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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Transport Statistics

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Proposal for an interactive glossary for transport statistics

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1.   The transport sector is witnessing rapid changes due to technological advancements, evolving policy landscapes, and emerging mobility trends. The current version of the Glossary for Transport Statistics[1], jointly developed by the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), International Transport Forum (ITF), and Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), was last updated in 2018 (2019 edition). Given the fast-paced changes in the sector, a more dynamic and flexible approach for maintaining this key resource is necessary.

2.   In recent years, the three organizations have launched new initiatives and identified data collection needs in response to emerging trends, such as electric mobility, new forms of transport, and active modes. To effectively incorporate these elements into the Common Questionnaire, the glossary must be updated with relevant new definitions and terminologies to ensure standardized data collection and international comparability.

3.   This document proposed the creation of an interactive, wiki-style glossary for transport statistics. This evolving online resource will facilitate real-time updates and enhancements, ensuring that the glossary remains relevant and comprehensive in reflecting the changing transport sector.

II. Benefits of an interactive glossary

4.   Unlike the current static PDF glossary, an interactive glossary offers dynamic search functionalities, enabling users to quickly locate terms and keywords. It also ensures access to the most recent information through real-time updates. Furthermore, an online platform can feature a user-friendly interface, allowing users to easily provide feedback for content validation, which is not feasible in the current format.

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[1] https://unece.org/info/Transport/Transport-Statistics/pub/2612.

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5.   Web-based glossaries have already been adopted by statistical institutions in UNECE countries, such as the United States Census Bureau[2] and Statistics Canada (through its "Standards, data sources and methods" webpage)[3] to enhance user experience.

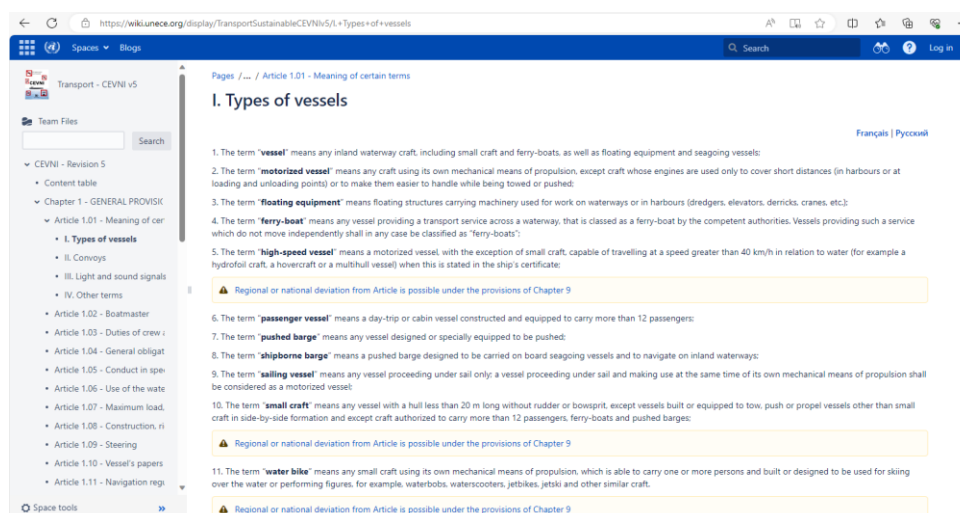## III.   Implementation strategy

6.   A secure online platform with governance structures for content development and oversight will be established for the glossary. In contrast to a traditional wiki page, which relies on community-driven external user contributions, only the three organizations will have the authority to make modifications to the glossary content. This approach is essential given the technical and specialized nature of a glossary. Furthermore, it is imperative to exercise caution since definitions already established in European Union legal acts and employed for collecting Common Questionnaire statistics are not easily amendable.

7.   The three organizations will collaboratively oversee and maintain the platform. Content adjustments will be made in a manner similar to past practices, involving a group of experts comprising, but not limited to, Eurostat, ITF, UNECE, member States, European Union agencies, and external experts, working collectively on changes to definitions and new definitions.

8.   To prevent user confusion and maintain consistency, adjustments to the glossary will be made judiciously. The goal is to update or modify the glossary as necessary, but not more than once per year. This will ensure that users have a stable reference point for the majority of the year. Any updates may align with the launch schedule of the Common Questionnaire, ensuring that users have access to the most up-to-date terminology and definitions before submitting their data. As a result, the group of experts will need to meet at least once a year, with additional meetings potentially required in the first implementation year, given that the last version of the glossary dates back in 2018. Further discussions on this implementation issue will take place among the three organizations.

9.   The interactive glossary is a collaborative product of Eurostat, ITF, and UNECE. Each of the three organizations may also publish the glossary in different formats to suit their needs. Some examples of similar platforms hosted by UNECE include the IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units[4] and the European Code for Inland Waterways.[5]

UNECE's wiki-style page of European Code for Inland Waterways

IV. Discussion and concluding remarks

10.   The introduction of an interactive, wiki-style glossary represents a significant step forward to keep pace with the rapidly evolving transport sector. Its dynamic nature will ensure that transport statistics and terminologies are consistently up-to-date, accurate, and relevant, ultimately supporting an efficient and effective data collection process.

11.   The Working Party is invited to provide its perspectives on this proposal. Member States are also encouraged to share their experiences and practices in the development and maintenance of similar interactive glossaries, where applicable.