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Item 1 of the provisional agenda

THE PEP 2016 Symposium

World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

THE PEP 2016 Symposium: Contributing to economic development and stimulating job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport

Concept note prepared by the secretariat

Summary

At its seventh session (Geneva, 22–23 October 2009), the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) discussed how more actively to engage member States and other stakeholders on priority issues for THE PEP. To that end, the Committee agreed that, beginning with its eighth session, in-depth discussions, or symposiums, would be organized, including speakers from the private sector, academia, government and civil society (ECE/AC.21/SC/2009/8–EUR/09/5088363/8, para. 46). The topics were to be in line with one of four THE PEP Priority Goals set out in the Amsterdam Declaration,¹ and to cover one Goal per year up to the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, 14–16 April 2014).

In Paris, States added a fifth Priority Goal through the Paris Declaration

¹ See ECE/AC.21/2009/2–EUR/09/5086385/2, annex I, available from <http://www.uncece.org/index.php?id=2519#/>.



(ECE/AC.21/2014/2–EUDCE1408105/1.6/4HLM/2, annex) and foresaw the continuation of the annual symposiums. At its thirteenth session (Geneva, 17–18 November 2015), the Steering Committee reconfirmed the holding of a 2016 annual symposium in the framework of its fourteenth session (ECE/AC.21/SC/2015/6–EUDCE1408105/1.6/SC13/6, para. 52). The Bureau of the Steering Committee, meeting just after the thirteenth session, decided that the topic for the 2016 Symposium would be in connection with the implementation of Goal 1 (“to contribute to sustainable economic development and stimulate job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport”).

THE PEP 2016 Symposium will be held on 7 November 2016 at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, beginning at 3 p.m. This concept note was prepared by the secretariat to provide background on the content and issues to be covered, as well as the format, for the Symposium.

Introduction

1. At its seventh session (Geneva, 22–23 October 2009), the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), wishing to more actively engage member States and other stakeholders on priority issues for THE PEP, agreed that, beginning with its eighth session, in-depth discussions, or symposiums, would be organized, including speakers from the private sector, academia, government and civil society (ECE/AC.21/SC/2009/8–EUR/09/5088363/8, para. 46). The topics were to be in line with one of four THE PEP Priority Goals set out in the Amsterdam Declaration,² and to cover one Goal per year up to the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, 14–16 April 2014).

2. In Paris, States added a fifth Priority Goal through the Paris Declaration³ and foresaw the continuation of the annual symposiums. At its thirteenth session (Geneva, 17–18 November 2015), the Steering Committee reconfirmed the holding of a 2016 annual symposium in the framework of its fourteenth session (ECE/AC.21/SC/2015/6–EUDCE1408105/1.6/SC13/6, para. 52). Subsequently, the Bureau of the Steering Committee decided that the topic for the 2016 Symposium would be in connection with the implementation of Goal 1 (“to contribute to sustainable economic development and stimulate job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport”).

3. THE PEP 2016 Symposium will be held on 7 November 2016 at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva.

4. The present document provides background information setting the scene for the discussion of economic impacts of transport on health and environment (chapter I) as well as detailing the content and proposed organization and format of the Symposium (chapter II).

I. Background and issues

A. Transport trends impacting health and environment

5. Transport is central to economic and social development and a driver for growth. As an economic sector, it has a significant contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) (on a global scale, transport contributes between 3 and 10 per cent to a country’s GDP) and is an unequivocal enabler in terms of providing access to markets and supply chains for exports and imports. As such, it is essential for achieving “The future we want”.⁴ Transport provides access to work, health, education and other public services. It is a key socioeconomic factor, a source of revenues and employment and an essential component for trade and tourism development, and thereby for economic growth.

6. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵ and the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-

² See ECE/AC.21/2009/2–EUR/09/5086385/2, annex I, available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=2519#/>.

³ See ECE/AC.21/2014/2–EUDCE1408105/1.6/4HLM/2, annex, available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31244#/>.

⁴ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

⁵ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1).

2015 development agenda (New York, 25–27 September 2015), transport was recognized as a driver for sustainable economies and societies.

7. At the same time, a high level of political will and sustained financial commitments are needed to ensure a shift towards sustainable low carbon societies and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Central transport-related sustainability issues, with key economic impacts, that THE PEP contributes to addressing are:

(a) **Social inequalities, through affordable, safe and efficient public transport systems.** In the majority of developed countries, passenger transport systems have favoured the use of private cars. Affordable, safe and efficient public transport systems lag behind, thus limiting the chances and employment opportunities for large segments of the population whose access to workplaces, markets and health and education facilities is compromised. The most vulnerable segments of the population are especially affected, including women and children, the elderly and disabled;

