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Current situation and trends in inland water transport:

Follow-up of the International ministerial conference

“Connecting by Inland Navigation”

Building Up a Solid Regulatory Framework, Ensuring Balance Among Transport Modes and Promoting Multimodality

Transmitted by the Governments of Belarus, Belgium, Croatia and Slovakia**

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. At its sixty-fifth session, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) asked the secretariat to collect information from governments on the implementation of the Wrocław ministerial declaration (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/215, paragraph 14). The present document contains information transmitted by the Governments of Belarus, Belgium, Croatia and Slovakia on progress in building up a solid regulatory framework, ensuring balance among transport modes and promoting multimodality, complemented by the secretariat.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.

** The present document is being issued without formal editing.

II. Strategic Actions 1 to 11 of the Wroclaw Ministerial Declaration

A. Building Up a Solid Regulatory Framework Aimed at Increasing the Efficiency of Inland Water Transport

- (i) **Participation in international treaties and conventions relevant to inland water transport other than those within the Inland Transport Committee, bilateral and multilateral agreements**

Belarus

3. The Republic of Belarus pursues a policy of the development of navigation with neighbouring countries and is a Contracting Party to the following bilateral agreements in the field of inland water transport:

- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on navigation on inland waterways, concluded in Medininkai (Lithuania) on 25 May 2007 (approved by Decision No. 631 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 30 April 2008);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on navigation on inland waterways, concluded in Brest (Belarus) on 20 January 2012 (ratified by the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 13 July 2012 “On ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on navigation on inland waterways”);
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on navigation on inland waterways, made in Minsk on 6 February 1998;
- Agreement between the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Transport of Ukraine on further development of navigation on inland waterways, concluded in Kyiv on 25 May 2001 (based on the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on navigation on inland waterways of 6 February 1998).

Belgium

4. Belgium is a Contracting Party to a number of conventions relevant to inland water transport, for example:

- Revised Convention for the Rhine Navigation
- Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway
- Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims, which has been declared applicable to inland vessels
- Strasbourg Convention on the Limitation of Liability in Inland Navigation 2012 (CLNI 2012)
- Convention on Collection, Deposit and Reception of Waste Produced during Navigation on the Rhine and Inland Waterways (CDNI).

5. Belgium is a member State of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) and the CCNR Regulations therefore also apply in Belgium. Belgium is also bound by the European regulations in the context of inland shipping (e.g. professional qualifications in inland navigation).

Croatia

6. Croatia is a Contracting Party to:
- Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway
 - Convention Regarding the Regime of Navigation on the Danube
 - Supplementary Protocol to the Convention Regarding the Regime of Navigation on the Danube
 - Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin
 - Protocol on the Navigation Regime to the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin
 - A number of bilateral agreements.
7. Croatia is a member State of the Danube Commission (DC) and of the International Sava River Basin Commission.

Slovakia

8. Slovakia is a Contracting Party to:
- Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway
 - Convention Regarding the Regime of Navigation on the Danube
 - Several other bilateral agreements establishing cooperation in the field of trade and navigation.
9. Slovakia is a member State of DC.

(ii) Work on acceding to or ratifying international conventions and agreements relevant to inland water transport under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee

Belarus

10. Accession to international conventions and agreements in the field of inland water transport within the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is under the scope of activities of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus, who examines this issue on a continuous basis.

Belgium

11. Belgium is currently working on acceding to the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance. It is planned to prepare the necessary package of documents by the end of 2023.

B. Ensuring the Appropriate Balance Among All Transport Modes, Streamlining Cargo Flows and Promoting Multimodality

(iii) National measures and action plans aimed at increasing the modal share of inland water transport, developing infrastructure and logistics

Belarus

12. Activities aimed to increasing the share of transport by inland water transport, developing infrastructure and logistics, inland waterway and sea navigation are carried out under five-year state programmes and are commissioned by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus. Currently, the State programme “Transport Complex” for 2021–2025, approved by Decision No. 165 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 23 March 2021, is under implementation. To improve the efficiency of the inland water transport use, including the infrastructure development, and increase the attractiveness of the State registry of sea-going ships of the Republic of Belarus,

Subprogramme 3 “Inland water and maritime transport” provides for a set of measures that include the development of the port infrastructure, engineering works on inland waterways and upgrading of the engineering structures, as well as improving the technical and economic characteristics of ships and upgrading (renovation) of vessels used for state functions, including environmental safety.

