

**UNECE**

# River Information Services in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe



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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is one of the five United Nations regional commissions, administered by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1947 with the mandate to help rebuild post-war Europe, develop economic activity and strengthen economic relations among European countries, and between Europe and the rest of the world. During the Cold War, ECE served as a unique forum for economic dialogue and cooperation between East and West. Despite the complexity of this period, significant achievements were made, with consensus reached on numerous harmonization and standardization agreements.

In the post-Cold War era, ECE acquired not only many new member States, but also new functions. Since the early 1990s the organization has focused on assisting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia with their transition process and their integration into the global economy.

Today, ECE supports its fifty-six member States in Europe, Central Asia and North America in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals. ECE provides a multilateral platform for policy dialogue, the development of international legal instruments, norms and standards, the exchange of best practices and economic and technical expertise, as well as technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

Offering practical tools to improve people's everyday lives in the areas of environment, transport, trade, statistics, energy, forestry, housing, and land management, many of the norms, standards and conventions developed in ECE are used worldwide, and a number of countries from outside the region participate in the work of ECE.

ECE's multisectoral approach helps countries to tackle the interconnected challenges of sustainable development in an integrated manner, with a transboundary focus that helps devise solutions to shared challenges. With its unique convening power, ECE fosters cooperation among all stakeholders at the country and regional levels.

## Transport in the Economic Commission for Europe

The ECE Sustainable Transport Division is the secretariat of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The ITC and its twenty working parties, as well as the ECOSOC Committee and its sub-committees are intergovernmental decision-making bodies that work to improve the daily lives of people and businesses around the world, in measurable ways and with concrete actions, to enhance traffic safety, environmental performance, energy efficiency and the competitiveness of the transport sector.

The ECOSOC Committee was set up in 1953 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the request of the Economic and Social Council to elaborate recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods. Its mandate was extended to the global (multi-sectoral) harmonization of systems of classification and labelling of chemicals in 1999. It is composed of experts from countries which possess the relevant expertise and experience in the international trade and transport of dangerous goods and chemicals. Its membership is restricted in order to reflect a proper geographical balance between all regions of the world and to ensure adequate participation of developing countries. Although the Committee is a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, the Secretary-General decided in 1963 that the secretariat services would be provided by the ECE Transport Division.

ITC is a unique intergovernmental forum that was set up in 1947 to support the reconstruction of transport connections in post-war Europe. Over the years, it has specialized in facilitating the harmonized and sustainable development of inland modes of transport. The main results of this persevering and ongoing work are reflected, among other things, (i) in fifty-nine United Nations conventions and many more technical regulations, which are updated on a regular basis and provide an international legal framework for the sustainable development of national and international road, rail, inland water and intermodal transport, including the transport of dangerous goods, as well as the construction and inspection of road motor vehicles; (ii) in the Trans-European North-south Motorway, Trans-European Railway and the Euro-Asia Transport Links projects, that facilitate multi-country coordination of transport infrastructure investment programmes; (iii) in the TIR system, which is a global customs transit facilitation solution; (iv) in the tool called For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS), which can assist national and local governments to monitor carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions coming from inland transport modes and to select and design climate change mitigation policies, based

on their impact and adapted to local conditions; (v) in transport statistics – methods and data – that are internationally agreed on; (vi) in studies and reports that help transport policy development by addressing timely issues, based on cutting-edge research and analysis. ITC also devotes special attention to Intelligent Transport Services (ITS), sustainable urban mobility and city logistics, as well as to increasing the resilience of transport networks and services in response to climate change adaptation and security challenges.

In addition, the ECE Sustainable Transport and Environment Divisions, together with the World Health Organization (WHO)–Europe, co-service the Transport Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).



## CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>1. RIS objectives, services and stakeholders</b> .....  | <b>3</b>  |
| 1.1 Concept and objectives .....   | 3         |
| 1.2 RIS operational services (RIS services) .....  | 3         |
| 1.3 RIS technical services (RIS key technologies) .....  | 6         |
| 1.4 User groups and services (RIS stakeholders) .....  | 7         |
| 1.5 RIS enabled Corridor Management .....  | 7         |
| <b>2. Evolution of RIS</b> .....   | <b>9</b>  |
| 2.1 RIS origins.....   | 9         |
| 2.2 RIS development .....  | 11        |
| <b>3. ECE resolutions on RIS</b> .....   | <b>15</b> |
| 3.1 Resolution No. 48 “Inland Electronic Chart Display Information Service” .....                        | 15        |
| 3.2 Resolution No. 57 “Guidelines and Recommendations for River Information Services” .....              | 16        |
| 3.3 Resolution No. 58 “Guidelines and criteria for Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways” .....    | 17        |
| 3.4 Resolution No. 63 “International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways (VTT)” .....  | 18        |
| 3.5 Resolution No. 80 “International Standard for Notices to Skippers in Inland Navigation” .....        | 19        |
| 3.6 Resolution No. 79 “International Standard for Electronic Ship Reporting in Inland Navigation” .....  | 20        |
| <b>4. International regulatory framework for RIS</b> .....   | <b>21</b> |
| <b>5. The strategic framework of the Economic Commission for Europe for the development of RIS</b> ..... | <b>25</b> |
| <b>6. RIS: the way forward</b> .....   | <b>27</b> |

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## List of figures

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure I RIS operational services (RIS services) .....                    | 4  |
| Figure II RIS development in Europe .....                                 | 11 |
| Figure III Trends in the development of RIS for the upcoming period ..... | 27 |

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