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HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH
THE PEP Steering Committee
(Third session, 11-12 April 2005
agenda item 4. A. (a))

CLEARING HOUSE ON TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH
(THE PEP Clearing House)

Implementation and pilot operation phases

Note by the secretariat

A.   INTRODUCTION

1.   The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) adopted by the second High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (5 July 2002) and its Work Plan provide the policy framework and the mandate for developing THE PEP Clearing House as a portal for user-friendly access to information on transport, health and environment in the pan-European region (ECE/AC.21/2002/6–EUR/02/5040828/6; ECE/AC.21/2002/9–EUR/02/5040828/9).

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* Mention of firm names and commercial products does not imply the endorsement by the United Nations.

2.   The overall scope and purpose of the Clearing House is to provide easy access for policy makers at the local, national and regional levels to information on policy-related, legal and scientific issues concerning transport, environment and health and their integration, including good practices. The Clearing House focuses especially on the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe. The web-based Clearing House should serve as a user-friendly information broker and facilitator for the dissemination of knowledge and good practices with links, search mechanisms and inter-active facilities. The information content of the Clearing House is organised around THE PEP priority areas, i.e. integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policy; demand side management and modal shift; urban transport; and the cross-cutting issues.

3.   At its first (10-11 April 2003) and second (29-30 March 2004) sessions, the Steering Committee endorsed the overall project concept, the conceptual design of the Clearing House, the planned operational and administrative arrangements, as well as the phased implementation (ECE/AC.21/2003/2 – EUR/03/5040828/2; ECE/AC.21/2004/14 – EUR/04/5045236/14; ECE/AC.21/2004/3 – EUR/04/5045236/3), and recommended that the Clearing House reflect in its contents the results of other projects implemented under THE PEP (ECE/AC.21/2004/14 – EUR/04/5045236/14, paras. 11 and 12). To provide guidance and advice to the secretariat and the Content Managers of the Clearing House, the Steering Committee established THE PEP Clearing House Advisory Board and adopted its Terms of Reference (ECE/AC.21/2004/14– EUR/04/5045236/14, para 14; ECE/AC.21/2004/3/Add.1– EUR/04/5045236/3/Add.1). The Advisory Board has provided advice and consultancy to the secretariat on the development of the Clearing House and has endorsed the main decisions taken in this regard by the secretariat.

4.   At its first and second meetings, the Bureau of the Steering Committee acknowledged the significant progress made during the preparation and the implementation phases and expressed its appreciation of the design of the Clearing House website in terms of layout and content. The Bureau also undertook a preliminary evaluation and prioritization of possible additional services that could be established during the pilot operation phase of the Clearing House in 2005.

5.   The work arrangements and procedures to set up the Clearing House have been divided into three phases. Phase I (April 2003 to March 2004) was dedicated to development of the conceptual design of the Clearing House by the Clearing House Task Force in cooperation with the UNECE and WHO/Europe secretariat and has been completed. During phase II (April to December 2004) the implementation of the Clearing House was carried out by developing and testing the Clearing House website and database. Phase II has also been completed. Phase III (January to December 2005) covers the pilot operation of the Clearing

House, including development and implementation of additional services in accordance with the estimated priorities and available resources.

6.   The paper on Conceptual Design and Implementation Arrangements of THE PEP Clearing House, endorsed at the second meeting of the Steering Committee (ECE/AC.21/2004/3 - EUR/04/5045236/3), served as the basis for work accomplished during the implementation phase in 2004 and will also provide reference for the pla nned activities during the pilot operation phase in 2005.

B.   CLEARING HOUSE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OUTCOME
(April – December 2004)

7.   The implementation phase focused on developing, on the basis of the recommendations of the Steering Committee, the Clearing House website, its information structure, quality guidelines for available information, legal copyright issues, and technical components, including the choice of a search engine (see the Clearing House home page illustration in Addendum 1 to this report). All these aspects of the Clearing House, which are described in more detail below, were reviewed and endorsed by the Advisory Board, which provided guidance and consultancy to the secretariat throughout the implementation phase. They were also approved by the Bureau at its second session. In addition, a demonstration version of the Clearing House was developed and presented at the fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 23-25 June 2004), together with a brochure on the Clearing House. The brochure has proved to be a useful marketing tool to make the Clearing House better known.

