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## Economic Commission for Europe

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**Strategic questions of a horizontal and cross-sectoral policy or regulatory nature: Implementation of the international United Nations inland transport conventions and agreements (statements by delegates)**

## Regional Accession Dynamics to United Nations Inland Transport Conventions and Agreements

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

This document analyses the regional dynamics of accessions to transport conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee. It takes a focus on conventions covering Border Crossing Facilitation and Road Safety, due to their high policy interest during the pandemic and post-pandemic period, and reports on progress made in ECE and other regions.

## I. Background and scope

1. The 59 United Nations inland transport conventions developed and serviced by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) are a vital tool for the development of sustainable transport systems regionally and globally. Currently 49 of them are in force (see ECE/TRANS/2021/11 for more details). Each country accession can make transport safer, greener, cheaper, faster or more accessible. Therefore, each country accession counts. As of December 2020, there are 1801 separate accessions to these legal instruments.
2. Tracking the number of accessions is of course not the only way to determine if worldwide inland transport is becoming more sustainable. For instance, the change in worldwide road traffic fatalities, rather than accession to road safety conventions, is the principal metric of progress on road safety. Nevertheless, accessions are a strong driver or leading indicator of future progress in road traffic safety for several reasons, including the



use of harmonized rules and standards, as well as a common framework that enables and strengthens the diffusion of best practices. The same principle applies to other aspects of inland transport, such as border crossing facilitation, transporting specific cargoes or providing a common set of standards for environmentally friendly transport.

3. This document therefore analyses, at a macro level, the accession dynamics of each region of the world, as defined by United Nations regional commission membership. The regional commissions are: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC); Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP). The analysis looks at the best performing countries in each region, sees how accessions have changed over time, and also focusses on two groups of conventions: relating to border crossing facilitation and to road safety.

4. Border crossing facilitation covers fourteen conventions (for a full list, see <https://unece.org/list-agreements>). Road safety is covered by several legal instruments and road safety pillars, however the ITC Strategy until 2030 and several General Assembly resolutions identify seven conventions<sup>1</sup> as the core ones – these are the ones covered by the analysis in this document.

5. When allocating countries to their regional commissions, it is important to note that many countries are members of more than one regional commission. In some cases, these countries have a clear geographical link to one regional commission and are thus assigned to this one only. In addition to this, though, there are two principal areas where the regional Commissions overlap: in North Africa/Western Asia (countries involved: Algeria Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Egypt, Sudan,) and Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). In these two cases, the countries have been included under the analysis of both regional commissions.

## II. The Economic Commission for Europe Region

6. Of the 1801 total accessions by all contracting parties to all conventions, 1387 (77 per cent) are by 56 ECE member States. Luxembourg (45), Netherlands (44) and Serbia (42) lead the way with the most convention accessions of any member State. Countries with less than ten convention accessions include Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Israel, Monaco, San Marino, Tajikistan and the United States of America.

7. Of the 1387 ECE accessions, 229 have occurred since 2005, 69 of which were 2015 onwards. 2020 saw a noteworthy jump in ECE accessions of 24, principally due to multiple accessions by Liechtenstein (8) and Turkmenistan (6).

8. The conventions with the highest number of individual contracting parties in the ECE region are the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (1975 TIR Convention) and the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR) each of which has 51 ECE contracting parties. They are followed by the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) with 49 ECE contracting parties.

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<sup>1</sup> **Core United Nations Road Safety Conventions:** 1949 Convention on Road Traffic; 1968 Convention on Road Traffic; 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals; 1958 Agreement on UN Regulations for Vehicle Type-approval; 1997 Agreement on Periodic Technical Inspection; 1998 Agreement on UN Global Technical Regulations on Vehicle Construction; 1957 Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road

9. Border crossing facilitation (377 accessions) is well developed in the region. With respect to road safety, the 216 ECE accessions are broadly spread across the seven core road safety conventions, with the ADR being the most subscribed and the 1997 Agreement on periodic technical inspection the least subscribed.

