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HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSPORT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Steering Committee on the Transport, Health and
Environment Pan-European Programme

Sixth session
Geneva, 28–29 April 2008
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

PROGRESS REPORTS AND PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. In accordance with the terms of reference (ECE/AC.21/2002/9, annex 3) and the rules of procedure (ECE/AC.21/2003/6, annex 1) of the Steering Committee, the present report outlines progress achieved in the implementation of THE PEP workplan. The Steering Committee may wish to review progress in the implementation of these activities as adopted by the Second High-level Meeting on 5 July 2002 (ECE/AC.21/2002/9), and to provide guidance for further steps to be taken. In addition, delegations are invited to express interest in supporting implementation of these activities.

I. CLEARING HOUSE ON TRANSPORT, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

A. Objectives and mechanism of THE PEP Clearing House

2. The Clearing House on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) is a web portal designed to facilitate exchange of information and knowledge across the transport, health and environment sectors in the pan-European region. It is used to collect, disseminate and exchange information on sustainable transport policies, legislation, research and good practices, with a particular focus on the 12 countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)¹ and South-Eastern Europe (SEE)².

3. Its present information content covers 110 topics relevant to the transport, health and environment sectors, including as priorities the health and environmental effects of transport, policy integration, urban transport and transport demand management. The Clearing House is primarily targeted at addressing the information needs of national and local policymakers as well as transport planners and experts in the design, communication and implementation of sustainable transport policies. The Clearing House (www.thepep.org/CHWebSite) operates in English and Russian. Its framework and description of topics are also available in French.

4. The information collected, validated, structured and disseminated stems from national focal points and the UNECE and WHO/Europe secretariats and is, to a large extent, kept and maintained by the original information providers. It has been developed by the secretariat in three phases:

- (a) Development of the conceptual design (April 2003–March 2004)
- (b) Implementation phase (April–December 2004)
- (c) Pilot operation phase (January 2005–December 2007)

B. Pilot phase of Clearing House and need for resources for sustained operation

5. Since its launch in December 2005, the Clearing House has operated in a pilot phase. In 2006, numerous modifications were made to the site and its underlying mechanisms to improve its user-friendliness and to introduce new features such as directories of other relevant sites at national ministries. Major technical work was undertaken to improve the response and operation of the automatic search engine and to enhance the automatic messaging system for uploading information.

6. In 2007, the Clearing House continued to operate in “automatic” mode, as neither the budgets of UNECE or WHO/Europe nor the extrabudgetary funds made available by donor countries allowed for the recruitment of a content manager, as originally foreseen, who could ensure the necessary permanent interaction with users and information providers. Staff of the UNECE Transport and Environment Divisions have continued to provide minimum support to

¹ EECCA: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

² SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

ensure automatic operation of the Clearing House and to validate uploaded information on a regular basis. They also upload information submitted by mail and e-mail.

7. The number of persons authorized to upload information onto the Clearing House at the end of 2007 was 276 (2006: 235 persons), including 61 persons (2006: 32 persons) from EECCA and SEE countries. The number of uploaded documents or references amounted to around 600 with around 1,500 resources indexed in the search engine (the Clearing House search engine also scrolls regularly the EST goes EAST Clearing House). The majority of these documents and references are uploaded by the WHO/Europe and UNECE secretariats. Very little information is provided by EECCA and SEE countries.

8. Seventy per cent of these documents or references are in English, 24 per cent in French and 6 per cent in Russian. The main substantive areas addressed by these documents and references are, in order of importance: “urban transport”, “effects of transport” and “demand management”. Relatively little information is available on “cross-cutting issues”. Within these areas, the most comprehensive information coverage is given in the fields of “pollution and noise”, “public transport” and “modal split”. Most of the documents relate to international sources. Little information is available on national studies, research or governmental records that are of particular interest for EECCA and SEE countries.

9. In 2007, the average number of visitors of the Clearing House was approximately 350 (2006: 240) per month. The number of pages visited during the same period was approximately 970 (2006: 1,000) per month, with peaks during the beginning and in the middle of the year. Most visitors were from Western Europe, but large numbers were from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. This could be an indicator of the importance of the Clearing House as a complementary source of information as well as a platform for disseminating the outcomes of project activities, including under THE PEP. While statistical figures on the number of visitors to the Clearing House should be regarded with caution, they may give an indication of its use.

