


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

Geneva, 13–15 December 2021

**Report of the second 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 (GE_HUBS or the Group) held its second session from 13 to 15 December 2021 as a hybrid meeting, taking place simultaneously online and in-person in Geneva.
2. The session of the Group of Experts was attended by representatives of the following countries: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey, and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The representatives of the European Union were present.
3. The representative of the following intergovernmental organization was present: Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD). A representative of the ECE Trans-European Railway Project also attended the session.
4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Passengers' Federation and International Union of Railways (UIC).
5. The representative of the following private sector group attended the session: TRA Consulting. An observer also was present at the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/5

6. The Secretary to the Group presented the agenda. The Group of Experts adopted the draft agenda for the second session of the Group of Experts on International Railway Passenger Hubs as contained in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/5.

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

7. The Group was updated on the activities of the Platform for international rail passenger transport of twenty-seven European countries of which twenty-five European Union member States by the Netherlands, on UIC activities with a particular focus on the work of the Station Managers Global Group and the creation of the entity: Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking to replace the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking of the European Union.
8. The Group thanked the Netherlands, UIC and Europe's Rail for their interventions and encouraged experts to update participants on developments on other complementary activities across the ECE region at the next session of the Group.

IV. Identification of stations on the AGC network to be defined as an international passenger railway hub (agenda item 3)

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/8

9. The Group of Experts continued discussions on the identification of stations on the AGC network to be defined as international railway passenger hubs based on the analysis included in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/8 prepared by the secretariat in collaboration with experts. Discussions focused on whether the approach of looking at demand and supply side drivers was an acceptable approach, on how many levels of passenger stations were necessary and on whether the preliminary list of stations identified in annex I of the document was appropriate.
10. The Group noted that it may be difficult to define hubs according to passenger numbers or number of services. This had been attempted within the activities of UIC and it was very contentious. It was noted that maybe tying the categories to levels of commitment could be an alternative approach.

11. Participants noted that while the list of stations identified in annex I was an excellent start, there were changes that needed to be made. In particular, hubs at airports and some key ferry connections should be considered. The Russian Federation noted that there were some differences in the English and draft Russian text that should be corrected and asked that two stations in Moscow and three in St. Petersburg be added to the list.

12. The Group of Experts welcomed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/8 and asked the secretariat, with the assistance of experts, to prepare a document that updates this information for the next session considering discussions at the second session.

13. The Group also asked participants to provide any written comments to the list in annex I of document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/8 by 15 February 2022 so that the secretariat can consolidate the comments and update the list of hubs according to comments received in order to facilitate further discussion at the third session of the Group.

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

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/9

14. The secretariat introduced discussions on agenda item 4 by explaining the importance of the technical and service parameters within hubs. TRA Consulting proceeded to share a presentation on possible preliminary parameters as set out in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/9.

15. In particular, the presentation highlighted the importance of passenger facing facilities but also operator facing facilities and identified four high-level categories under which the parameters should be considered:

- Necessary railway infrastructure for operators
- Station facilities
- Demand considerations
- Connectivity and accessibility.

16. The Group proceeded to discuss in detail the parameters included in the document assessing their relative importance. In particular, it was noted that requirements for ticketing facilities should reflect modern technologies, that the use of real-time traffic data should be considered (where it is publicly available) and the importance of staff being visible and available. It also noted that alternative options should be considered to these parameters such as the use of video terminals for information sharing and the third party service providers for such things as services to persons with reduced mobility. Considerations relating to the availability of all necessary border controls in stations where these are required or appropriate, should also be set out in more detail.

17. Delegates noted the importance of addressing issues related to the interface with multiple operators and who would be responsible for the ultimate delivery of the services identified in this document.

18. The Group also discussed the potential for a two-tier system where different technical and service parameters could be assigned to primary and secondary hubs. The Group concluded that it may be difficult to exclude some of the technical parameters identified in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/9 and as such it could be better to retain the parameters for all hubs noting that the parameters that are available for infrastructure in AGC are target parameters meaning that they are parameters that contracting parties work towards rather than having fixed deadlines by which they need to be implemented.