I.   Information content and management

8.   The Clearing House content is structured according to a certain number of categories and sub-categories, which relate to the priority areas of THE PEP identified at the Second High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (5 July 2002).[1] These categories could be expanded as the Clearing House develops in the future. The detailed structure of the Clea ring House information tree is presented in Addendum 1 to this report.

9.   Information found on the Clearing House is, in addition, classified according to the following categories: policy documents; legislation, research and methods; case studies; indicators and data; and international capacity building and funding opportunities.

10.   The information included in the Clearing House is reviewed to ensure its quality and relevance. Quality control is applied at distinct moments and by different actors in order to ensure that there is a qualitative review and selection of the information which is accessible

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[1] See Clearing House Background Document No. 5 (December 2003).

on the Clearing House site. Quality control is firstly applied at the time when information is submitted for inclusion by an authorised source, in order to ensure the quality of each piece of information. Secondly, quality controls are made on a periodical basis, in order to maintain the quality of the information already contained in the Clearing House.

11.   Several actors are involved in ensuring quality control. The Clearing House Advisory Board has the mandate under its Terms of Reference to approve the general quality policies for the inclusion of information, provide guidance on quality assessments on a case-by-case basis, and undertake periodic review of the whole content of the Clearing House, as necessary. The other actors are the Clearing House Content Managers[2] and other users authorized to submit information.

12.   In terms of ensuring quality control at the point where information is submitted for inclusion in the Clearing House database, the Clearing House is equipped with a procedure allowing authorized users to upload information by logging onto the Clearing House administration site and filling in the required fields for the document or link submitted. At that stage, it is necessary to ensure the quality screening of the information submitted, from the point of view both of its citation and relevance to the themes covered by the Clearing House. Once documents and weblinks have been added to the database, and uploaded on the Clearing House, they are regularly scanned by a dedicated webcrawler that will ensure automatic updating of its information content.

13.   Currently, two categories of users are able to upload information onto the Clearing House. The Clearing House Content Managers have full user rights, i.e., they are able to submit information which is directly uploaded onto the site and validate the information submitted by other users. The second category of users includes other information providers who need to apply for a username and password enabling them to log onto the Clearing House administration site and submit information. These users have limited rights, in that all the information submitted is validated by the Content Managers before being uploaded onto the Clearing House. To date, members of the Advisory Board have limited user rights and have been involved in submitting documents. In a second stage and pending designation of national nodes as information providers, THE PEP Focal Points will be given limited user rights for this purpose during the pilot operation phase.

14.   Both categories of users are requested to accept the Clearing House "Terms of Use" (see Addendum 1) that set forth general guidelines on quality. The Terms of Use are available on the Clearing House website. Within these Terms of Use, the Clearing House Content Managers have the discretion to determine the suitability of information for inclusion on the Clearing House. The Advisory Board provides overall guidance.

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[2] The Clearing House content managers are staff of the UNECE and WHO/Europe secretariat or those designated by the secretariat. See Clearing House Background Document No. 10 (December 2003).

15.   With regard to the periodic control of quality, the content of the Clearing House (particularly weblinks) are monitored by the Content Managers on a regular basis to ensure that quality and relevance is maintained. Websites stored in the Clearing House are also periodically scanned by the webcrawler installed on the site to ensure that the information is constantly updated. The existence of broken links is also automatically checked on a periodic basis.

16.   In the final instance, the disclaimer contained on the Clearing House web site itself [3] provides that UNECE and WHO/Europe cannot be responsible for the information content.

II.   Language Policy

17.   The implementation of the language policy as decided in the conceptual design and implementation arrangements document[4] is planned in a phased approach. The translation of the Clearing House webpages was started during the implementation phase of the Clearing House and will continue throughout the pilot operation phase. An assessment of the possibility to translate executive summaries or abstracts of key documents or documents in their entirety, will be undertaken during the pilot phase, provided resources are available. A sustainable process for the translation of documents should be thought beyond the pilot phase.

III.   Legal Considerations

18.   The Clearing House web site contains legal copyright and disclaimers based on relevant United Nations provisions.[5] The text of the legal copyright and disclaimers, including the Terms and Conditions of Use of UN Websites, disclaimers, preservation of immunities, country and area nomenclature, feedback as well as the privacy notice, were adjusted to THE PEP Clearing House needs. Addendum 1 to this report provides all details in this respect.

IV.   Information Technology (IT) Features

19.   On the basis of the report on technical issues prepared by the secretariat,[6] further work has been done to implement the initial proposals concerning the structure of the Clearing House database.

