and improve its integration in multimodal transport and the logistics chains through the promotion of multimodality” of the *White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport*, include:

(a) Continue raising awareness of the competitive and complementary advantages of IWT at high-level policy events;

(b) Encourage measures to ensure the appropriate balance among all transport modes. Undertake and coordinate measures to facilitate integration of inland water transport in multimodal transport and logistics chains;

(c) Continue cooperation with the rail and road sectors through joint meetings and other activities of other bodies of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) dealing with inland water, road, rail, intermodal transport and logistics in order to facilitate the integration of inland water transport in the multimodal transport and logistics chain;

(d) Encourage multimodality in inland water transport operations by promoting the relevant international agreements, such the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), with a view to facilitate integration of inland water transport in multimodal transport and logistics chains;

(e) Use ECE instruments, such as jointly organized high-level conferences, dedicated working parties, workshops and capacity-building events, to promote the favourable impact of the use of inland water transport in the logistics chain on the environment as well as the economic advantages for transport of larger quantities of cargo shift via inland waterways over long distances.

6. Modal shift in freight transport from road to inland waterways is a strategic objective prioritized by both the European Union and many of its member States. Even in the small number of countries in which inland waterway transport has a high market share and is well established, inland waterway freight transport volumes have decreased in recent years. From the macro perspective, the sector as a whole has difficulties to maintain its modal share and thus support the ambitions of the European Union to shift freight to more sustainable modes of transport. It provides for actions aimed at ensuring:

- Fit-for-future infrastructure for optimized navigation
- Seamless integration into multimodal mobility and logistics systems
- Boosting the uptake of more sustainable transport modes
- A well-functioning inland waterways internal market.

7. On 7 November 2023, the European Commission presented its proposal for a revision of the Combined Transport Directive with a stronger emphasis on reaching a modal shift towards more sustainable transport methods and increasing the competitiveness of intermodal transport compared to road transport. The proposal aims to make intermodal transport more efficient and competitive by channelling support towards operations that

reduce by at least 40 per cent the negative externalities compared to road-only operations between the same starting and end points.

### **III. Topics for Discussion at the Workshop**

8. The purpose of the workshop is to:
    - Highlight the ongoing activities aimed at promoting inland water transport, increasing its modal share and integration into multimodal mobility and logistics systems, strategies, programmes and projects in this field
    - Address challenges and barriers to a modal shift to inland water transport and ways of overcoming them
    - Consider actions that could be undertaken by SC.3 to assist countries in addressing this issue.
  9. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to discuss the following topics:
    - Ways for increasing the efficiency of international legal instruments in this field
    - Progress made by countries, international organizations and other key stakeholders and lessons learned
    - Ensuring a level playing field with other transport modes
    - Role of recent developments and innovations in the sector for facilitating the modal shift to inland waterways
    - Priorities for future activities.
  10. Participants are invited to take part in the round table discussions and share their experience, best practices and developments in this field, consider further steps and provide recommendations for SC.3.
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