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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

##### Sixty-fifth session

Geneva, 19–21 October 2022

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

##### **Emerging issues in freight transport and logistics:**

**Issues, trends and performance in the industry**

### **Collaborative networks for flexible transport planning processes, for integration of modes and for strengthening the voice of the intermodal industry**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The resolution on strengthening intermodal freight transport adopted by the Inland Transport Committee at its eighty-second session on 25 February 2021 calls upon the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) to support appropriate collaborative networks for flexible transport planning processes and integration of modes and for strengthening the voice of the intermodal industry.
2. At its previous session, following its initial discussion on collaborative networks, WP.24 requested the secretariat to collect information on good practice available in providing support to collaborative networks for flexible transport planning processes, integration of modes and for strengthening the voice of the intermodal industry and to present it at the sixty-fifth session.
3. This document summarizes information collected by the secretariat.

## **II. Good practice information**

4. The secretariat reminded on 24 June 2022 the focal points of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries, about the WP.24 decision regarding collection of good practice on collaborative networks in support of flexible transport planning processes, integration of modes and strengthening the voice of industry.
5. By the time of preparation of this document, good practice information has been shared by the following countries: Austria, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia and Serbia.

**(a) On flexible transport planning processes**

6. There are booking platforms already set up or projects on platforms for booking combined transport (CT) slots. These platforms help integrate shippers and customers into CT. These platforms have strong cooperation partners such as railway undertakings and intermodal operators. Among such platforms are:

- Rail-flow: a digital ecosystem, which consists of a platform and software-as-a-service solutions for rail freight and intermodal transport. Its objective is to optimize collaboration and networking between participants such as shippers, rail forwarders, rail undertakings, intermodal forwarders and intermodal operators.
- Modality: a platform whose aim is to bring together the demand for rail solutions and free transport capacities of train operators. The platform enables customers to find, plan and book rail freight connections directly online without any prior knowledge on CT.
- PhysICAL (Physical Internet through Cooperative Austrian Logistics), with project time between 2020 and 2024, supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, and more specifically its component on open transport management platform aims at the development of digital and open platforms for mutual, trusted data exchange (Pilot open platform and SupplyChain3.0). The further development of the existing intermodal transport platform (IMSLOT) with collaborative and ecological elements proves to be a pragmatic approach with possibilities for agile, interactive and practical implementation. While IMSLOT currently returns a list of execution sorted by price, time and adherence to schedules for a concrete transport request, a presentation of the environmental impact caused by a (potentially selected) transport mode is to be added. One of the project's goals is that decision-makers will make more sustainable decisions based on the additional information provided. Ideas include an objective representation via a standardised point scale whose concrete value can be a sum of different factors such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, noise, traffic safety, etc. and a graphical representation of the sustainability value. The complex calculations necessary to implement those ideas – both ex-ante to influence decision processes and ex-post to achieve an objective evaluation – require in-depth coordination with WP7 (digital twin). The interested decision-maker will be redirected to the digital twin by an appropriate motivating presentation in order to get more detailed information. The pilot also includes optimisation calculations for container bookings and bundling of transport journeys. In the case of flexible container booking, the aim is to achieve the optimal utilisation of trains in the round trip for container transports by providing detailed information. The display of sustainability can explicitly point out to decision-makers the effects of their decision-making behaviour. The bundling of transport journeys is actively carried out by an optimisation algorithm that attempts to rationalise transport journeys by combining them.

**(b) On integration of modes**

7. There are numerous research projects undertaken whose focus is to improve collaboration and integration of intermodal actors. Among them:

- KV 4.0, sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport with the aim to facilitate the complex logistics process. KV 4.0, which ended in May 2021, resulted in the development of a prototype joint data hub and standardized interfaces for involved actors to enable them to have direct access to transport-relevant CT parameters such as orders, timetables, arrival forecasts and other transport-relevant information. In the project, the project partners agreed to and used a uniform data standard – EDIGES4.0 format for seamless data exchange. To further develop the prototype data hub into a marketable product, after the end of the project, an operating entity was expected to be formed to serve as a data broker.
- DIGIT, managed by The German Promotion Centre for Intermodal Transportation (SGKV), resulted in the establishment of the German specification on standardized data exchange (DIN SPEC 91073). Its aim is to standardize data exchange in the

intermodal chain and thus enable an efficient flow of information. It is intended to help ensure that those involved in CT have access to the most important information in a uniform format at the right time. This should lay down the foundation for efficient digital communication, which is fundamental to automation technologies and the digitization of the intermodal transport chain.

8. There are programmes in place which call for projects that should help automation along logistics corridors so as to realize a global concept of automation of the end-to-end multimodal supply chain.

9. Also, the construction and expansion of modern CT terminals and ports is referred to as important contributor to integration of modes and strengthening intermodal transport.

**(c) On strengthening the voice of intermodal industry**

10. A number of interest groups have been formed over years, in particular in the European Union area for different purposes related to intermodal transport.

11. One of them is AGORA whose aim is to support mutual exchange of good practices between terminal managers and to assist each other in learning about the improved interaction with other actors in the intermodal transport chain. Its aim is also to contribute to the standardisation of procedures, reduction of costs and thereby optimization of the intermodal transport chain. Further reading about AGORA and its Terminal Interest Group can be done at [Intermodal Terminals \(intermodal-terminals.eu\)](https://www.intermodal-terminals.eu).

12. Another group came about from COVID-19 Crisis Meeting set up by SGKV. Its aim initially was to exchange information between terminal operators and learn from each other on ways to deal with the crisis, to protect employees of the CT terminals and ports from infections and thereby to ensure continuous operation. The collaboration resulted in elaboration of a guideline with concrete protection measures which were made widely available in the DACH region (Austria, Germany and Switzerland). The guideline was gradually improved and as a result it contains almost 30 concrete measures for the protection of employees. The collaboration also elaborated 14 overall recommendations for policymakers and authorities including such as on contactless transport or 24/7 operation on critical corridors.

13. PRIME which is a Platform of Rail Infrastructure Managers in Europe, among others, fosters strategic discussion and explores initiatives and ongoing projects in the context of climate change mitigation and the transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. Within the platform, various ways are explored how rail infrastructure managers can innovate, modernise and boost modal shift to rail, with which they also assist strengthening the intermodal industry.

14. Railnet Europe is a network of the European railway infrastructure managers and allocation bodies, which among others provides a coordination platform for various rail freight corridor organisations to jointly develop harmonized processes and tools to the benefit of all of them. This is done with the consideration that freight traffic does not usually start and end on rail freight corridors exclusively, and so efficient and harmonised interfaces are needed which would also allow to integrate terminals into the corridor management process.

15. Another format for strengthening the intermodal industry is through establishment of strategic partnerships. Such are formed between CT terminal operators and logistics enterprises. Through this partnership, the logistics enterprises ensure the relevant transshipment throughput for their customers while CT terminal operators gain new customers.

16. There are also national transport plans referred to, which propose interventions, among others for enhancing CT operations, and which are expected to be developed into specific projects leading to collaboration between various actors.

17. Provision of e-learning courses and seminars on CT is another way through which intermodal transport is promoted and possibly strengthened. In particular, building a good understanding of the CT's advantages including through collaborative networks and techniques for CT can attract new companies to the sector and networks and so help strengthen the sector and the networks.

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