Clearing House structure

20.   To have a very flexible application, the data structure (i.e. database that stores uploaded information), the graphical user interface and the tree structure need to be distinguished in terms of their programming and conception. This allows developing each

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[3] See Addendum 1 to this report.

[4] ECE/AC.21/2004/3-EUR/04/5045236/3.

[5] See Clearing House Background Document No. 4 (November 2003).

[6] See Clearing House Background Document No. 7 (December 2003).

component independently to match its own resource need. Moreover, it allows upgrading or applying modifications to a component without interference with the others. For instance, if the quantity of uploaded information should become critical, it should always be possible to upgrade the database component without any intrusive changes to Clearing House architecture or to the graphical interface. As development is still in progress, some technical choices still have to be defined. Nevertheless, each main component is summarized below.

Clearing House database

21.   The Clearing House database is installed at present at a server provided and maintained by the UNECE/UNOG in Geneva. A Microsoft SQL Server is used as the Clearing House database. The database is composed of three main tables allowing for storage of the three document types that can be submitted, i.e. weblinks, document files and document reference:
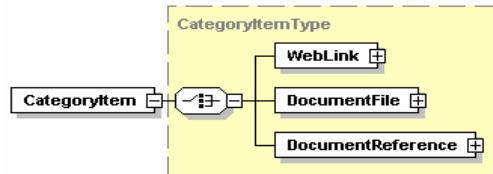
22.   Each of the main items can then be divided further, including a set of requested information elements, like a document name, a Web URL or a date of publication. Each piece of information is stored in this database and is thus not directly connected to the Clearing House information tree structure.

Clearing House tree structure

23.   THE PEP Clearing House web site gives a good overview of the Clearing House information tree structure as described in Addendum 1 to this report. Technically, this structure is maintained by an XML tree which is very well adapted for the Clearing House requirements. The substantive content is separated from the data tree. This separation enables to have as many languages as needed for the categories' labels. The following graphic illustrates the "recursive" scheme that is the foundation of the Clearing House architecture:
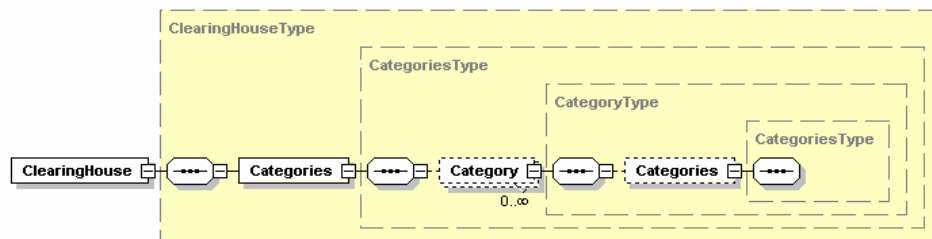
24.   Theoretically the Clearing House tree structure can contain as many nested sub-categories as needed. Moreover, XML models provide a very flexible structure. It will always be possible to add new categories or rename an exiting one or even swap two of them.

Graphical User Interface (GUI)

25.   The Clearing House has a Web-based GUI, meaning that it will be available through the Internet. The whole application has been developed using ASP.NET technology. All connections to the data structures (XML or Database) are done using ADO.NET which offers the most powerful and recent infrastructure to access data. Again, the GUI is definitively object-oriented and all its components are made by "User Controls" or "Custom Controls". They offer very flexible implementation and a high-level of reusability representing the present state-of-the art.

Electronic submission of documents

26.   A dedicated form has been developed to allow efficient and user-friendly submission of weblinks and documents for inclusion in the Clearing House by authorized users. It contains text fields with the necessary information for each submission as well as check boxes to attach each piece of information to the suitable content categories of the Clearing House. Once all fields are completed by the user, internal automatic checks are triggered to ensure the stability of the application (corrupted files, badly-formed URL, etc.). Documents can then be stored in the database. They are not displayed in the Clearing House web site unless approved by the Content Managers. An illustration of the submission form is given in Addendum 1 to this report.

The Search Engine of the Clearing House

27.   At its second session, the Steering Committee endorsed the equipment of the Clearing House with a search engine to ensure its efficient operation. To this effect, the secretariat undertook detailed performance evaluation of a large number of appropriate search engines. Priority was given to engines that, while providing very high performance standards, required low maintenance costs and being compatible with existing UNECE structures. As a result of the evaluation, the Fusion Bot search engine was selected as the best adapted solution for THE PEP Clearing House. This sophisticated search engine has been used by UNECE for more than 3 years with very good results. The present choice does not exclude the possibility of a future migration to a different search engine if the need should arise. The search engine was integrated into the Clearing House website after endorsement by the Advisory Board, and is now undergoing tests and adjustments to align its search capabilities with the needs of the Clearing House.

