

Distr.: Restricted  
20 September 2022

English only

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## **Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics**

### **Sixty-fifth session**

Geneva, 17 and 19–21 October 2022

Agenda item 2 (b)

### **Session's workshops:**

#### **Automation in freight transport and logistics**

## **Workshop on automation in freight transport and logistics**

### **Note by secretariat**

### **Background**

The Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) is interested to review experience, good practices, and innovation in automation in freight transport and logistics and to discuss whether a handbook on automation in the sector should be developed to assist in guiding an effective automation process.

It is assumed that well-managed automation in freight transport and logistics sector is to help further optimization in freight transport and logistics processes and so to make them more efficient, thus will help reduce operation cost and so bust profit. At the same time, as automation may be a rather high-capital investment undertaking, in particular the more autonomous processes are in mind, investors would like to see evidence that their investments will result in efficiency gains and costs savings. Investors would also be interested in legal certainty surrounding automation.

However, the uncertainty around safety, liability and cyber security of the new emerging technologies for sector automation and its further aggravation by observed resistance to change among institutions and workforce, calls for a cautious approach and rather progressive investment process. New technologies will be researched and piloted to understand their impacts or prospects before they are implemented.

While then an investor perspective on automation may be guided by whether or not an investment will bring the attained results from automation ie. efficiency gains, costs savings, etc, and so bust profit, for policy makers the issue has a broader context. The workforce of today and tomorrow needs to be provided with opportunities to find decent jobs which would support their living. Therefore, while there is rather a common support to replacing professions in which human workers are exposed to health and safety issues, there is resistance to automate jobs which can be executed well and efficiently by them. Moreover, interaction between automated technology and human workers, but also society at large, needs to be safe, so that automation would not aggravate health and safety issues for

workforce and society instead of reducing them. In the end, gains from automations in the sector should not impose negative externalities on societies, instead they should offer win-win situations.

To achieve the latter, it is important that rules and regulations prevent negative impacts. This is however easier said than done, as at the same time, these regulations should not prevent investments in innovation for automation.

Furthermore, automation goes hand-in-hand with digitalization of information. Whether or not automation be successful depends on how digitalization of information is managed, and how policy makers establish conditions, including legal conditions, for digitalization evolution.

With the above in mind, WP.24 is interested to look at and discuss actions taken by various stakeholders on embracing and developing automation in freight transport and logistics sector, especially considering inland transport operations. In this discussion, WP.24 would be interested to ascertain whether or not it should embark on a process to develop a handbook on automation which could potentially serve as a guide to well-managed automation at an enterprise level or policy level in freight transport and logistics sector with focus on inland transport operations.

## **Workshop programme, 19 October 2022, 15.00 to 18.00**

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### *Programme*

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**15.00-15.10    Workshop opening and a brief introduction**

Statements by WP.24 chair and the secretariat

**15.10-17.30    Automation in freight transport and logistics: good practices, experience, lessons learned**

15.10-15.30    Lessons learned with automation of freight terminals and way forward

15.30-15.50    Lessons learned with automation at ports and way forward

15.50-16.10    Automation of rail freight transport operations and way forward

16.10-16.30    Digital twin for freight handling in intermodal chain, how does it work and how is it to help improve intermodal freight transport operations

16.30-16.50    Coffee break

16.50-17.10    Advancing automation through adequate regulatory action

17.10-17.30    Automation and decent jobs for workforce

**17.30-17.50    What have we learned on automation in the sector? Is there a role for WP.24 to assist automation by developing a handbook on automation?**

Open discussion involving all workshop participants

Moderation – chair/secretariat

**17:50-18:00    Conclusions and closure**

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