13. Activities in the field of inland waterway and maritime transport of the Republic of Belarus are supported by scientific and research work being a part of the scientific support measures for 2021–2025 foreseen by Subprogramme 5 “Ensuring the functioning of the transport complex”.

Belgium

14. In economically important areas of the Flemish Region, efforts are being made to accelerate multimodal transfer points through an adequate supply of water-bound business parks. These are crucial to enable a further modal shift to waterways. Further, in its yearly updated business plan, De Vlaamse Waterweg nv in 2022 included a specific key performance indicator (KPI), by which it aims to increase the share of inland waterways in the modal split. Moreover, the importance of the Flemish Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030 should be emphasized. One of the objectives set in the Plan is achieving a modal shift of 6.3 billion tonne-kilometres in freight transport from road to waterway or rail.

15. Within the Flemish policy context, the stimulation of use of inland navigation for transport of goods is an important topic. In Flanders, 171 cities and municipalities are located along inland waterways and 80 % of companies are located within 10 km of inland waterways; therefore, there is a huge potential for inland waterway transport within the logistics chain. Policy documents of the Flemish Government emphasize the importance of investments into up-to-date inland waterway infrastructure and also aim at stimulating companies to use inland waterway transport. Furthermore, this is elaborated on in the Policy letter of the Flemish Minister of Mobility and Public Works, which sets out strategic and operational objectives and underlines the importance of investing in the transport capacity of inland waterways for infrastructure projects, such as the upgrading of the Albert Canal.

16. De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is working together with the Flemish Government on the scope of a new incentives programme for estuary shipping. This will focus on the implementation of innovative technologies and lowering environmental impact and emissions from inland navigation. It is expected to be launched next year.

17. The Port of Brussels has developed a network of multimodal consolidation hubs and transshipment points for unitised goods (building materials and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG)). Construction sites and companies in the Brussels area are stimulated to use these consolidation hubs for enhancing the efficiency of deliveries to construction sites and for stimulating waterborne transport. Whenever possible, the Port of Brussels buys industrial lands along the waterway, equips it with quays (maritime ones where justified), and installs port terminals or companies that make intensive use of the waterway. The Port of Brussels imposes penalties on companies in case they do not realize a contractually agreed threshold of cargo transshipment by waterway. Companies realizing more than their threshold get a reduction on their concession fee. Since 2004, the Port of Brussels has abolished mooring fees on river-sea transport to promote its use.

Croatia

18. The main directions of the national policy for the development of Croatian waterways are set out in the newly adopted Strategy of Development of River Transport and the Medium-term plan for development of inland waterways and inland ports for the period from 2022 to 2031. The overarching goal is facilitating modernization of the inland navigation system and its complete integration into the European transport network. The medium-term plan sets up special goals that focus on optimizing the inland navigation system, increasing the competitiveness of inland navigation, strengthening the ecological sustainability of inland

navigation, increasing infrastructure capacities, strengthening safety and increasing navigability.¹

19. In all inland ports, projects are ongoing or being launched with the aim of ensuring high-quality and efficient transport services involving other modes of transport. Construction of additional access routes in ports, the development of the infrastructure for container transport and the development and maintenance of waterways are under way to attract more cargoes to ports.

Slovakia

20. Slovakia is developing a conceptual and strategic document for the development of inland navigation under the title “Concept of the Water Transport Development in the Slovak Republic until 2030 with a view to 2050”. The final version of the document will be ready by the end of 2023. The conception will contain, for example, analysis of the interconnection of combined transport transshipment points to inland waterways; analysis of the public ports Bratislava, Komárno, Štúrovo and possibilities for new public intermodal transport terminals with connections to waterborne transport. Furthermore, the conception provides for the development of a construction plan for public intermodal transport terminals with a connection to water transport.

- (iv) **Ensuring and maintaining the required minimum parameters of inland waterways, eliminating bottlenecks and missing links, ensuring adequate capacities of ports and terminals, enhancing multimodality and other measures aimed at developing the infrastructure and logistics**

Belarus

21. The list and boundaries of inland waterways of the Republic of Belarus open for navigation is established by the Decision No. 12 of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus of 23 April 2020. Annually, the technical assignment is developed for maintenance, improvement and development of inland waterways which specifies the waterway length and class, the guaranteed fairway dimensions, design water levels at the flow measuring stations, the category of navigational equipment and its validity period and operation periods for navigable engineering structures.