C.   CLEARING HOUSE PILOT OPERATION PHASE (2005)

28.   Work during the pilot operation phase involves pilot launching of the Clearing House to THE PEP Focal Points, including processing of feedback from test users; developing and implementing additional (value-added) services; as well as maintaining and continuously expanding and updating the Clearing House web site, database and information content. In addition, the IT structure and features will be maintained, improved, tested and adjusted to ensure maximum performance of the Clearing House in line with user needs.

I.   Additional services

29.   The results of a survey on the needs and preferences of target users conducted by the secretariat in August 2003[7] confirmed that the Clearing House should, in order to respond to the expectations of the majority of its target users, provide selected additional services, which are of particular importance for countries within EECCA and South-Eastern Europe. The survey also revealed willingness on the part of the respondents to support the implementation of such additional services through various means.

30.   As the implementation of additional services through the Clearing House can be resource-intensive, the Bureau of the Steering Committee recommended, at its first meeting in October 2003, that a step-wise and cautious approach be followed in the implementation of such services.[8]

31.   The development and implementation of additional services during the pilot operation phase will focus on promoting the integration of environmental and health concerns in transport-related policies that provide new information or enable interaction between different partners. The implementation of additional services depends, to a large extent, on the availability of resources. In an initial stage, the focus could be put on a few services whose use can be monitored as the Clearing House is implemented. Those services could then gradually be complemented by other services according to available resources.

32.   A short description of the planned additional services[9] is presented below. The details for each service will be developed under the guidance of the Clearing House Advisory Board and implemented, to the extent possible, during the Clearing House pilot operation phase in 2005. The summary of additional services was presented to the Bureau of the Steering Committee at its second meeting in order to receive guidance on the priorities in their development and implementation. The priority given by the Bureau to different additional

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[7] For further details, see background document No. 2 (August 2003).

[8] ECE/AC.21/2004/2 – EUR/04/5045236/2.

[9] For further details, see Clearing House Background Document No. 6 (December 2003).

services are in line with those of the target users given during the survey. The priority level is given in parentheses for each of the additional service.

Information resources / dissemination

Databases and Statistics (high importance)

33.   The Clearing House could provide users with links to on-line databases and statistics of relevance to the problematic of THE integration. This could include sites offering relevant tools (such as indicators, tools for impact assessment, software, etc.). It could also imply granting selected users with access to databases for which a subscription is ordinarily required.

34.   The substantive Content Managers of the Clearing House would be responsible for implementing this service, in line with the compilation of the database of information accessible on the Clearing House site.[10] This would require the identification, in a first stage, of sites that contain information of relevance for THE PEP, including those with restricted access. In a second stage, this information would be organized and included into the Clearing House databases so that it might be accessible to users through the search engine of the Clearing House.[11] Emphasis should be put on identifying the most pertinent information that is readily available. The databases could then be gradually updated and expanded.

Glossary (medium importance)

35.   As a complement to the range of information made available on the Clearing House in the area of THE integration, a technical glossary would prove a very useful service in providing short definitions of terms related to THE integration generally, as well as more specifically to THE PEP, that might be found on the Clearing House site. In addition, the glossary could be linked to the search engine. It could be available in both Russian and English, as well as, in French.

36.   The implementation of a glossary on the Clearing House site would require important (although one-time) resources, as its initial compilation would necessitate the input of (an) external specialist(s) in the areas of THE integration. It would also require translation services if it is to be made available in other languages than English. Once the glossary has been compiled and installed on the site, its maintenance would need to be ensured (regular checking and updating) by the substantive Content Managers.

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[10] For a description of the operational aspects of the Clearing House, see background document No. 10 (December 2003).

[11] For further details, see background document No. 7 (December 2003).

Newsletter (high importance)

37.   An electronic newsletter available on the Clearing House website could disseminate information on THE PEP, including current news on major developments, reviews and appraisals of progress in the implementation of THE PEP, outcome of other PEP projects, feature articles that highlight themes of interest to THE PEP, upcoming relevant events, as well as, opportunities for funding and capacity building. The newsletter could also incorporate analytical fact sheets or reviews in the form of editorials or, depending on the importance of the topic, as main content of an extra or monographic issue of the newsletter. The newsletter could be produced both in English and Russian.

