



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRANS/SC.3/2000/6
3 August 2000

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Inland Water Transport
(Forty-fourth session, 17-19 October 2000,
agenda item 6(a))

**EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON MAIN INLAND WATERWAYS
OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

Note by the secretariat

At its forty-third session, the Working Party discussed the proposal of the representative of the International Touring Alliance (AIT), supported by the representative of the European Boating Association (EBA), on the possible elaboration of the draft European Agreement on Pleasure Navigation Network (AGNP) and invited AIT and other interested non-Governmental organizations to transmit to its next session a detailed written proposal which would clearly outline the objectives of the project, practical ways for its implementation and possible structure of the future draft instrument.

The secretariat reproduces below a communication received from AIT.

I. Introduction.

1. During the meeting of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) in October 1999, the proposal of the International Touring Alliance (AIT) and the European Boating Association (EBA) to develop the so-called European Agreement on the Network of Inland Pleasure Navigation Waterways (AGNP) was discussed in depth. AIT, EBA, together with other non-governmental organisations concerned, were invited to submit a detailed written proposal to the next session of SC.3 which would clearly outline the objectives of the project, suggest practical ways for its implementation, and a possible structure for the future draft instrument.

2. Below, the questions of the Working Party are explored in further detail.

II. Reasons for the development of AGNP

3. Most of Europe's rivers and canals were originally meant to be used for the transport of goods. Developments in recent years, however, have led to changes.

4. As a result of economies of scale in the goods transport sector, many of the smaller canals became less suitable for transport due to the large size of the ships used. Consequently, canal networks in England, large areas of the Netherlands and also in Belgium, France and other parts of Europe, could no longer fulfil their original purpose. Water transport was increasingly replaced by transport by road and rail. Passenger transport by water also became less and less important. On smaller canals, on more than one occasion, these developments led to the closing of bridges and locks, and the discontinuation of maintenance services. This not only pushed the use of waterways for recreational purpose to one side, but also had cultural and historical consequences. Fortunately, many canals can still be navigated or require only a little work to be made navigable.

5. Awareness has grown of the fact that the main inland transport waterways can play an important role in fulfilling the demands of international transport in a cost-efficient and environmentally-friendly manner.

6. In 1996, in order to set down and develop the options open in this regard in the most secure fashion, a European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) was drawn up by the UN/ECE Inland Transport Commission. This agreement, that went into force on 26 July 1999, laid the foundations for the protection and improvement of the E waterway network for commercial shipping.

7. All waterways with a CEMT classification of IV or higher fall under the network. This does not mean that CEMT classes I - III are no longer considered significant in terms of transport. On the other hand, the E network will also be used by pleasure craft.

8. In the second half of last century, recreational water sports developed dramatically. This was in part due to booming economies and increased leisure time.

9. More than 1 million motorised pleasure craft sail the inland waterways of the Member States of the EU. This figure does not include an as yet unknown number of craft from ECE countries outside the EU.

10. In the Netherlands alone, the economic value of recreational navigation is around 2 billion euros. Tourists/recreational visitors to the canals in England are worth around 1,340 million pounds a year. There are 54,000 related jobs in the sector and for Europe as a whole, the number of jobs is estimated at around 500,000 (VNE). The annual growth in the water sport sector is an estimated 5%.

11. In the PIANC report “Standards for use of inland waterways by recreational craft” (supplement to Bulletin 103, 2000), the current situation of recreational navigation and the waterways network is described as follows:

“Sport and recreational navigation is an international business. Yachts and motor boats are built in one country and used in other countries. Recreational navigation still is a booming business. People have more holidays and are willing to spend their leisure time on the water. Boat owners wish to make long trips and to discover foreign countries across the borders. There is a growing interest in round trips, which results in an increasing demand for international waterway networks for recreational navigation. For this purpose, old waterways are renovated and re-opened. On the other hand, these opportunities are threatened by the construction of more and more roads and fixed bridges. Generally, the waterway dimensions pose no problems, but locks and bridges often form the bottle-necks. The factors are pressing for more uniformity and recommendations for international standards for recreational navigation waterways.”