22. Technical assignment is the basis for the development of the waterway engineering works plan, prepared by the State Water Transport Administration. In accordance with the plan, measures are implemented for eliminating bottlenecks on inland waterways and for developing inland waterways of classes I–III which constitute the majority of waterways in the Republic of Belarus with the exception of the Belarusian section of the E 40 waterway.

23. Timely and high-quality implementation of the engineering works plan ensures the cargo turnover shown in table I.

Table I

<i>Year</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
Cargo turnover, million t-km	20.6	32.1	36.7	33.4	29.9	33.3

24. Transportation of passengers by inland waterways of the Republic of Belarus includes mainly regular short day trips (up to 10 km) within the cities of Gomel, Brest, Pinsk, Rechitsa and Mozyr. A cruise “Pearls of Polesie-2” is organized along the rivers Mukhavets, Pina, Pripyat on the vessel *Belaya Rus*. The passenger turnover of inland water transport is shown in table II.

¹ <https://mmpi.gov.hr/vijesti-8/23494>.

Table II

<i>Year</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
Passenger turnover, million passengers-km	1.8	2.4	2.7	3.0	0.7	1.9

25. There are eight river ports on the territory of the Republic of Belarus: Brest, Pinsk, Mikashevichi, Mozyr, Rechitsa, Gomel, Babruysk and Mogilev. The cities of Vitebsk, Gomel, Rechitsa and Pinsk have ship repair and shipbuilding facilities. The ports of Bobruisk, Mozyr and Gomel have a multimodal port infrastructure with access to rail and road.

26. Examples of intermodal transportation using inland waterways are: (a) transportation of bleached pulp produced by OJSC Svetlogorsk Pulp and Cardboard Mill from Svetlogorsk to Belgrade in 2021 with the transshipment from rail to a Belarusian river-sea vessel in the port of Kyiv, (b) transportation of products manufactured by Belarusian Metallurgical Plant from Zhlobin to the port of Odesa (Ukraine) with the transshipment from rail to a barge in the port of Mozyr; the return voyage was used for transportation of cement to the port of Mozyr.

27. In the field of development of the inland water transport infrastructure and increasing the efficiency of its use, the following projects have been implemented or are in progress:

- Reconstruction of lock No. 3 Ragodosch on the Dnieper-Bug Canal; the reconstructed lock is in operation
- Development of design and estimate documentation for the reconstruction of lock No. 2 Pererub
- Construction of berths for mineral construction cargoes of the river port in Yamno in the Brest region is under way.

28. As part of the implementation of the current State programme “Transport Complex” for 2021–2025, the following measures are planned:

- Creation of the port infrastructure on the Dnieper
- Organization of engineering works on inland waterways
- Development of the port infrastructure in the river port of Mozyr
- Reconstruction of engineering structures on the eastern slope of the Dnieper-Bug Canal:
 - Hydraulic complexes No. 2 Pererub and No. 4 Ovzichi of the Ivanovsky district, the Brest region (including design works and hydrographic surveys)
 - Hydraulic complex No 11 Kachanovichi of the Pinsk region (including design works and hydrographic surveys).

29. In accordance with the legislation, the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus carries out the state regulation and management in the field of inland water and maritime transport. The Ministry is the state customer of measures in the field of inland water and maritime transport and for the scientific support of activities in this field, which are being implemented within the framework of the State programme “Transport Complex” for 2021–2025.

30. For the purpose of developing inland waterways and the related transport infrastructure, ensuring proper maintenance of inland waterways, the state regulation of port activities, the accessibility, improving the quality and safety of water transport services and ensuring the implementation of international obligations of the Republic of Belarus, the state institution State Water Transport Administration was established in 2020 under the authority of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Belarus (Decision No. 137 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus of 9 March 2020).