38.   The content of the newsletter would be the responsibility of the Clearing House's substantive Content Managers, with experts in THE providing specific input relating to their respective field. Further information could be provided by the THE PEP Focal Points, as respondents to the survey on target users have indicated their willingness to contribute to a newsletter in several ways.[12] A procedure should be instituted to coordinate the various providers of information. The newsletter could either be disseminated by email to subscribed users or be freely available on the Clearing House website.

Calendar (medium importance)

39.   While the current THE PEP website already contains information on upcoming events in the field of transport, environment and health, the Clearing House site could include an electronically up-dated calendar of relevant news and events. This tool should allow the administrator to easily publish any type of event with the ease of desktop applications.

Expertise / capacity building

Analytical services (medium importance)

40.   The Clearing House could offer analytical services supplementing the information made available on the site in the form of reviews or fact sheets. Such services could provide users with analyses, evaluations and/or summaries of information and data on THE and their integration published on the Clearing House, as well as analyses of THE PEP project results and current news and events.

41.   These forms or fact sheets would be oriented to the information needs of policy-makers and could be included as part of other services (for instance, the newsletter or the electronic forums). Important human resources would be needed, on a permanent rather than

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[12] Namely to contribute to the contents of the Clearing House (e.g. studies, reports, scientific publications, data, news) (38 respondents, 88.4%); provide articles for a newsletter (22 respondents, 51.2%); and name providers of articles for a newsletter (21 respondents, 48.8%).

one-time basis, for the dedicated coverage of the relevant issues required by the provision of analytical services (this would be the task of the substantive Content Managers, with input from THE specialists). Information and news included on the Clearing House website would have to be regularly filtered and assessed, in order to determine the most important issues deserving in-depth analysis.

Advisory services (medium importance)

42.   The availability of advisory services on the Clearing House site would provide users with the opportunity to directly access experts in the field of THE and their integration and have the means to resolve concrete problems.

43.   The realization of advisory services could be achieved in several ways. One option is that it could be carried out through a people database (or roster of experts) available on the Clearing House. Users would be able to search through the database, in order to find direct contact details of experts. This might require developing specific agreements with THE experts stipulating the terms and conditions for the provisions of advisory services. Once the database has been implemented, and linked to the search engine, this procedure would not require additional resources, as the users would be given the tools to search for and identify the most appropriate experts. Only the administration and maintenance of the database itself are required.

44.   Another option would be to provide advisory services through electronic forums available on the Clearing House. For this purpose, participants on the forums would have their profile or credentials visible to others, allowing participants to interact with experts on specific topics. This would prove a more dynamic and efficient way for users to access advisory services.

45.   A third option would consist in allowing users to send queries directly to the secretariat, which would then be tasked with filtering the queries and forwarding them to appropriate experts. This option appears to be the most resource-intensive and time-consuming. It might, however, be an intermediate solution applicable prior to the implementation of a people database and/or electronic forums.

Capacity-building and training (high importance)

46.   The availability of information on capacity-building resources could represent an important element in the effective implementation of THE PEP by giving countries support in finding human resources and institutional capacities in the area of THE integration. This service would allow users of the Clearing House to search for information on capacity-building resources and tools, available or up-coming on-line seminars, training courses, etc.

47.   The implementation of this service would entail the creation of a capacity-building and training opportunities database focusing on the integration of health and environmental concerns in transport-related policies. Additional resources provided by THE PEP Focal Points could serve to further develop the service.

Sources of funding (high importance)

48.   The Clearing House could provide assistance to users in identifying sources of funding at the international level that might be relevant for THE PEP implementation by providing links to such sources of funding. Users could be able to search for funding opportunities using different criteria, such as, for instance, country, institution, field, etc.

49.   The availability of links to sources of funding at the international level could be implemented in line with the establishment of databases, statistics and capacity building services, as it would require in a first stage the identification and organization of relevant links to be included in the Clearing House database and linked to the search engine.

Interaction / co-operation

Electronic forums (high importance)

50.   The Clearing House could provide for networking opportunities such as electronic forums. These forums would allow for on-line discussion by different user groups (policy makers, scientists, etc). As mentioned above, it could also serve to put users in contact with experts in a particular area.