10. The Clearing House web portal is expected to have a central role in disseminating information on all THE PEP activities, providing a forum for the exchange of experience and access to tools developed under THE PEP framework (e.g. the Toolbox for Action on Transport, Health and Environment). Therefore, the contribution and feedback of THE PEP national focal points is of utmost importance for the provision and uploading of information and relevant data and documents on national experiences.

11. With the official launch of the Clearing House on 6 December 2005, the design, technical development and implementation of its main features were completed. During 2006 and 2007, the technical features of the Clearing House were improved. The challenge remains to enlist the necessary resources to guarantee its continued operation in 2008 and beyond. If this can be achieved, then the Clearing House could become a powerful tool to support efforts to promote sustainable transport in the pan-European region and to integrate environmental and health concerns into transport policies, particularly in EECCA and SEE countries. The secretariat has identified several measures, including financial and technical requirements for the sustained operation of the Clearing House (ECE/AC.21/SC/2007/4).

12. Given the uncertainties about resources for the sustained operation of the Clearing House and the amount of additional services it could provide, it is advisable to extend the pilot phase of the Clearing House and to use the remaining extrabudgetary resources earmarked for that purpose. This would allow for fine-tuning of the Clearing House and, possibly, the installation and testing of some additional services during 2008.

II. SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORT

13. Cross-sectoral cooperation and policy integration are necessary preconditions for (a) achieving a holistic long-term strategy for urban transport development in the countries; (b) agreeing on policy goals that are compatible with transport, environment, health and urban planning priorities and requirements; and (c) allocating national and local resources. An integrated approach to urban transport development is also required for clarifying the rights and responsibilities of the actors and improving coherence between the legislative acts, policies and decisions that influence the development of urban transport. In this connection, three subregional workshops have been held under THE PEP (Nicosia (2003), Moscow (2004) and Tbilisi (2006)).

A. Recommendations on improving policy integration and cross-sectoral cooperation

14. The workshop on sustainable urban transport and land-use planning held at Tbilisi in October 2006 (ECE/AC.21/SC/2007/5-EUR/2007/5068055/5) produced a number of recommended actions aimed at improving cooperation between the various authorities as well as consistency between sectoral goals. The following concrete actions, which are recommended for achieving a more integrated approach to urban transport development, may be taken into account when organizing the next workshop:

(a) Signature of an agreement or a memorandum of understanding on coordination between the national and local authorities responsible for health, environment, transport and urban land-use planning which clarifies their respective roles, rights and responsibilities;

(b) Creation of a permanent high-level inter-agency coordination body (e.g. a committee or commission) that would effectively involve all stakeholders in the development and implementation of coherent policies, legislation and decisions on urban transport, city planning, and environmental and health protection. This body should involve representatives from the environment, health and transport sectors of the central government, municipalities, business groups, trade unions and non-governmental organizations. Successful coordination would necessitate direct and committed involvement by high-level government representatives (e.g. deputy ministers). Ideally, the body would operate under the auspices of the prime minister's office to maximize the high-level coordination of activities. In addition to the permanent high-level coordinating body, technical groups could be created in relevant ministries as needed for various activities;

(c) Development of information collection and exchange, integrated monitoring and assessment. Data collection and information exchange systems should be developed and harmonized in line with available international guidance. Monitoring and inspection functions

and responsibilities should be allocated to the competent bodies/institutions with a view to: (a) maximizing the quality and reliability of the information collected; (b) avoiding duplications of efforts; and (c) ensuring efficient use of resources. Information collected should be readily available and easily accessible to relevant line ministries, municipalities, police, civil society, mass media and the non-governmental sector to encourage information-sharing and obtain broad support for the measures necessary to solve the problems (e.g. taxes and charges). Prior assessments of the environmental and health impacts of transport strategies, policies and projects should be made compulsory. The integrated assessment procedures should ensure public and other stakeholders' participation in decision-making on transport projects that affect them.