III. Proposal

12. AIT and EBA together with PIANC and VNE believe that, waterways are of increasing international importance to the development of tourism and recreation in general, and to recreational navigation in particular. AIT and EBA advocate the realisation of a European Agreement on a Network of Pleasure Navigation Waterways (AGNP) analogous to the drawing up of the AGN, and in this regard, propose the following:

IV. Objective

13. The preservation and development of a European waterways network suitable for transit and transborder recreational navigation.

V. Implementation

14. The structure of AGNP could follow that of AGN, i.e.:

- Preamble;
- Legal part of the instrument;
- Annex I: Description of the network of inland pleasure navigation waterways of international concern (PE Waterways);
- Annex II: Technical and operational characteristics of inland pleasure navigation waterways of international importance;

- Annex III (optional): Inland pleasure navigation ports (marinas) of international importance (PE ports).

15. Annex II could be supplemented, *inter alia*, with provisions aimed at the facilitation of international pleasure navigation (visas, recognition of international boat and operator's certificates, pilotage, etc.) and, at the same time, at the observance by boat operators of national and international (in particular of UN/ECE) safety requirements and rules. In this regard a reference could be made in this part of AGNP to resolutions Nos. 13, revised; 40 and 41.

16. Annex III could contain information on pleasure navigation centers and their minimum equipment, supplies and facilities to be available.

17. AIT and EBA propose the following stages for the implementation of the AGNP:

(i) Determining a classification for recreational waterways based on the PIANC proposal and following on from the CEMT classification. Three categories of craft are classified in the PIANC proposal:

- RA all small craft such as rowing boats, canoes, inflatables, dinghies, sail-boards and outboard-motor boats. These boats have no cabin and are not suitable for an overnight stay;
- RB small and medium-sized cabin cruisers or sailing boats, the most popular family boat, that allows for trips of more than one day on small waterways and lakes;
- RC large motor yachts that are more suitable for making long trips on international waterways.

18. AIT and EBA propose the addition of a fourth category, i.e.

- RD sailing boats where lowering the mast is difficult or impossible.

19. Designation of the waterways of the network from the existing PIANC classification classes a, b, and c, class d from the AIT/EBA proposal, and ECE/CEMT classification classes I, II and III. For class d, the dimensions of class c apply, with the exception of depth and height measurements. These are 2.1 metres and are unrestricted through height, respectively.

20. Designation shall take place on the recommendation of the secretariat and shall be set down by allocating classifications to the existing waterways. This allocation shall result in an annex of waterways being generated that can be regarded as the Blue Book of the AGNP.

21. Drawing up the final text of the agreement that might begin as follows:

“The Contracting Parties

Conscious of the growing importance of tourism for the economic, social and cultural development of Europe,

Taking into account CEVNI, resolution no.13 (revised) on the International Certificate for Pleasure Craft, resolution nos. 40 on Competence of Pleasure Craft Operators, and 41 on Small Craft Used Exclusively for Pleasure Navigation,

Being aware of the potential positive effect that the network of smaller and larger waterways can have on pleasure navigation as well as the transport of goods and people,

Emphasising the important role of inland transport and the capacity that is needed on the main network of inland waterways (AGN),

Convinced that, in order to make pleasure navigation less obstructive to transport on major European inland waters and to allow it to work as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development of the regions involved, it is essential to establish a legal framework within which a coordinated plan for a Network of Inland Pleasure Navigation Waterways can be laid down,

Have agreed as follows:

- to establish standards for the use of inland waterways by recreational craft
- to designate a network
- to preserve and develop the network to a recreational, cultural and economic advantage
- to identify areas for improvement to the network.”

22. In practical terms, if Governments members of SC.3 decide to go ahead with the drafting of AGNP, a small group of experts could be set up to look at the draft to be prepared by the interested international non-Governmental organizations together with the secretariat.

23. The Working Party may wish to study these preliminary considerations of AIT and EBA and decide on putting this project in its Programme of Work. It may also wish to discuss whether the future document should be of a binding character (just like the AGN Agreement) or a Recommendation to be introduced by a resolution of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport.

VI. The role of AIT and EBA

24. AIT and EBA, together with the Voies Navigables d'Europe will provide users of the waterways with information on the waterways of a nautical and touristic nature and on the requirements that must be fulfilled by users of the waterways and their craft.