

Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda  
**Managing THE PEP:  
Communication Strategy**

## **THE PEP Clearing house: updated options for the future**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### **I. Background**

1. The Committee was informed by the secretariat at its twelfth session about the status of THE PEP Clearing House. The Committee considered the three proposed options for moving forward with THE PEP Clearing House: (1) business as usual, (2) modernizing architecture and (3) expanding functions and requested the secretariat to develop cost estimates for the implementation of the various options with the help of a consultant, in order to assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the required investment into the Clearing House.

2. The secretariat prepared and presented a paper to that effect at the June meeting of THE PEP Bureau. The report analysed the information structure, search mechanism of the Clearing House, technical information of its website architecture, maintenance and administration, as well as technical and administrative pitfalls. On the basis of this information the document presented a proposed action plan with four alternative options. These options will be presented and updated in the next section.

#### **II. Available options**

3. In order to address the issues identified and to make the Clearing House fit for purpose for current needs, a number of possible options are available:

##### ***Option 1: Business as usual***

4. This option consisted of managing the existing search platform as it is with patches of support from UNECE ISU to fix technical problems. However, this would incur a high cost for maintenance of an obsolete search platform. Since the June Bureau meeting, however, the secretariat was informed that actually the current configuration poses security threats to the UNECE IT architecture that currently hosts it. In light of this development, **the business as usual scenario is no longer an option.**

##### ***Option 2: Modernizing architecture***

5. Modernising the core architecture would entail updating the technology and improving technical functionality (search options, user-friendliness etc.) of the system. Technically this solution would require switching to a name server (domain) hosted by UNOG ICTS and migrating to an open source Content Management Application like TYPO 3 (UNECE website currently functions on a similar architecture). UNECE ISU is discussing possibilities with UNOG ICTS to host the domain name ([www.thepep.org](http://www.thepep.org)) without any annual hosting charges and integrating into the CMS application. Migrating to the ICTS servers will address

the technical concerns enabling THE PEP Clearing House to function with minimal downtimes due to continued server support provided by ICTS without incurring an annual server maintenance cost.

6. With migration to Content Management Application, non-technical users will have complete control over their website content i.e. focal points with no computer programming knowledge can make changes to websites that only a developer or individual with technical knowledge was able to do previously.

7. The administrative and technical challenges of creating user identification and passwords can be addressed by integrating a “Front end user registration” plug-in into the CMS application. This will automate the process of user identification and password generation. This however will need to be supported by a control mechanism where the documents uploaded by the user to the website will first need to be approved by the focal points or administrator.

8. In addition, to ensure continued support is provided in maintaining THE PEP Clearing House by the secretariat, roles and responsibilities of focal points need to be clearly defined with sector specific i.e. transport, health or environment dedicated staff in countries to be identified to carry out the tasks. Focal points should consistently review, through the website, contents and documents, respond to queries from users and focus at increasing the visibility of THE PEP Clearing House. They should also vouch for aspects related to the copyright of any documents uploaded to the Clearing House.

9. On the cost side, **the integration would result in an annual savings of 2450 USD** (paid to AXONE and Logika Corporation as mentioned above), since there would no longer a need to rely on external services for the running THE PEP Clearing House. **The one-off investment costs of undertaking these activities were estimated by the consultant to reach USD 17,500 (plus programme support 13%)**. In addition, there will also be some ongoing operational costs resulting from the tasks set out above. To be prudent we have assumed these to be the same as the previous costs, that is about 100 hours per annum. This accounts for a reduced amount of time necessary to carry out technical activities and greater time for focal point input. This is equivalent to about 3.5 days per focal point per annum and to 2 months of person-time per year for the Secretariat, which would maintain an overall management function for the Clearing House. Furthermore, the functionality of the Clearing House should be clearly defined vis-à-vis existing related products and focus on the added value that the Clearing House can provide (e.g. availability in more than one language).

### ***Option 3: Expanding functions***

10. More than a separate option, this option would be an extension of option 2. In addition to the integration of the Clearing House into existing UNECE architecture, it would entail providing additional services, for example in the direction of supporting THE PEP Academy capacity-building activities and training modules. The work involves adding functionality to what is set out in Option 2. It would not require reworking of the work identified in Option 2.

11. This option would require allocating budget to employ a full-time Content Specialist, further investment to integrate an e-learning platform into the website, and more time of the Secretariat and consultants to provide for the enhanced contents and services. The Content Specialist would not necessarily need

to be in-house and would cost about an average of 65,000 USD per annum. The cost for the Secretariat would increase to 6 months person time per year. The e-learning platform would further strengthen the purpose of THE PEP Clearing House for exchanging views and good practices through virtual classrooms or webinar sessions with the target audiences. The courses could be offered to a wide array of participants and would be subject to an enrolment fee or charged for each session to cover the cost of establishing the e-learning platform.

12. In addition to the one-off investment in option 2, e-learning software application would incur an annual cost of at least 1500 USD (100 users or software licenses), depending on the number of users and licenses required.

13. Further, complementary, services could include information dissemination and communication with users in the form of newsletters and online forum. Furthermore, information resources, such as Databases and Statistics could also be included. These features will actively engage the partners or users with the ongoing THE PEP activities, promote research papers or available documents, promote upcoming events, create visibility among potential users, and would be an effective means to maintain relationship with them.

***Option 4: Shutdown THE PEP Clearing House operations***

14. This option would involve shutting down THE PEP Clearing House operations and diverting traffic to WHO EURO and UNECE websites to be utilized as online communication platforms. This would lead to disparity in maintaining THE PEP vision of having a single interactive facility for the exchange of views and good practices, create difficulties for users to access two websites to seek relevant information and remove the benefits of having such a system. There would also be a one-off cost associated with the transfer of the information on to the separate websites.

### **III. Next steps**

15. The Committee is invited to consider these options and reach a decision on (a) whether to support the continuation or not of THE PEP clearing house, in light of the challenges it poses in its current form to the UNECE IT architecture, (b) the level of one-off support granted for the upgrading of the tool, and (c) on the level of regular support that is needed to maintain a useful tool with the desired characteristics of the Clearing House.

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