B. Promoting sustainable transport modes and sustainable travel behavior

15. A second set of recommended actions aims at encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of transport and at significantly reducing private motor vehicle use in order to reduce congestion, air pollution, noise and road accidents. This set of actions includes:

(a) Development and implementation of a comprehensive urban transport strategy/policy framework outlining the various measures to be taken at the local level;

(b) Increasing and improving the attractiveness of the more sustainable transport options – notably public transportation, in particular trolleys and trams – and better regulating privately operated services (e.g. minibuses). This would involve improving the vehicle fleet, infrastructure and services of the public transport system, inter alia, by prioritizing public transport in road traffic planning and investment strategies, developing integrated ticketing systems, and training drivers in safer, more environmentally friendly driving;

(c) Enacting market and pricing reforms to manage private car use and reduce environmental and health externalities of transport (e.g. through road and congestion pricing, removing parking subsidies, introducing parking charges, realigning excise taxes to ensure that fuel prices reflect the fuel's environmental impact, and introducing fiscal incentives for zero or ultra-low emission vehicles).

C. Proposals for further activities

16. Following the Tbilisi workshop, the Steering Committee, at its fifth session, endorsed proposals to organize further workshops on urban transport in EECCA and SEE countries to strengthen collaboration among the three sectors and to address the challenges related to transport (ECE/AC.21/2007/10, para. 29). Moldova and Bulgaria indicated the possibility of hosting a subsequent workshop in 2008 as part of the preparatory process for the Third High-level Meeting. This workshop would be focused on sustainable and healthy urban transport in EECCA/SEE, including the use of surveys on urban travel preferences and perceptions as used in the Tbilisi workshop. In addition, a side-event is planned on urban air pollution from transport and its health and ecosystem effects.

17. As part of the preparations for the Tbilisi workshop, the secretariat developed a questionnaire in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to

obtain detailed information on the use of different modes of transport in urban areas as well as on citizens' perceptions and preferences regarding urban travel. Information on citizens' awareness, values and priorities can provide valuable insights to national and local governments for deciding how to best influence the demand for urban transport. On the basis of a sample questionnaire and a common methodology, questionnaire surveys could be carried out in a number of other cities of the region, in particular in the EECCA and SEE countries. This would allow for international comparisons and for the identification of commonalities and specificities across this part of the region. Surveys of a size similar to the one carried out in Tbilisi could be done at a fairly low cost (around US\$ 20,000 per site) through local research institutes or universities and with the assistance of university students in data collection.

III. SUPPORTIVE INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS FOR POLICY INTEGRATION

18. A report on "Practical guidance on Institutional Arrangements for Integrated Policy- and Decision-Making" was prepared for discussion at the Steering Committee's fifth session. The Steering Committee recommended that a brochure be prepared that would build on the report and be made available to the Third High-level Meeting (ECE/AC.21/SC/2007/10, para. 33). The brochure was prepared by the Federal Environment Agency of Germany and in English, French and Russian (ECE/AC.21/2008/8-EUR/08/5068055/8).

19. The brochure is designed to provide support to political decision makers in their efforts to ensure more sustainable development by strengthening policy integration among relevant sectors of government, and to incorporate variety of stakeholders in decision making process. It is also intended to provide some guidance to decision makers on how to move forward in the direction of policy integration. Most of the suggested steps, tools and instruments can support both vertical and horizontal integration. They were derived from best practices from all over Europe and are one of the concrete results of the THE PEP programme and its activities.³

20. Specifically, the brochure addresses the mechanisms required for effective policy integration including both horizontal and vertical cooperation. Moreover, it explains benchmarking and monitoring procedures to allow for the evaluation of the integration process. Finally, it describes ways and means to overcome institutional, legal and psychological barriers to policy integration.

21. The Steering Committee may wish to consider further work in this field, such as a capacity-building workshop to share best practices in integrated policy and decision-making in the fields of transport, health and environment among Member States.

³ Stead, D. and M. de Jong, Supportive Institutional Conditions for the Integration of Transport, Environment and Health Issues in Policymaking (ECE/AC.21/2006/7/EUR/06/THEPEPST/7).