19. The Group welcomed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/9 as a first step in the identification of technical and service parameters for international railway passenger hubs and asked experts to provide written comments on the proposed parameters by 15 February

2022 to the secretariat to allow for the comments to be consolidated, in addition to those received during the session, and made available for the third session of the Group of Experts.

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

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/10

20. The secretariat introduced this agenda item with an explanation of the possible approaches to creating a legal instrument or tool for international railway passenger hubs as set out in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/10. The explanation highlighted the preliminary options of: amending the European Agreement on Main Railway Lines (AGC) to add references to stations and their parameters; the creation of a new Convention; the preparation of a Protocol to AGC; or the development of softer tools such as non-binding regulations. The Group discussed what each of the options entailed in terms of the time taken to complete the work, to what extent each of these options were binding on member States and how the provisions could be updated. As per many other legal agreements under the auspices of the Inland Transport Committee of ECE, including AGC and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), these parameters are targets and are not accompanied by a defined timescale for their achievement or any commitment by member States on investments to reach the targets.

21. The Group noted that, at this point in time, it would be more favourable to further develop the option of the modification of AGC – through its updating – to include elements included in the work of the Group of Experts. The Group acknowledged that if this is the option adopted then any approach that is agreed within the framework of the Group would need to be proposed by a contracting party to AGC for it to be discussed as a potential amendment to that agreement.

22. The Group of Experts noted the discussion on the possible legal instrument or tool to be used for international passenger railway hubs and asked the secretariat to draft a more detailed document focused on the option of updating AGC.

VII. Analysis of the legal framework governing international passenger transportation (agenda item 6)

Document: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/7

23. The secretariat introduced this agenda item noting the important work undertaken by OSJD in its document submitted to the Group as ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/7. The Group thanked OSJD for its excellent work on this document. The Russian Federation provided further background on the document and encouraged participants to review and comment on the document in order to make it as complete as possible.

24. The Group discussed the document and noted that it covered many of the legal provisions for international passenger transport and was very comprehensive in nature. It noted that, as the document had not been made available in the three languages, it would be preferable to provide experts with more time to comment on it and suggest further legal instruments and analysis to complement the document for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the terms of reference for the Group.

25. The Group asked participants to provide their comments and suggestions on the contents of document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/HUBS/2021/7 to the secretariat by 15 February 2022 to allow for these comments to be consolidated into a document for discussion at the next session of the Group.

VIII. Measures to support international rail carriers in pandemics (agenda item 7)

Document: Informal document SC.2/HUBS No. 4 (2021)

26. The secretariat reminded participants of the requirements under this agenda item and recalled that a survey on measures to support international rail carriers in pandemics had been prepared by the secretariat with the support of experts. The survey had been sent out to participants and responses were requested by 10 December 2021. The Group thanked Belgium, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for responding to the survey within the original time allocated.

27. The delegation from the Russian Federation noted that a study was to be undertaken within UIC in 2022 called: "Analysis of governmental measures taken to support the international rail passenger transportation, elaboration of recommendations on enhancement of economic efficiency and improvement of passenger carriers' sustainability". It was noted that as part of this study there would be one or more workshops to discuss these measures and that the secretariat and participants in the Group of Experts would be invited to share their experiences and information on these measures. The Group welcomed the existence of this study, thanked the Russian Federation for the invitation and noted that there could be potential synergies with the work to be undertaken within Group and that analysis.

28. The Group of Experts asked delegates to submit their responses to the survey by 15 January 2022 in order to provide the secretariat and experts enough time to prepare a draft document for discussion at the next session of Group. When responding to the survey, the Group asked delegates to seek to identify separately which measures were taken specifically for international journeys and services if possible.

IX. Other business (agenda item 8)

29. There was no other business discussed at the second session of the Group.

X. Date of next session (agenda item 9)

30. The Group of Experts noted that the third session of the Group would be held from 23 to 25 May 2022 in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The secretariat noted that the meeting would probably also be available in hybrid form with in-person and online participation possible. Further details relating to this would be made available to experts by the secretariat closer to the date.

XI. Summary of decisions (agenda item 10)

31. 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 second session.