Figure I

**Cumulative Border crossing convention accessions by regional commission (excluding ECE), over time**

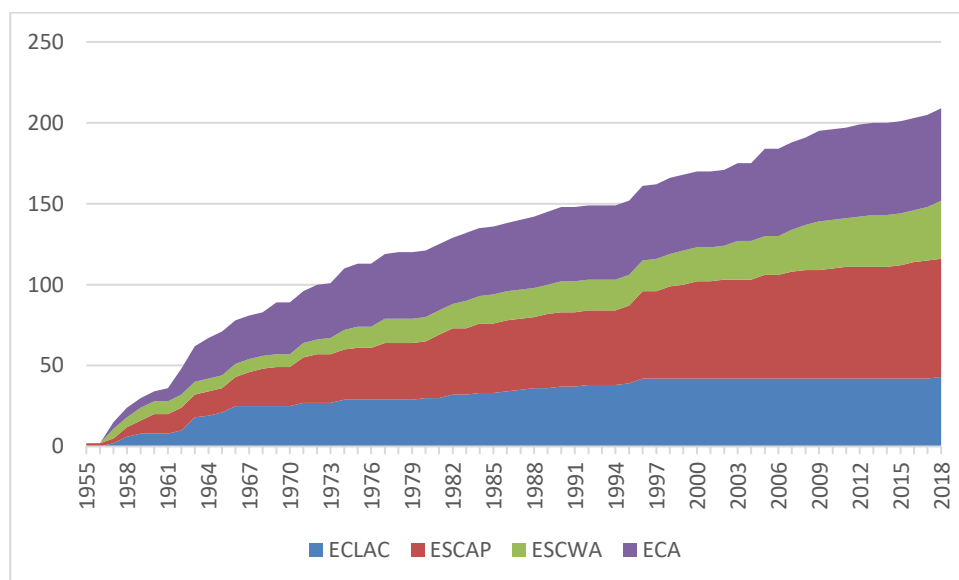
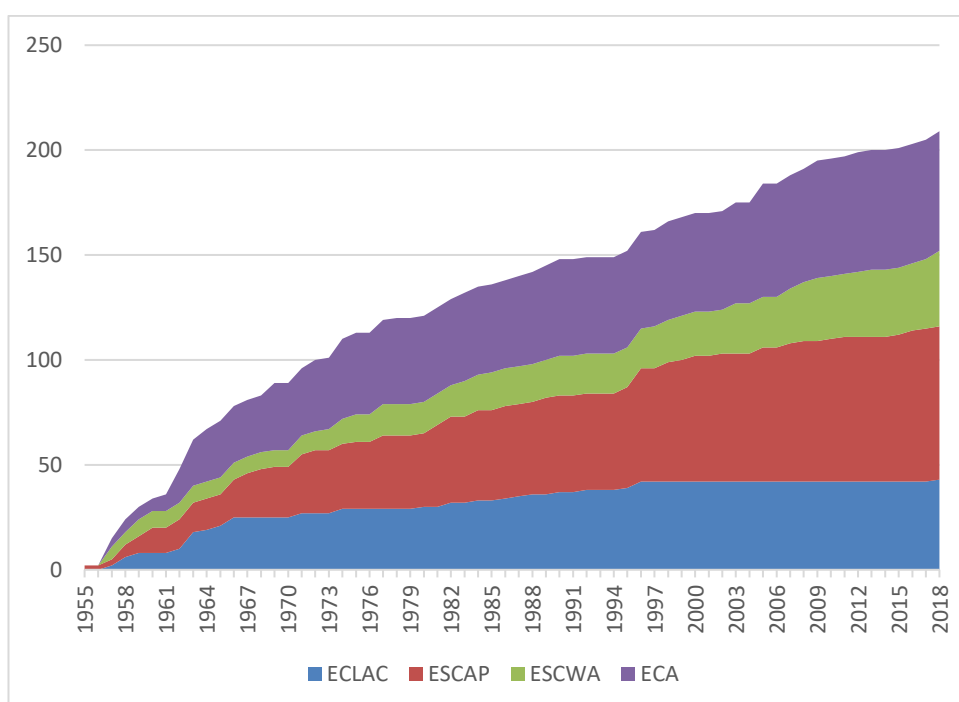


Figure II

**Cumulative Road Safety convention accessions by regional commission (excluding ECE), over time**



### III. The Economic Commission for Latin America Region

10. Of the 33 member States of ECLAC, only 22 have acceded to at least one of ECE's transport conventions, thus 11 (33 percent) are not signed up to any. The 11 that have not signed any are Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominica, Grenada, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. In total, the region has 80 accessions. The rate of progress has been very slow in recent years as well, with only nine of these accessions occurring since 1987.