51.   Access to electronic forums could be free or restricted. Restricted access would require users to register in order to receive a user name and password. This has the advantage of greater control over the users of the forums, although it might also discourage use. A moderator would be of great benefit to the maintenance of electronic forums. The moderator could be responsible inter alia to screen messages, ensure that spam and off-topic messages are not included in the posts, and summarize results of exchanges. He or she could also be responsible for the selection of experts on a given topic.

52.   The maintenance of electronic forums would thus be quite important in terms of human resources. This could be mitigated by the outsourcing of a moderator by the secretariat.

People database and mailing list (high importance)

53.   The Clearing House could contain a regionally balanced people database, or roster of experts, containing contact information on experts in fields relevant to THE and their integration. The database could be linked to the Clearing House's main search engine and

would be available for users to easily search for, and ide ntify, key stakeholders or experts in a specified field. The database could be either freely accessible or password-protected.

54.   Such a database could be compiled and installed by the secretariat (Substantive Content Managers and IT Content Manager) on the basis of available contacts (with the authorization of the expert concerned), and subsequently expanded/updated. A procedure and criteria would need to be developed in order to select the experts to be included in the database. This would require relatively important human resources.

55.   A mailing list service could also be compiled by the secretariat in order to assist in disseminating information and news on the Clearing House.

Feedback mechanisms (medium importance)

56.   It is essential that the Clearing House provides for a feedback mechanism and possibilities for continuous evaluation of the site through periodical surveys, in order to ensure that the Clearing House maintains its relevance to users and continues to address their information needs. [13]

Translation s (high importance)

57.   From the very outset, it has been emphasized that the availability of key documents in Russian is essential to maintain a strong interest of Russian-speaking policy makers both at the national and local levels. Given the focus of THE PEP and its Clearing House on the needs of EECCA and South-Eastern Europe, it appears necessary to ensure that information of particular relevance for those countries is made available in Russian. In addition to Russian, the availability of some of the Clearing House contents in the French language would be very valuable.

58.   Different options for translation can be considered. The translation of THE PEP Clearing House web pages, which do not require frequent updating, could be done by tapping into regular resources of the UNECE and WHO/Europe. The translation of information available on the Clearing House is, on the other hand, extremely resource-intensive. For this reason, it would be necessary to compile, in a first stage, a list of documents of particular importance for THE PEP implementation that would deserve to be translated. In a second stage, translation resources should be determined. Rather than translating documents in their

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[13] Applicable UN regulations indeed provide that websites should include a server log with user feedback analysis to help monitor and evaluate the site, including through the maintenance of statistics showing accesses and files downloaded. See United Nations Secretariat, *Administrative Instruction: United Nations Internet publishing* (20 June 2001), ST/AI/2001/5, para. 2.11; United Nations Secretariat, *Administrative Instruction: Regulations for the Control and Limitation of Documenta tion: Addendum: Guidelines for Publishing in an Electronic Format* (14 August 1996), ST/AI/189/Add.28, para. 14.

entirety, the Clearing House could offer translated abstracts or executive summaries of the documents. In addition to translating documents found in the English language, the translation of Russian documents into English could be instrumental in fostering the dissemination of know-how and good practices from EECCA and South-Eastern Europe as well as a broader understanding of country-specific issues.

II.   **Operational and administrative requirements**

59.   The operational and administrative requirements for the pilot operation phase are similar to the ones for the implementation phase. The UNECE and WHO/Europe secretariat, including the substantive and IT Content Managers will work jointly on the Clearing House pilot operation. The Clearing House website as well as THE PEP corporate site will be hosted on a server provided by UNECE at least until the end of the pilot operation phase. Feedback from users will be a valuable input for the development of the Clearing House in a user-friendly and efficient way.

60.   The Clearing House Advisory Board established by the Steering Committee should continue to provide guidance and consultation during the pilot operation phase, in particular for the development and establishment of a set of guidelines on the selection of material to be uploaded on the Clearing House, for the selection of key documents to be translated into Russian, as well as for developing and installing additional services.

61.   The selection, quality screening and uploading of content information will be carried out by the Clearing House substantive Content Managers with overall guidance from the Clearing House Advisory Board. The IT Content Manager will continuously maintain the technical components of the Clearing House, including the database, improve the Clearing House features in accordance with the feedbacks received from the users and develop appropriate interfaces for additional services.

