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Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Implementing the Amsterdam Declaration: THE PEP  
relay race (staffette)****THE PEP relay race (staffette)****Report of the workshop on safe and healthy walking and cycling in  
urban areas (Batumi, September/October 2010)***Summary*

The Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) decided at its seventh session (22–23 October 2009) to establish relay races (staffette) as a part of a new communication and implementation strategy, with a view to spreading the key messages of the Amsterdam Declaration throughout the region (ECE/AC.21/SC/2009/4–EUR/09/5088363/4, paras. 8–10). Each relay race focuses on one topic or theme, drawing from the four priority goals of the Declaration. The “batons” of the selected topics are then passed from country to country across the pan-European region, spreading know-how and experience.

At its fourteenth session (Rome, 20–21 June 2011), the Bureau of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme Steering Committee discussed the long-term local impacts of THE PEP relay race workshops, and decided that workshop reports should be presented by the corresponding member State at subsequent sessions of the Steering Committee.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The report will be available shortly from THE PEP website at <http://live.unece.org/index.php?id=2506>.

The third relay race workshop, on “Safe and Healthy Walking and Cycling in Urban Areas”, was held in Batumi, Georgia, from 30 September to 1 October 2010. The workshop, which was organized by THE PEP secretariat in cooperation with Georgian State and local government, agreed on the following action points for policymakers and local actors:

- Create opportunities for community outreach and awareness-raising
- Make good use of the health argument
- Maximize existing assets of the local environment
- Focus on the green economy
- Support local actions and their implementation

Further information, including documents and presentations from the Batumi workshop, are available at [http://www.unece.org/thepep/en/workplan/urban/batumi\\_docs.htm](http://www.unece.org/thepep/en/workplan/urban/batumi_docs.htm).

## **I. Introduction**

1. A third workshop as part of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) relay race, entitled “Safe and Healthy Walking and Cycling in Urban Areas”, was held in Batumi, Georgia, from 30 September to 1 October 2010.
2. The workshop was organized by THE PEP secretariat (the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Transport and Environment Divisions and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe)) in cooperation with the Georgian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia; the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; the region of Adjara; and the City of Batumi. Special technical and financial support was provided by the Governments of Austria and Switzerland.
3. THE PEP secretariat also received support for the event from the non-governmental organization “Environmental Information and Sustainable Development Center Rio”.

## **II. Participation**

4. The Batumi workshop was attended by 62 experts from ECE and WHO/Europe member States and civil society, including national and local government officials, city planners and architects, academics and researchers from the following 17 countries: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. Non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations participating included: the Chisinau Branch of the Environmental Movement of Moldova; the Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation Greenways Programme; the International Charitable organization Information Center “Green Dossier” (Ukraine); Partnership for Road Safety (Georgia); the Dutch Cyclists Union (Netherlands); International World Travelers Association; Tbilisi State Academy of Arts; and the WHO CEHAPE<sup>2</sup> Youth Network.

## **III. Technical cooperation on walking and cycling**

5. In connection with the technical cooperation and capacity-building role of THE PEP, the Government of the Netherlands provided Georgia with a technical expert, Mr. Henk Hendriks, Project Manager of the Dutch Cyclists Union, to assess the walking and cycling potential in Batumi in advance of the workshop.
6. The objective of the technical mission was to determine the degree to which the City of Batumi — in terms of infrastructure, legislation and safety regulations — supported non-motorized transport; to raise awareness of the local population on the attractiveness of health-friendly transport; to raise interest among the local and national press on this subject; and to make recommendations for future actions to promote walking and cycling that could be presented during THE PEP workshop.

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<sup>2</sup> Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE).

7. Below is an account of the findings of the technical visit and the policy recommendations at the local and national levels that emerged during the workshop deliberations.

### **A. The transport setting in Batumi**

8. The city of Batumi is currently developing appropriate infrastructure for recreational cycling as a means of attracting tourists. Aside from recreational cycling, cycling in the city by tourists and inhabitants is used as a means of transport in order to reduce car traffic in the city.

9. Cycling is accessible and popular in the beach area and on the sidewalks in the city, although many sections of the city do not yet have dedicated bicycle paths. Walking routes from the beaches into town could also be improved, providing increased traffic safety for both pedestrians and cyclists.

10. The tourist season in Batumi runs from the beginning of June through mid-September. During this time, traffic is chaotic and congested, especially on the main roads. During this period, cycling as a means of travel to work is often more rapid than by car.

11. During the peak tourist season, the predominant pedestrian traffic flows are from the city centre to the beaches. The overall impression that tourists have of Batumi would improve if the roads leading to the beaches were more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. For example, pedestrian sidewalks should be widened, separate bicycle paths should be continuous and link the city with the beaches, and traffic calming measures should be imposed, such as a limit on the number of cars in the city centre.

12. Cycling is an interesting option, moreover, for secondary school students travelling from nearby villages to Batumi, in particular along the beach boardwalk, which is ideal for cycling, as well as for tourists travelling throughout the region of Adjara.

### **B. Recreational infrastructure**

13. The main tourist area in Batumi is a boulevard (boardwalk) along the beach that was constructed in 1880 and has developed gradually into a large park several kilometres long. It is made up of a cycling and a pedestrian path, both of which are well constructed and well lit for safety. However, a more extensive network and greater public awareness of the benefits of cycling and walking would allow for a wider usage during the tourist season and off season. The current plans are to extend the boulevard to the south, almost to the Turkish border (20 kilometres), including a bridge with a span of 800 meters that has a pedestrian and a cycling lane, 10 and 5 meters wide respectively.