(b) **Climate impacts of transport.** Although well behind cities and industrial production sectors, transport accounts for nearly one quarter of total energy used and contributes 23 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. In the European Union, virtually, all the energy used in transport, both passenger and freight — 95 per cent of all kilometres travelled — are powered by oil-derived fuels. The combustion of this oil releases pollution in the form of emissions, which place significant burdens on human health and the environment. In 2012, the transport sector (including bunker fuels) accounted for 24.3 per cent of total European Union greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, transport is responsible for about 13 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and 22 per cent of the total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from fuel combustion. The sector is currently both the fastest-growing consumer of fossil fuels and the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. Barring a major shift away from current patterns, energy use and carbon emissions are projected to increase 80 per cent over current levels by 2030, driven by rapid economic growth and urbanization in emerging economies. Much of the increased growth is forecasted to take place in urban areas in developing economies. Increased investment in sustainable urban transport infrastructure is therefore crucial, as the majority of transport investments are being made in developing countries where they will have long-term effects on urban development and resource consumption;

(c) **Air pollution and its effects on health:** In 2013, the International Agency for Research on Cancer declared air pollution to be carcinogenic to humans. In 2014 WHO published its latest estimates of the burden of disease related to ambient (outdoor) and household (indoor) air pollution. The majority of these deaths were due to cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as lung cancer. In 2015, WHO added an economic valuation of this burden for Europe, estimating the overall annual economic cost of health impacts and mortality from air pollution, including estimates for morbidity costs, at US\$ 1.575 trillion;

(d) **Noise pollution and its health effects.** Emissions of noise, including from transport, impact the quality of life in urban areas, but also are increasingly seen as a health hazard. Noise is defined as an “unwanted or disturbing sound”. Sound becomes unwanted when it either interferes with normal activities such as sleeping or conversation, or disrupts or diminishes quality of life. As it cannot be seen, tasted or smelled, noise tends to receive less attention from policymakers than other types of pollution. Excessive noise seriously harms human health and interferes with people’s daily activities at school, at work, at home and during leisure time. It can disturb sleep, lead to cardiovascular and psychophysiological effects, reduce performance and provoke annoyance responses and changes in social behaviour. One in five Europeans is regularly exposed to sound levels at night that could significantly damage health. In addition, new evidence has emerged indicating that at least 1 million healthy life years are lost every year in Europe as a result of noise from road

traffic alone. The social costs of traffic noise in 22 States of the European Union are over €40 billion per year, and passenger cars and lorries (trucks) are responsible for the bulk of costs;

(e) **Physical inactivity.** In all countries, physical inactivity is a leading risk factor for ill health. Forms of transport that entail physical activity, such as walking and cycling, separately or in conjunction with public transport, offer significant positive health, environmental and economic gains. In Europe, over 30 per cent of adults are insufficiently active during a typical week, i.e., they do not meet the WHO recommended levels of physical activity (150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week). Meeting the WHO recommended levels would reduce many diseases and deaths every year.

B. Making the link: transport policy, green investments and job creation

8. The pan-European region is committed to the transition to a green economy and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is a recognition that “business as usual” is no longer feasible if the region is to follow the path to sustainable development. Green economy promotes the integration of social and environmental considerations in the policymaking and decision-making processes of the productive sectors and promotes synergies between sectors and between economic activities aimed at curbing resource use. Green economy also supports healthy living and well-being as well as helps to create green and decent jobs.

9. In view of the commitments and requirements to transition to a green economy, national transport policy requires a fundamental shift to more environmentally efficient modes, such as public and non-motorized passenger transport. Investment in public transport and infrastructure that promotes walking and cycling generates jobs, improves well-being and can add considerable value to regional and national economies.

10. There are multiple policies and measures that could contribute to the creation of green and health-friendly investment and jobs in transport, which in turn could accelerate structural and systemic answers to the challenges at hand. Their effectiveness depends on the political, economic and social environment of the countries concerned. Possible enabling measures include policies such as land-use planning to promote compact or mass-transit corridor-based cities; regulation of fuel and vehicles; and the provision of information to aid decisions by consumers and industry. Potential investment measures include using public financing for public and non-motorized transport, and using economic instruments such as taxes, charges and subsidy reform. Green transport technology should be developed and widely applied and the capacity of relevant institutions to foster greener transport should be enhanced.

11. Elevating human-powered transport such as walking and cycling into a mainstream mode of transport, at least for cities, would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion and increase the attractiveness of cities. It has to be recognized that walking and cycling are an integral part of transport and urban development, on a par with other modes of private and public transport. Walking and cycling contributes to individual fitness and public health by increasing physical activity levels and reducing noise, air pollution (leading to substantial reductions in risks for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes type 2, obesity and breast and colon cancer) and traffic accidents.

12. Methodologies and tools developed in the context of THE PEP have shown that accelerating active mobility reduces the health and environmental effects of transport activities, including the emission of greenhouse gases, and thus has direct economic benefits. The Partnership on Green and Healthy Jobs in Transport has also provided evidence that in the case of using cycling as a mode of transport, policies that support

cycling not only contribute to the fight against air pollution and greenhouse gases and boost health, but can also go a long way in creating jobs as part of the transition to a green economy.

13. These solutions require appropriate infrastructure investments, including seamless links with public transport that is safe, accessible, convenient, comfortable and attractive to the user. The topic of THE PEP 2016 Symposium relates to “contributing to sustainable economic development and stimulating job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport”, which corresponds to THE PEP Priority Goal 1.