III.   **Implementation and resources requirements**

62.   Detailed information on financial resources spent during the implementation phase, the resources needed for the pilot operation phase and beyond, as well as financial mechanisms developed to ensure a sustainable and efficient functioning of the Clearing House, are presented in the document on the overview of the resources made available and further required (ECE/AC.21/2005/12 – EUR/05/5046203/12).

63.   An interim report on financial resources was presented at the second meeting of the Bureau. The Bureau welcomed the detailed information provided and expressed its appreciation for the considerable amount of financial and in-kind resources that have been made available so far by a few donor countries, particularly for the Clearing House. It

acknowledged the importance of sustaining the substantial investment that has already been made into THE PEP implementation.

64.   The required extra-budgetary resources for the pilot operation phase of the Clearing House (January-December 2005) have been estimated to vary between US$ 188,000 (basic version) and US$ 314,000 + depending on the amount of additional services to be installed and operated, such as translation and analytical services, etc.

65.   The overall timetable for the pilot operation phase is provided in the table below. A more detailed timetable is available in Addendum 1 to this report.

PILOT OPERATION PHASE (January-December 2005)	
TECHNICAL WORK	SUBSTANTIVE WORK
January-June: - Pilot operation of the site with continuous processing of feedback from selected number of users; - Implementation of other additional services. **June-December**: - Pilot operation of the site with processing of feedback from greater number of users; - Monitoring of website.	**January-June:** - Finalization of collection and analysis of information, data and websites; - Assessment of adequacy of contents and necessary adjustments. **June-December:** - Determination and implementation of additional services; - Assessment of further translation requirements.

D.   CLEARING HOUSE LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE (as of 2006)

I.   Clearing House sustained operations and necessary resources

66.   Once the pilot phase is completed, the sustainable and efficient operation of THE PEP Clearing House as of 2006 will require the continuous maintenance of technical features and the updating of the Clearing House information content. This will entail a continuous identification and uploading of new information, validation of received information, collaboration with nodes, facilitation of interaction between the users and actors in the framework of additional services, as well as providing input to additional services as needed. The IT maintenance for the Clearing House will be less resource-intensive, although continuous availability of an IT Content Manager is needed. The provision of additional services, however, might prove to be quite resource-intensive.

67.   As of 2006, possibly already in mid-2005, THE PEP Clearing House will become fully operational and provide its services to the general public and/or registered user groups and national information nodes in particular. Under the assumption that the UNECE can continue to host the Clearing House on one of its servers and provides the required technical and substantive back-up support (assistance by UNECE staff, provision of offices, equipment and IT services), the large majority of extra-budgetary resources to operate the Clearing

House as of 2006 is required for qualified personnel (Information/Substantive and IT Content Managers).

68.   The annual cost for the operation of the Clearing House, if administered by the UNECE, could be estimated to range between US$ 168,000 and US$ 240,000, depending on the qualifications and experiences of recruited personnel, local and/or international recruitment, length of contracts, etc.[14] In addition considerable additional funds are required to ensure a continued operation of additional Clearing House services (databases, newsletters, analytical services, etc.).

E.   ACNOWLEDGMENTS

69.   The thorough analytical work undertaken by the Clearing House Task Force and the WHO/Europe and UNECE secretariat for the preparation of the conceptual design and implementation arrangements, the technical reports and background material referenced in Addendum 1 to this report, as well the work accomplished during the implementation and pilot operation phases of the Clearing House would not have been possible without the generous financial and in-kind support made available by Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

F.   DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE

70.   Following approval of the overall project, concept, phased approach, design and implementation arrangements of THE PEP Clearing House at its first and second sessions, the Steering Committee may wish to consider the present report including Addendum 1 as well as section D. III. of   relevant document (ECE/AC.21/2005/12 – EUR/05/5046203/12), and endorse, in particular, the following issues with a view to ensuring the efficient conclusion of the pilot operation phase in 2005 and the efficient operation of the Clearing House as of 2006:

-     Clearing House implementation phase (April-December 2004) (paras. 7-27)
-     Clearing House pilot operation phase (2005) (paras. 28-58)
-     Operational and administrative requirements (paras. 59-61)
-     Implementation and resources arrangements (paras. 62-65)
-     Clearing House long-term perspective (paras. 66-68).

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[14] These estimates are based on annual cost figures for professional staff (incl. overhead costs) of US$ 84,000 to US$ 120,000 for one person (for 1.5 information content managers and 0.5 IT content manager).