IV. TRANSPORT-RELATED HEALTH IMPACTS AND THEIR COSTS – WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON CHILDREN / THE PEP TOOLBOX

22. The project on “Review methods and development of guidance for the economic valuation of transport-related health effects, with a particular focus on children” is implemented with support from two consultants (Ecoplan (Switzerland) and RIVM (the Netherlands)) as well as an advisory group of international experts. The following steps have been carried out thus far:

- (a) Review of existing economic valuations of transport-related health effects, including air pollution, noise, traffic crashes and lack of cycling and walking;
- (b) The relevant epidemiological literature on review and identification of health-endpoints has been summarized for inclusion in economic valuations;
- (c) Based on the results of these literature reviews, a draft report has been prepared;
- (d) The draft report has been discussed at an international expert meeting (12–13 November 2007, Düsseldorf, Germany) in the framework of a workshop of the Pollution Reduction Options NETwork (PRONET)⁴ project.

23. The workshop provided clear guidance for the finalization of the report and possible opportunities for follow-up, including pilot testing of the guidance developed, which will be further discussed.

24. The project is implemented with the support of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the French Agency for Energy and the Environment (ADEME) and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

25. The Task Force for THE PEP Toolbox held its fifth meeting on 26 June 2007 in Telč, the Czech Republic, back-to-back with the third workshop of the Toolbox project. The events were hosted and supported by the Transport Research Centre and the National Institute of Public Health, the Czech Republic. Participants first assessed the contents of the Toolbox. The presented tools, particularly the checklist for health-impact assessment, were deemed useful and applicable also in EECCA and SEE countries. Possibilities to transfer examples and good practice from Western Europe to other countries remains a main focus of the project. After minor adjustments, the format for evidence briefings was accepted. Currently, the following products of the Toolbox are available:

- (a) Templates for the evidence briefings and case studies;
- (b) Evidence briefings on transport-related noise exposure and impacts and on road traffic injuries (provided by the Netherlands and WHO/Europe);
- (c) Case studies from the Netherlands (estimated effects of speed limit reduction on 10 highway sections), the United Kingdom (health in transport appraisal), Belgium (tool for municipalities to calculate air quality levels in streets), and Lithuania (experiences with inter-ministerial cooperation).

⁴ See <http://www.proneteurope.eu/>

26. The outcomes of the other projects, in particular guidance on economic valuation of transport-related health effects and of health benefits from cycling and walking, will be made available through the Toolbox. In addition, close collaboration with relevant ongoing international projects and networks, particularly INTARESE5 and PRONET, have been established.

27. The Toolbox will be launched during the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in autumn 2008. Further financial contributions will be needed for the continued development of the Toolbox, including for workshops, dissemination and advocacy.

V. SAFE CYCLING AND WALKING IN URBAN AREAS

28. At its fourth session, the Steering Committee emphasized the need for further clarification of the costs and benefits of promoting non-motorized transport and agreed on the proposed next steps outlined in a background document (ECE/AC.21/2006/6 – EUR/06/THEPEPST/6). The project on “Methodological guidance on the economic appraisal of health effects related to walking and cycling” is implemented in collaboration with the European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA Europe)⁶ and aims to facilitate the harmonization of methodological approaches by providing guidance for practitioners. Focused on approaches to the economic valuation of potential health effects, its products are intended to be integrated into cost-benefit analyses of transport infrastructure projects, complementing existing tools. They can be used to assess the current situation or past investments.

29. The project was carried out with the support of an international advisory group consisting of economists, experts on health and physical activity and experts on transport, in close collaboration with HEPA Europe. It was developed with support from Austria and Sweden and facilitated by the Karolinska Institute (Sweden). Results were presented⁷ in November 2007 in a plenary launch and a parallel session of the British Heart Foundation’s Annual Conference on “Evaluation in a nutshell”, including guidance on quantifying the health effects of cycling and walking, an illustrative tool for cycling applying the principles outlined in the guidance (titled “Health economic assessment tool for cycling”, or “HEAT for cycling”), and a user guide.

30. The Steering Committee may wish to provide its views regarding the methodological guidance on the economic valuation of health effects from cycling and walking.

⁵ Integrated Assessment of Health Risks of Environmental Stressors in Europe; see www.intarese.org

⁶ Please see <http://www.euro.who.int/hepa> for additional information about the HEPA network and its activities.

⁷ http://www.euro.who.int/transport/policy/20070503_1