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Transport Division on technical excursion

The UNECE Transport Division went on a technical visit on 18 September, to see the construction of a new high-speed railway section between Geneva and Paris. The 65 km stretch between Bourg-en-Bresse and Bellegarde-sur-Valserine, a partly existing but unused itinerary, is being modernized and electrified to accommodate the TGV. When the new line opens in 2009, it will take 47 km, or around 20 minutes, off the journey from Geneva to Paris, making the total trip less than three hours.

In drizzly rain and cool temperatures, the Transport Division staff got a real sense of what is involved in the day-to-day work of infrastructure creation. Making a railway line – nice and straight – doesn't sound too complicated at the outset, but throw in some drainage issues, tunnel flooding, environmental concerns, existing road infrastructure and a winding, mountainous terrain in the mix, and the full picture merely begins to emerge.

The current TGV line Paris-Geneva is 550 Km long and takes 3 hours 22 minutes. It uses the high-speed section between Paris and Mâcon, but from Mâcon to Geneva, trains use the traditional railway lines that pass through Bourg-en-Bresse, Ambérieu-en-Bugey, Culoz and Bellegarde-sur-Valserine.

Mr. Jean-Damien Bierre, project manager at Réseau Ferré de France (RFF) responsible for the rehabilitation of the so-called Haut-Bugey line, said that only a section between Bourg-en-Bresse and Brion is still operational for regional traffic today, while the other segment leading up to Bellegarde was closed for rail traffic in May 1990. Modernization of the total line, including electrification will allow the TGV Paris-Geneva to operate at speeds of between 80 to 120 Km/h.



This project is part of a wider plan of improving rail links between Western Switzerland and France. The two countries committed to the works through a bilateral convention (signed on 5 November 1999) with the final financing agreement signed on 25 August 2005. Work commenced in January 2006.

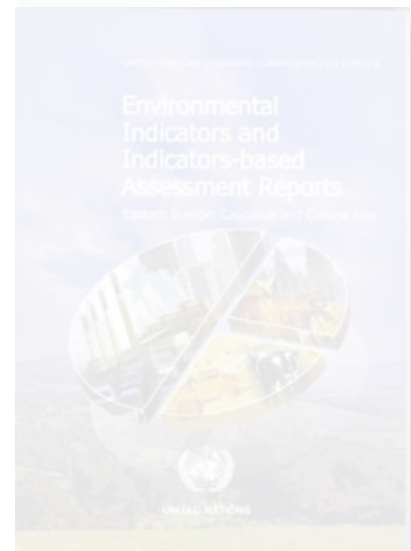
The total cost of the operation is €341 million; €317.5 million for the modernization of the Haut-Bugey line, and €23.5 million to pay for a new station in Bellegarde-sur-Valserine (co-financed by the Rhône-Alpes region, le Conseil général de l'Ain, le Conseil général de la Haute-Savoie, la ville de Bellegarde-sur-Valserine, la SNCF et RFF). The Swiss contribution is €110 million.



Environmental indicators and reporting

Environmental indicators are a key tool for environmental assessment, reporting and policymaking. They can show trends and help describe the causes and effects of environmental conditions. They can also help in setting priorities, evaluating environmental policy implementation and assessing compliance with international commitments.

The UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy has recently adopted Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators and Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports* prepared for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.



The Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators cover 36 indicators evaluated as being the most important from the viewpoint of national and international requirements, the most



*Environmental Indicators and Indicators-based Assessment Reports – Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, ECE/CEP/140 – Sales # E.07.II.E.9 – ISBN 978-92-1-116961-4 – US\$ 20 – E.R. Available from United Nations Publications, Sales and Marketing Section (unogbookshop@unog.ch)

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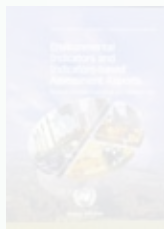
To read more about the project, see:

- http://www.equipement.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/PresentationPOLE2_cle23b518.pdf
- http://www.rff.fr/biblio_pdf/dos_pres_bugey.pdf
- http://www.rff.fr/pages/projets/fiche_projet.asp?lg=fr&code=33&codeReg ion=21



After lunch, the Transport Division continued the day in a team building spirit with a visit to the Grottes de Cerdon (www.grottecerdon.com), and a sampling of the famous Cerdon pink sparkling wine.

