THE PEP 2016 Symposium

The economic dimensions of environment- and health-friendly transport: green jobs and investments in transport as enablers of sustainable economic development

Draft 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 (ECE/AC.21/SC/2009/7–EUR/09/5088363/7, para. 8). To that end, the Committee agreed that, beginning with its eighth session, in-depth discussions, or symposia, 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).

Topics would be in line with the four priority goals of the Amsterdam Declaration, adopted by the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Amsterdam, 2009) and address one goal per year. With the adoption of the Paris Declaration by the Fourth High-level Meeting (Paris, 2014), Goal 5 (“To integrate transport, health and environmental objectives into urban and spatial planning policies”) was added. Following the Fourth High-level Meeting, the extended Bureau of THE PEP Steering Committee confirmed the wish to continue holding THE PEP Symposia and, at its thirteenth session, the Committee entrusted the Bureau to decide on the topic for the Symposium in 2016, recalling that topics of related processes could also be considered (ECE/AC.21/SC/2014/6–EUDCE1408105/1.6/SC12/6). At its twenty-eighth
meeting, the Bureau reconfirmed that the new format with only one keynote speech and fewer panellists was an improvement over previous years. The Bureau decided that the topic for the 2016 Symposium would be 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 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, beginning at 3 p.m. This concept note was prepared by the secretariat to provide the background on the issues to be covered by the 2016 Symposium and the proposed content of the Symposium.

I. Introduction to the issues

A. Transport trends impacting health and environment

1. The challenges. Transport is central to economic and social development and a driver for growth. As an economic sector, it has a significant contribution to 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”. Transport provides access to work, health, education and other public services. Transport is a key socio-economic factor, a source of revenues and employment, an essential component for trade and tourism development and thereby for economic growth.


3. 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 that are of primary focus within THE PEP framework are:
Reducing 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, health and education facilities is being compromised. Most vulnerable segments of the population are especially affected, including women and children, the elderly and disabled.

Cleaner transport systems can improve the health and well-being of communities and individuals around the world. In terms of impacts, environmental sustainability may be affected negatively by transport, for example, through the consumption of non-renewable energy, the emissions of harmful pollutants and greenhouse gases, through the generation of waste and by impacting natural habitats and biodiversity. While significant reductions in the emission of pollutants have taken place in recent years, in many cities around the world transport is often the main source of air pollution.

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% of global GHG emissions. Virtually all the energy used in transport - 95% of all kilometres travelled - (both passenger and freight) in the EU 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% of total EU GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions. Globally transport is responsible for about 13 percent of GHG emissions and 22 percent of the total CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion. The sector is currently both the fastest-growing consumer of fossil fuels and the fastest growing source of GHG 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.
Air pollution and its health effects: In 2014 the World Health Organization (WHO) published its latest estimates of the burden of disease related to ambient (outdoor) and household (indoor) air pollution. Specifically, 482,000 premature deaths are attributable to ambient air pollution. The majority of these deaths are due to cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as lung cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) declared air pollution as carcinogenic to humans. 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.

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 one’s quality of life. As one cannot see, taste or smell it, 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 EU are over €40 billion per year, and passenger cars and lorries (trucks) are responsible for the bulk of costs.

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 being insufficiently active during a typical week, i.e. they do not meet the WHO recommended levels of physical activity (150 min 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

4. 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 policy 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.

5. 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-motorised 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.

6. 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-motorised transport, also 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.

7. 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 is an integral part of transport and urban development, on 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.
8. 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 also has 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.

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

10. This goal 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.

11. The historic developments of 2015, underlined primarily by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in New York and the Climate Accord in Paris, 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 Goal 1 of the Paris and Amsterdam Declarations becomes all the more critical for the achievement of humanity’s goals.

C. Intersectoral cooperation

12. The UNECE Environment and Sustainable Transport Divisions and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO-Europe) jointly implement the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (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 PEP’s vision is for green and healthy transport and mobility that includes sustainable urban livelihoods for all.

13. Priority Goal 1 of the Paris and Amsterdam Declarations makes reference to proposed policy actions to achieve the goal of contributing to sustainable economic development and stimulating 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”.

14. THE PEP has developed and/or applied tools and methods to promote sustainable transport. For example, the WHO-developed health economic assessment tools for walking and cycling and the step-by-step manual Developing national action plans on transport, health and environment promote active mobility and highlight the economic benefits of derived health improvements. The UNECE Sustainable Transport Division-developed the For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS) tool evaluates transport activity, energy use, and CO2 emissions in a range of possible policy contexts. Furthermore, in the next years THE PEP will focus on strengthening capacities through the newly established THE PEP Academy, developing a pan-European Master Plan on Cycling under the new partnership on cycling promotion, and launching the study of job-creation in green and healthy transport, i.e. in public transport, cycling and walking. Integrated and cross-sectoral policy-making was also promoted through a special session on transport and air pollution organized by UNECE Environment and Transport Divisions in July 2014¹.

¹ The event was organized as part of the 52nd session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review under the Air Convention. The report is available at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2014/AIR/WGSR/ECE.EB.AIR.WG.5.112_ENG.pdf
II. Organization of THE PEP 2016 Symposium

A. Proposed content of Symposium

15. The Symposium is to be organized after the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016). One of the two themes of that Conference is “Greening the Economy”. The 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 of the Paris Declaration, while at the same time also generate economic growth. The outcomes of the Symposium will then be reported to THE PEP Steering Committee.

16. It is therefore proposed that the Symposium focuses on two topics.

- Topic 1 : Greening the economy: Green and health-friendly investment
- Topic 2 : Greening the economy: Green jobs in transport

17. 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 investments strategies and how can they be mainstreamed? How can we estimate their potential and measure their effects?

(b) What are the trends in the UNECE-WHO European Region region in investments and financing that contribute to the achievement of sustainable transport, the reduction of emission of air pollutants, GHGs 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/policy work that contribute to the reduction of?

(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 which conditions are such investments possible?

(i) What can Governments, business and civil society do?

(j) Good examples and best practices?

B. Proposed format of the Symposium

18. The Symposium will be part of the fourteenth session of THE PEP Steering Committee (Geneva, 7–9 November 2016). 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), opening with a keynote address, followed by a panel discussion, beginning with brief statements from five to six panellists, and a moderated discussion.

19. The secretariat will summarize the discussions for the Steering Committee on the following day, 8 November, under item 1 of the provisional agenda. The Committee will be invited to review the results of the 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 speaker and panellists, will be available in October 2016.