

FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Agenda item 5. Transport

Intervention by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union¹



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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

The development of sustainable mobility of people and goods worldwide is essential towards a sustainable world. Access to mobility is a main condition for an open, motivated society and a competitive economy. Currently, the transport sector is the fastest growing economic sector in most developing countries. International trade together with cross-border transport is one important contributor to the wealth of nations and helps to use scarce resources more efficiently.

However, transport is the largest end-user of energy in many developed countries. EU transport is still to 97% dependent on fossil fuel and a significant emitter of greenhouse gases. It has the highest growth rate of greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels. The growing transport sector has also other significant negative impacts on the environment and human health through air pollution (esp. emissions of NO_x and fine particles (PM₁₀)) and noise. The need to expand infrastructure leads to a loss of land and biodiversity.

Furthermore, growing traffic causes congestion. Transport is also one of the major health problems in modern society as traffic leads to accidents resulting in road fatalities and severe injuries.

The Agenda 21 has already aimed at a more effective design and management of transport systems and recommended specific goals and activities, but they have only received limited attention until now.

Constraints – obstacles and challenges

Transport systems depend on multiple factors, including the pattern of human settlements and consumption, the organisation of production and the availability of different transport modes.

Not only technical measures are required to achieve sustainable mobility. There is a need to provide better mobility choices for people and better logistics for goods. All measures should aim at a more efficient, sustainable transport sector. Therefore we see big challenges in the global motorization, the growth of international freight transport, in the technology development and how to link it with new transport patterns and also regarding financing sustainable transport (polluter pays principle).

Best Practices and lessons learnt

The EU has laid down ambitious objectives and targets in order to achieve sustainable development, e.g. in the field of GHG emissions and air quality. All sectors, including the transport sector, have to contribute to reaching them. Moreover EU has set a target to halve the number of road fatalities between 2001 and 2010.

The EU has already implemented various measures to make transport more environmentally friendly and energy efficient. The measures concentrate mainly on technical standards and market based instruments such as fuel taxes, road pricing and emissions trading scheme .

Stricter Euro emission standards have contributed to an improved air quality in European cities. A regulation on CO₂ standards for new passenger cars aims at making the European vehicle fleet more energy efficient.

Common standards on railway transport technology and safety are improving performance and competitiveness of railway transports across the borders within the EU.

Minimum rates of energy taxation create a level playing field in terms of competition across borders within the EU and contribute to decreasing CO₂ emissions.

The amendment of the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) Directive includes all arriving and departing flights in the EU from 2012.

An example of an integrated approach is the THE PEP (Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme) managed by UNECE and WHO.

What remains to be done?

Despite these efforts there is still a lot to be done to achieve sustainable mobility especially to decouple transport growth from its negative effects on environment and health. In the long term we need to develop and promote transport solutions that contribute to worldwide economic growth and welfare in a more sustainable way.

We need to apply a wide range of policy instruments, including regulations, economic incentives, funding of research, information etc. External costs across all transport modes shall be internalised. In general road pricing, energy taxation, Emission Trading Schemes are options.

A more integrated strategy is necessary. We need to consider sustainable transportation, land use and spatial planning in an integrated manner. An efficient transport system is an important part of the development of sustainable cities. Public authorities and companies should take into account the consequences of their choices in terms of travel needs of clients and employees in addition to the transport of goods.

Key Messages

I would like to conclude by summing up what we see as main issues:

As one of the biggest economic sectors, transport has to change to environmentally friendly, non fossil-fuel-dependent technologies and to a sustainable development in a globalised world. It has

a key role in meeting ambitious GHG emission reduction targets to be set at the next climate conference COP 15 in Copenhagen.

We need a transition to a **highly efficient transport system with low or near-zero GHG emissions** combined with a sustainable energy future. And if we start acting now we may save money in the long run.

We need clean transport means in order to reduce their negative effects on the environment and health. The development, deployment and transfer of clean and energy efficient technologies are key factors.

We need a multi-modal approach. Mobility management, multi-modal operations and enhanced co-modality, as well as more intelligent vehicles integrated in traffic systems offer good perspectives. Strengthening the quality of railway transport, sea and inland water transport as well as public passenger and non-motorized transport (by bicycle or foot) will help saving energy and reduce transport on roads. Sound spatial and transport planning should also facilitate the seamless integration of the different transport modes.

We need to consider sustainable transportation, land use and spatial planning in an integrated manner.

Public awareness and acceptance is crucial to **promote and facilitate behavioural change**. Public authorities and companies should take into account the consequences of their choices in terms of traffic.

Development of the transport sector in Europe acts as a model for many developing and emerging countries. Demonstration and know-how transfer of sustainable, low-carbon transport systems is essential to react to ongoing rapid fossil-fuel motorization trends in the developing world. We especially recognise that the establishment of efficient, affordable, reliable and sustainable transit transport systems and facilitation are key issues for developing countries.