



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
20 April 2022

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-first session

Geneva, 29 June–1 July 2022

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

###### Workshop “Towards a Modern, Sustainable and Resilient E Waterway Network”

## 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 2022, part V, Regional cooperation for development, section 20, Economic Development in Europe, Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe (A/76/6 (Sect.20), paragraph 20.76).
2. Following the decision of the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) at its sixtieth session, delegations are invited to take part in the workshop dedicated to the development of modern, sustainable and resilient E waterway network.

#### II. Background

3. The network of inland waterways of international importance, or E waterway network, consists of European inland waterways and coastal routes used by sea-river vessels as well as of ports of international importance situated on these waterways and routes in accordance with the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN). As of 2016, the total length of the E waterway network increased from 27,711 km to 29,238 km and the share of E waterways that comply with the AGN standards – from 79 to 83 per cent. This is supported by the increasing number of contracting parties to AGN, which now stands at 19, and infrastructure projects of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) corridors, thus engaging countries of the European Union that have not yet acceded to AGN.

4. The current status of the E waterway network is highlighted in the White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport and is regularly updated in the Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (Blue Book).

5. Policy Recommendation No. 1 of the White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport has proposed a set of actions for the Economic Commission for Europe in this field:

(a) Continue promoting and facilitate accession to AGN based on the road map for ratification, acceptance, approval and accession; continue consultations with member States on possible concerns on its implications or ratification;

(b) Further strengthen the monitoring mechanism to review and update the development of the AGN network, in particular, by maintaining the Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (“Blue Book”), the Inventory of most important bottlenecks and missing links in the E Waterway Network (resolution No. 49) and the online Blue Book database by coordinating this work with the European Commission and other relevant stakeholders;

(c) Encourage ongoing initiatives on waterway construction, maintenance and rehabilitation plans of international waterways and invite other countries to consider these initiatives when maintaining their waterways;

(d) Facilitate actions to ensure the resilience of the sector to climate change. In particular, promote the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Transport Networks and Nodes by member States;

(e) Continue monitoring and support of the ongoing infrastructure projects of European waterways of international importance.

6. The Wroclaw ministerial declaration has set out the following objectives for inland water transport sector aimed at building up a modern, sustainable and resilient transport mode:

- To foster the role of inland water transport as safe, environmentally sound and economically efficient by promoting an appropriate balance among all transport modes and thus using it as a significant contributor to national, regional and international development;
- To encourage investment in the sector aimed at building and modernizing the inland waterway infrastructure, the fleet and ports as well as fostering innovation and using alternative fuels, to increase the market share of inland water transport and ensuring that it is resilient to climate change.

7. In recent years, the need for urgent actions to address modern challenges has been emphasized by the European Union in the European Green Deal,<sup>1</sup> Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and NAIADES III Inland Waterway Transport Action Plan for 2021–2027<sup>2</sup>, in particular, completing and upgrading the inland waterway TEN-T network, facilitating integration on inland waterways into multimodal transport chains, decarbonization and greening inland waterways infrastructure and ports, developing smart and connected mobility and other relevant issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789>.

<sup>2</sup> See ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2021/1.

### III. Topics for discussion at the workshop

8. In accordance with Policy Recommendation No. 1 of the White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport, the purpose of the workshop is to consider possibilities for improving coordination in the development of E waterway network to ensure its greening, sustainability and resilience to climate change, external shocks and other challenges.
  9. The following topics are proposed for discussion at the workshop:
    - Progress in eliminating missing links and bottlenecks on inland waterways of international importance
    - Possibilities for improving the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of AGN
    - Ongoing infrastructure projects and initiatives aimed at modernizing and greening inland waterway infrastructure
    - Best practices and projects aimed at improving resiliency of inland waterway infrastructure to climate change and external shocks.
  10. Participants are invited to take part in the round table discussions to share their experience and views in building up a sustainable and resilient inland waterway network, consider further steps and provide recommendations for the Working Party on Inland Water Transport and SC.3/WP.3.
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