Despite the gloomy weather, everyone seemed to agree the day was a great success. Not only did staff members have the opportunity to get to know one another better, but they also gained a different perspective on their work. As one staff member remarked, it's important to see all that paperwork put into practice every once in a while. ☺



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understandable to the public, the best supported by

international methodological guidance, and the most compatible with indicator sets of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the European Environment Agency, OECD and WHO. These indicators address such key policy areas as air pollution, climate change, water, biodiversity, land and soil, agriculture, energy, transport and waste. Regular data collection on these indicators will help not only in national policymaking and raising public awareness, but also in comparing national environmental situations with those of other countries and data gathering for pan-European environmental assessment reports.

The Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports provide practical recommendations on how to improve the analysis in national environmental assessment reports so that these reports can better support the setting of priorities and targets for environmental policy, and better assess the efficiency of environmental measures.

Compliance with the Guidelines will lead to the conversion of conventional (descriptive and often compilation-like) to indicator-based environmental reporting. This will help transform environmental information into clear messages for the assessment and implementation of environmental policy. ☺

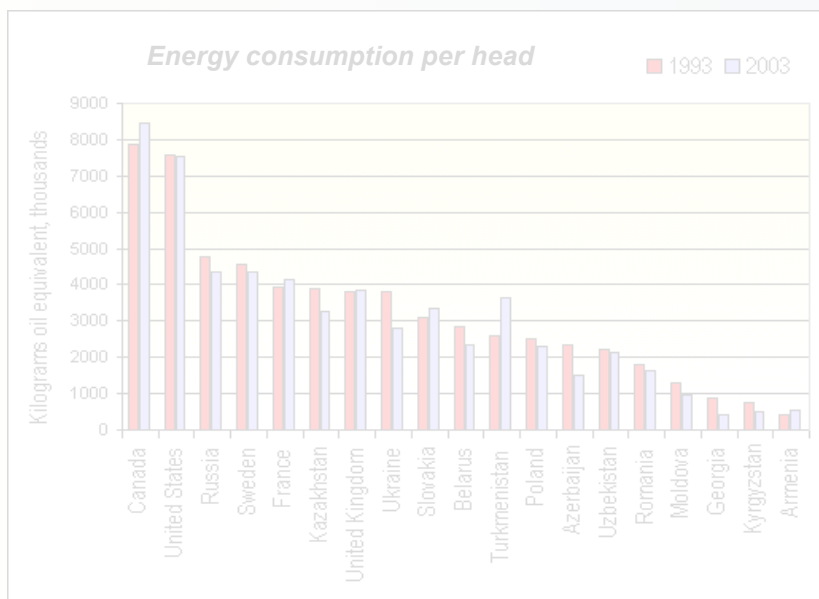
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Facts and Figures

Slow progress in reducing energy consumption

Many agree that in order to mitigate the effects of climate change, significant transformation of global energy consumption patterns is indispensable. Efficiency of energy use and replacement of fossil fuels with renewable energy sources are on the economic and political agenda of many countries in the UNECE region. However, energy consumption changes rather slowly, particularly for the biggest per capita consumers like Canada and the United States.

In fact, as the chart attests, in the region's high-income economies, which are in general big energy consumers, the consumption levels per capita have remained virtually unchanged or have gone up slightly since the early 1990s. Only in Sweden, in the sample, was there a slight drop in per capita consumption. In contrast, most East European and CIS countries observed a reduction in the energy consumption per capita during that decade. In Georgia, for instance, it halved, while in Ukraine it dropped by a quarter. However, in most cases, efficiency gains were not the major reason for this reduction: it was due rather to the transformation of economic structures and to a slow recovery from the collapse of industrial output in the early 1990s.



Source: United Nations Statistics Division database.

Note: One ton of oil equivalent is defined as comprising 1.0 x 10⁷ kcal.

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