14. Goal 1 was first adopted in January 2009, at a time when Governments were aware of the challenges posed by the global financial crisis. The situation called for a proactive and integrated policy approach that recognized the significant role of investment in environment- and health-friendly transport for the creation of economic and employment opportunities.

15. The historic developments of 2015, underlined primarily by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the global community recognized that drastic solutions were needed in order to safeguard the future of the planet and its inhabitants. In this historic context THE PEP Priority Goal 1 becomes all the more critical for the achievement of humanity’s goals.

C. Intersectoral cooperation

16. The ECE Environment and Sustainable Transport Divisions and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) jointly implement THE PEP, which addresses the existing linkages between the three different sectors, thereby offering a platform for countries to share experiences and lessons learned. Through the Amsterdam and Paris Declarations, member States have committed themselves to build capacity for the integration of transport, health and environmental policies to, inter alia, reduce emissions of transport-related greenhouse gases, air pollutants and noise. The vision of THE PEP is for green and healthy transport and mobility that includes sustainable urban livelihoods for all.

17. Priority Goal 1 makes reference to proposed policy actions to contribute to sustainable economic development and stimulate job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport by: “directing investment towards the development of transport infrastructure that promotes safety, environment and health and has the highest job creation potential, including rail and light rail; clean and efficient public transport, efficient intermodal connections; safety measures in road transport; and infrastructure for active and environmentally friendly transport”.

18. THE PEP has developed and/or applied tools and methods to promote sustainable transport. For example, WHO/Europe developed health economic assessment tools for walking and cycling⁶ and the step-by-step manual, *Developing national action plans on transport, health and environment*,⁷ to promote active mobility and highlight the economic benefits of derived health improvements. For its part, the ECE Sustainable Transport Division developed the For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS) tool, which evaluates transport activity, energy use, and CO₂ emissions in a range of possible policy contexts. Furthermore, in the coming years THE PEP will focus on strengthening capacities

⁶ See <http://www.heatwalkingcycling.org/>.

⁷ Christian Schweizer, Francesca Racioppi and Leda Nemer (Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2014). Available from <http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications>.

through the newly established THE PEP Academy, developing a pan-European Master Plan on Cycling under the new THE PEP Partnership on Cycling Promotion, and launching the study on job creation in green and healthy transport, i.e., in relation to public transport, cycling and walking. Integrated and cross-sectoral policymaking was also promoted through a special session on transport and air pollution organized by the ECE Environment and Transport Divisions in July 2014.⁸

II. Organization of THE PEP 2016 Symposium

A. Proposed content

19. The main lines and priorities for efforts in the coming years to improve the environment were set by States at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016). One of the two themes of that Conference was “Greening the Economy”. The 2016 Symposium will be used to discuss in depth how the greening of the economy can lead to a better environment and human health, reflecting the Priority Goal 1, while at the same time also generate economic growth. The outcomes of the Symposium will then be reported to THE PEP Steering Committee.

20. It is therefore proposed that the Symposium focus on two topics under the green economy theme:

- (a) Topic 1: Green and health-friendly investment;
- (b) Topic 2: Green jobs in transport.

21. Issues that could be addressed at THE PEP 2016 Symposium by the presenters and during the interactive discussion may include the following:

- (a) How do we define green and sustainable investment strategies and how can they be mainstreamed? How can we estimate their potential and measure their effects?;
- (b) What are the trends in the pan-European region in investments and financing that contribute to the achievement of sustainable transport, the reduction of emission of air pollutants, greenhouse gas and noise for the transport sector?;
- (c) How effective are current financing and investment policies in addressing the impact of air pollution from transport? What can be done to make such policies more effective? What are the financial incentives and how effective are they?;
- (d) How do we define jobs in green and healthy transport?;
- (e) Is the job-creating potential of green and healthy transport generally known and fully understood? How can communication be improved? Which channels, messages and means work best?;
- (f) What are the priorities for THE PEP in encouraging and promoting investments and related analytical or policy work that contribute to reducing pollution?;

⁸ The event was organized as part of the fifty-second session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. See the report of the Working Group's meeting for further details (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/112, annex III), available from <http://www.uncece.org/index.php?id=33280#/>.

- (g) How adequate are existing methodologies that calculate the return on investments? How can they be revisited to internalize health and environmental dimensions?;
- (h) How, where and under what conditions are such investments possible?;
- (i) What can Governments, business and civil society do?;
- (j) What are some good examples and best practices in this area?

B. Proposed format

22. The 2016 Symposium will be part of the fourteenth session of THE PEP Steering Committee. It will take place at the WHO headquarters in Geneva on 7 November 2016 from 3 to 6 p.m., with interpretation (English, French and Russian). The Symposium will open with a keynote address, followed by a panel discussion, beginning with brief statements from five to six panellists, and a moderated discussion.

23. The secretariat will summarize the discussions for the Steering Committee at its regular session on the following day, 8 November. The Committee will be invited to review the results of the 2016 Symposium and to consider possible follow-up actions in the context of THE PEP and its future work programme. A detailed programme of THE PEP 2016 Symposium, including speakers and panellists, will be available in October 2016.⁹

⁹ The programme will be made available on the web page for the Steering Committee's fourteenth meeting (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40554#/>).