Belgium

31. The Flemish Government is strongly committed to further development of the Flemish waterways network. In the Flemish Region, the different regional waterway authorities undertake on a continuous basis necessary actions to ensure that their inland waterways comply with the TEN-T² minimum requirements. However, for certain inland waterways they go beyond the TEN-T regulation:

- De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is currently working on increasing the height under bridges on the Albert Canal to 9.1 m (by the end of 2023), allowing carriage of four layers of containers and three layers of high cube containers. The increased height under bridges will also provide more opportunities for short sea shipping.
- The objective of the Seine-Scheldt project is to increase the height under bridges on the Seine-Scheldt axis to 7 m by 2027.
- De Vlaamse Waterweg nv focuses on the implementation of the Seine-Scheldt project. The priority is given to the Lys axis until 2027; but this also includes the modernization of the Sea Scheldt – Antwerp-Brussels-Charleroi (ABC) axis.

32. In the Brussels Capital Region, the Port of Brussels maintains the necessary water depth to ensure safe navigation. The programme of gradual increasing of the under-bridge height provides for the construction of new movable bridges or bridges with a free height of at least 7 m and upgrading of the existing bridges during the renovation or major repair works.

33. Small waterways can play an import role in urban logistics. One of the objectives of the Flemish Government is to reactivate the Flemish small waterways (class I to III). De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is one of the project partners of the project Watertruck + to introduce a new, innovative way of transporting goods. The project aims to enhance the interconnectivity and interoperability between the TEN-T core network and smaller inland waterways by introducing a new concept of transport units via inland waterway transport. When coupled in a convoy, the units can also be deployed on major waterways (class IV and higher). The initiative introduces an economically feasible alternative to a congested road network via a flexible model of waterway transport that is complementary to the current waterway transport. The Watertruck+ concept makes it possible for motorized and non-motorized barges to transport bulk goods, containers and pallets on small waterways.

34. De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is one of project partners of the project IWTS 2.0.³ One of the core objectives of the project is facilitating the use of inland water transport on smaller waterways (the comprehensive network) in the North Sea region by linking them to the main TEN-T corridors. It addresses the following challenges: (a) low awareness about opportunities of small waterway transport, (b) low innovation level in small barge development and transshipment of goods, (c) lack of expertise in using opportunities of small waterways and (d) lack of training and dedicated crews for operation on small waterways. Partners join forces and mobilize their potentials and capacity to move freight to yet under-used waterways by:

- Realizing a quick modal shift by introducing new and proven logistic technologies and support logistic managers in making decisions related to a modal shift
- Making better use of the existing waterways by adapting them towards a sufficient standard-sized vessels and developing innovative sustainable small barge concepts
- Modernizing professional education and training with a focus on navigation on smaller waterways.

35. In the Brussels Capital Region, the most limited part of Brussels waterway is class IV, as locks and bridges through the Brussels waterway are designed for barges of class I to III. Two locks are built for barges with dimensions up to 81.30 × 10.30 m, and the height under

² The Trans-European Transport Network/.

³ <https://northsearegion.eu/iwts20/>.

bridges is limited by 4.20 m in the city centre, while it reaches 30 m in the Northern part (outer harbour).

36. The Brussels port authority took part in the project Watertruck (2008–2014).

37. In the Flemish Region, De Vlaamse Waterweg nv established a programme related to digitalization in inland navigation (DigiWave), built upon three pillars: “Smart Logistics”, “Smart Administration” and “Smart Shipping”. The projects within the Smart Logistics Pillar aims to position inland shipping as a logical link within the broad logistics chain. To achieve this, the focus is on transparency and sharing information and knowledge to make the supply of inland shipping measurably safer, efficient, reliable and smarter. The project consists of several subprojects like:

- Development of a uniform sharing of ship, cargo and voyage data in collaboration with Cargo Community Systems vzw and the Flemish ports
- Traffic management advisory services for customers of the waterway and the logistic sector on the most efficient shipping routes, the maximum transparency during the transportation and monitoring of the scheduled travel time.

38. The Flemish Government strives to stimulate companies to choose inland navigation as the transport mode for their goods to the largest possible extent, and De Vlaamse Waterweg nv provides information to companies that want to integrate inland navigation in their logistic chain about the construction of a loading and unloading facility by means of a public private partnership between the waterway manager and a private partner.

39. De Vlaamse Waterweg nv is working together with the Flemish Government on the scope of a new incentives programme for estuary shipping. This will focus on the implementation of innovative technologies and lowering environmental impact/emissions. It is expected to be launched next year.

40. In the Brussels Capital Region, the Port of Brussels provides support for the waterway use to companies that are recently established or intend to enlarge the scope of services. Special focus is on the construction sector (site logistics for large real estate projects and unitised material flows) and FMCG.