14. Some tourists come to Batumi for mountain biking, but no particular plans have been developed for this target group.

### **C. Technical assistance**

15. During the technical visit to Batumi it became increasingly clear that there was a need for further technical assistance in planning the bicycling network for the city. There is a strong political will from the municipality to increase cycling in the city.

16. Discussions with the city architect focused on the old town, where difficulties were encountered in designing infrastructure suitable for cyclists in the narrow streets and in the neighbourhoods adjoining the boulevard.

17. It was decided to allow only unidirectional traffic for cars in the centre of the old town, and that not all streets would have dedicated paths for bicycles. In the streets that have dedicated lanes for bicycles in a lane going against the direction of traffic, these will be separated from the road by a low barrier. In cases where dedicated cycling lanes follow the direction of car traffic, cyclists would have a lane where trucks would drive as well.

18. The system is based on that used in the Netherlands, where bicycles are in the majority and cars are allowed to drive, but only as guests. In the roads with separate lanes for bicycles, car parking will be prohibited. On other roads, car parking will be available. Adjacent to the old city centre car park facilities will be built for extra car parking space.

19. In the area next to the boulevard adjacent to the old city the roads are wider and discussions with the local architect centred on the possibility for a cycling network. In this area, reduced speed is a requirement in order to reduce risk (severity of injury) at the junctions if a collision occurs. Only car traffic having a destination in the area and no through traffic may use these roads. In order to encourage through traffic to use the larger roads, some adjustments in the one-way directions are still required.

20. In the first instance, the municipality planned to limit the area where bicycle tracks would be built from the neighbourhoods just next to the boulevard to the second main road, an area extending to approximately 500 metres from the boulevard. At these distances, walking is almost as fast as cycling, and therefore cycling will not increase drastically. By extending the cycling infrastructure to a wider area, cycling can compete with walking.

21. Recommendations for next steps include increasing the number of bicycles in the city and to use rental systems, where feasible. Professionals should also be encouraged through policy to use bicycles, including police, postmen, couriers between offices, doctors, etc. Maintenance work in parks and pedestrian areas can also be done with cargo bicycles rather than with vehicles.

#### **D. Launch of the Walking School Bus**

22. Awareness-raising on walking as a viable, healthy and environmentally friendly means of urban mobility was stimulated by the launch of Batumi's first Walking School Bus for children. The event was covered by local and national television and radio stations and was attended by local and national politicians, architects and city planners. The Walking School Bus evoked public awareness and discussion on how to motivate children and parents to see walking as an attractive mode of mobility, and identified local requirements for a safe and healthy route. It was evident that groups of children walking together and groups of cyclists (such as those cycling as part of THE PEP workshop event) drew special attention. THE PEP workshop, moreover, received exposure in the local press and provided a platform for the successful stimulation of political support for walking and cycling.

### **IV. Action points for policymakers and local actors**

23. Workshop participants discussed in detail technical requirements for safe and healthy walking and cycling in Batumi and shared experiences from their countries and organizations on the promotion of non-motorized transport and its positive contribution to

health, sustainable mobility and economic development through tourism. The following policy directions were underlined as important aspects to emphasize in future planning:

(a) *Create opportunities for community outreach and awareness-raising.* This could be done through activities such as the Walking School Bus, to reach children and parents and to sensitize them to issues related to transport, health and the environment. Also, promotional rallies or similar events that attract road users as well as cyclists and pedestrians should be organized to promote safer walking and cycling;

(b) *Make good use of the health argument.* Health and physical activity aspects of transport are often overlooked. Relevant WHO recommendations on physical activity could create the necessary political momentum among Governments and civil society. This is particularly important as non-communicable diseases are on the rise and transport-related health effects contribute substantially to this rise. This can also be done by using the local and national health care systems and promoting public awareness through them;

(c) *Maximize existing assets of the local environment.* A successful walking and cycling strategy needs to strike a balance between adequate infrastructure, awareness-raising and promotion. To be successful, it is important to work with what is already in place and focus on improving it in order to create an urban environment that is safe, accessible, convenient, comfortable and attractive for walking and cycling;

(d) *Focus on the green economy.* It is important to highlight win-win-win (health, environment and economic) situations that can be created through walking and cycling in cities. This could also help in engaging international financial institutions to further invest in walking and cycling, instead of only in traditional road infrastructure;

(e) *Support local actions and their implementation.* While it is necessary to create national action plans on transport, health and the environment to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure good coordination, it is not necessary to wait for such processes to start. By tapping into local expertise and enthusiasm (“local champions”), concrete actions can lead to visible results at the local level and attract national attention. In turn, these can serve as good practice to motivate other regions and cities to take similar actions. Exchange of local experience at the international level can further strengthen local expertise (e.g., through THE PEP workshops and THE PEP Partnership).

## V. Workshop programme

24. The workshop covered the following issues and topics:

Session I: Setting the scene — Walking and cycling potential in Batumi

- Walking and cycling in Georgia
- Health benefits of walking and cycling

Session II: Laying the groundwork — Policy, legislation and institutions to support infrastructure and planning

Session III: Investing in walking and cycling — Win-win-win for health, environment and economic development

Session IV: The role of civil society, the media and schools

Session V: Making it happen! — Walking and cycling in urban areas across the ECE-WHO/Europe region

Session VI: Key messages and action points for policymakers

- Building on the Action Points from workshop in Pruhonice, Czech Republic (September 2009)
- Next steps — Passing the baton and monitoring progress

*Excursion:* Discovering Batumi's walking and cycling potential and awareness-raising rally.

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