11. For border crossing, the region's 38 accessions show that progress has been made (see figure I). It should be noted though that the majority of these are conventions created in the 1950s, whereas there are only three signatories to the TIR convention of 1975.

12. Concerning the core road safety conventions, the region has 23 accessions (see figure II). There is big potential for improvement in this regard, as 20 of the 23 accessions relate to the road traffic conventions of 1949 and 1968, and there are zero accessions for both the ADR and the core vehicle regulation agreements. **Given the estimated 110 000 fatalities on roads in the region in 2016, countries from the region may wish to consider these two areas for improvement.**

13. Cuba (fifteen accessions) and Trinidad and Tobago (seven) are the best performers in the ECLAC region in terms of total accessions.

### IV. The Economic Commission for Africa Region

14. The ECA countries have acceded to 153 transport conventions. Thirty-five countries have acceded to at least one convention, meaning that nineteen (35 percent) have not.

15. Progress over time has somewhat slowed, with only 37 of these 153 accessions occurring since 2000.

16. Border crossing facilitation has 57 accessions (see figure I), but only four of these are for the TIR convention. For the core seven road safety conventions, the region has signed 61 separate agreements, 40 of which are road traffic conventions and only 3 are for the ADR (see figure II).

17. Tunisia (eighteen), Morocco (fifteen), Liberia and Nigeria (both ten) are the best performing countries to accessions.

### V. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Region

18. The 20 member States of ESCWA have acceded to 89 different transport conventions. Of the 20 states, fifteen have signed up to at least one convention, whereas five (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia and Yemen) have not signed up to any at all. Countries in the region with the most accessions are Tunisia (eighteen), Morocco (fifteen) and Jordan (nine).

19. The rate of accessions over time has been inconsistent; after 20 separate accessions until the early 1960s, the 1970s saw thirteen accessions. These were followed by eight in the 1980s, six in the 1990s, 24 in the 2000s and then seventeen since 2010. The most common convention that has been acceded to is the TIR convention with eleven accessions, followed by the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic with ten.

20. In line with the ECLAC region, there is still a strong potential for further accessions relating to road safety. The region has 29 accessions to the core seven conventions, only two of which are to the ADR and four of which are to vehicle regulation conventions.

## VI. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific Region

21. Among 48 regional member States of ESCAP, 36 member States acceded to 266 separate accessions. This means, however, that 12 (or 25 percent) of its members are not covered by a single transport convention. The countries leading on accessions are the Russian Federation (33), Kazakhstan (eighteen) and Georgia (seventeen), all of which are also ECE member States.

22. The conventions that are most acceded to by ESCAP countries are the 1949 convention on road traffic (25 accessions) and the 1975 TIR convention (17).

23. For border crossing facilitation, the region has 86 accessions, trailing only the ECE region, with Australia and the Islamic Republic of Iran having the most accessions if ECE joint members are excluded (see figure I).

24. The region has 85 accessions to core road safety conventions, 52 of which are to road traffic or road signs and signals, whereas only 6 are to the ADR and 15 relate to vehicle regulations (see figure II).

## VII. General Conclusions

25. A few general trends emerge from the above analysis of regional accession dynamics. The first point is that accession levels vary between regions. Countries from the ECLAC region appear to be lagging in accessions to both border-crossing and road safety conventions, while the numbers of accessions by ESCAP member States appear to increase more dynamically over time. The second is that non-ECE accessions are clearly lagging compared to those of ECE overall and in particular in the two critical areas of road safety and border-crossing facilitation.

26. It follows from this analysis that there is still much room and urgency to strengthen the appeal of conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee to all regions. Despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the development of the pandemic and post-pandemic dynamics, empirical evidence suggests that countries with a high-level of accession to road safety conventions perform better in the face of the ongoing road safety crisis. Countries with higher-level of accession to border-crossing facilitation conventions were able to record more successful responses to cross-border flow of goods during the pandemic emergency and its aftermath, despite many of them having suffered heavy epidemiological impacts on their population (see also ECE/TRANS/2021/13).

27. In light of the above, the Committee **may wish to take into consideration** the analysis of regional accession trends and dynamics in relation to key clusters of United Nations inland transport conventions and agreements.

28. Furthermore, the Committee, mindful that improving implementation worldwide is a core element of the ITC Strategy and its vision in the run-up to 2030, is invited to **take note** of this information and may wish to **provide guidance to the secretariat** on ways to strengthen accession to and the implementation of these legal instruments.