41. The Port of Brussels promotes multimodality through advisory services from transport experts to logistics companies on the possibilities and benefits of multimodal transport. The Port of Brussels and the Brussel Capital Region are planning the creation of a trimodal platform (water/rail/road) in the northern part of Brussels. In the meantime, they are working to ensure restoring of the outer harbour's connection to the national and international rail network by 2025.

Croatia⁴

42. Projects for the improvement and modernization of the Danube include:

- Coordinated implementation of the Master Plan for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the Danube fairway (FAIRway Croatia)
- Fairway reconstruction on the Danube section from 1,321 river km to 1,324 river km near Sotin
- Development of the waterway marking and buoyage system to ensure a higher level of safety and visibility
- Construction of a winter harbour in Opatovac
- Preparation of FAIRway-2 works on the Rhine–Danube corridor.⁵

⁴ Complemented with information available at <https://mmpi.gov.hr/vijesti-8/23494>; <https://povezanahrvatska.eu/en/vijesti/javno-predstavljanje-strateskog-okvira-koji-ce-usmjeravati-razvoj-rijecne-plovidbe/>, www.ivr-eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IVR-Presentation-Duska-Kunstek-Ministry-of-the-Sea-Transport-and-Infrastructure.pdf.

⁵ www.ivr-eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IVR-Presentation-Duska-Kunstek-Ministry-of-the-Sea-Transport-and-Infrastructure.pdf.

43. The Croatian sections of waterways of international importance are regularly maintained to achieve the appropriate parameters in accordance with AGN. The bottlenecks on the waterways are regularly maintained in order to avoid congestion, and projects are under way that will additionally ensure the appropriate navigability; critical sectors on the Danube are being rehabilitated and waterway maintenance is being carried out continuously to avoid interruption in transport operations.

44. A project is planned for the revitalization of the Kupa river that has class I. The project documentation is currently at the stage of preparation.

45. Among the most significant projects aimed at renovation and construction of infrastructure in ports of international importance are (a) construction of bulk cargo terminals in the ports of Slavonski Brod and Osijek and (b) construction of the vertical quay in the port of Vukovar. Port authorities annually monitor, propose and encourage further development of port logistics and capacity. Furthermore, Croatia has an increasing passenger traffic on inland waterways, and a significant number of landing cruises in passenger ports. The passenger ports are located in Batina, Aljmaš, Vukovar, Ilok and Osijek. From 2021, new projects for passenger ports are being developed to provide a higher level of service for the port users.

Slovakia

46. Activities of ensuring and maintaining the required minimum parameters of inland waterways are carried out by the Slovak Water Management Enterprise, a waterway administration established by Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic. This company performs water management activities within the framework of cooperation and in accordance with the regulations and requirements of the waterway authorities and the relevant bodies in Austria and Hungary through the transboundary water commissions in the field of the waterway maintenance. Water management includes dredging, remedial work, sweeping, bank protection repairs, maintenance of navigational equipment and other activities. Main focus is on the Danube river as a waterway of international importance, and the work is in progress for bringing the fairway parameters in compliance with the DC recommendations and improving navigability in the shallow sections. In 2021, the total costs for the maintenance of the Danube fairway, including the demarcation service, amounted to € 2,180,582.

47. The development of inland waterways of classes I–III falls under the competencies of municipalities. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic supports activities of municipalities in this field.

48. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic is preparing a public procurement package for the feasibility study “Proposal for measures required to ensure the full navigability of the Danube section from 1,880.26 river km to 1,853.10 river km”. One of the ambitions of this study is to identify bottlenecks and find out appropriate solutions for their elimination.

49. JSC Public Ports has prepared the Master Plans for the ports of Bratislava and Komárno. Both documents define a long-term port development concept with due regard of the specificities resulting from the current situation in the port. The documents contain the analysis of the port capacity and possible solutions for its increasing.

50. Possible measures, actions and opportunities in this field will be set out in the Concept of Water Transport Development in the Slovak Republic until 2030 with a view to 2050.

51. At present, Slovakia doesn't provide any kind of grant for combined transport. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic implements procedures for the elaboration, approval and introduction of the State Aid Scheme for the Development of Combined Transport. The amount of funding approved for intermodal and combined transport development in the Recovery and Resilience Plan is € 16,100 thousand. Key to the development of intermodal transport is the network of intermodal terminals.