
Preparatory meeting to the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment 2 March 2021

Draft Annex I to the draft declaration: Challenges and opportunities for transport, health and environment

THE PEP addresses this question in a publication¹ to support the member States of the ECE and WHO European region in their efforts to advance the transport system in their own countries for the better and accelerate the transformation towards sustainable transport and mobility, building forward based upon an avoid-shift-improve strategy in mobility and transport policies. The publication's key conclusions are:

1. Despite the technological progress made, the current transport system and mobility patterns remain unsustainable. Traffic is still the source of several challenges in many countries, while mobility and transport play an essential role in our societies and economies. The sector provides access to jobs, education, services, amenities and leisure, while contributing to economic growth, jobs and trade. At the same time, it has a growing impact on the environment and human health.
2. THE PEP builds its objectives, strategies and actions on the latest scientific evidence and data available by analysing and highlighting the current state of mobility- and transport-related environmental and health effects in the region. This information should serve as a starting point for the further transformation of the sector towards zero emissions, health promoting mobility and safe and efficient transport in the decade to come. This transformation is urgent, as global increases in population, overall welfare and trade are expected to induce growing volumes of transport and mobility.
3. Across the ECE and WHO European region, motorized vehicles continue to play a significant role in transport. Considerable differences exist across the region but also between urban areas, where the share of trips carried out by walking, cycling and in public transport is increasing; and rural areas, where the car is still dominant and no choice for multimodal mobility is often provided.
4. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic contrasting trends are observed. On the one hand, rapid integration of new digital services may lead to less transport and the modal share of active mobility has increased. On the other hand, public transport has come under pressure and suffered significant decreases in passenger numbers and modal share.
5. Traffic-related air pollution, noise and road traffic accidents significantly contribute to the disease burden in the region with a disproportionate burden in certain

¹ For more information, see the eMagazine Road Transport Facts and Figures "How healthy and environment-friendly is our transport today?" at <link>

geographic areas and among less affluent groups of society. Cars and related infrastructure such as parking spaces use up a large amount of the already very limited space that is available in urban areas.

6. Although impacts of air pollution by, for example, particulate matter and NO₂ have decreased, air pollution still contributes to an estimated 417,000 premature deaths and over 4.8 million years of life lost in the 41 European countries of the ECE and WHO European region. NO₂ is typically associated with vehicle exhaust emissions. However, the focus should not be only on limiting exhaust emissions, as non-exhaust emissions (such as tyre and brake abrasion) are also a significant cause of air pollution.
7. At least 20 percent of the ECE and WHO European region's inhabitants live in areas with road traffic noise levels harmful to health. In urban areas this proportion exceeds 50 per cent in most countries.
8. More than 110,000 people die on the road every year in the ECE and WHO European region. On average this means that one person dies every five minutes. Millions more are seriously injured in road accidents. Road traffic injuries are the number one cause of death globally among young people between 5 and 29 years of age.
9. In addition, road transport is responsible for about a quarter of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, thus contributing to climate change and global temperature rise.
10. Car dependency, poor use of urban space and lack of safety for cyclists and pedestrians contribute to physical inactivity, leading to a sedentary lifestyle and obesity. Obesity is estimated to cause about 1 million deaths each year in the WHO Europe region alone. Moreover, physical activity such as cycling and walking has considerable health benefits. Thus, where possible, space needs to be reallocated to promote walking and cycling.
11. The external costs of road transport are not reflected in current market prices. The total bill for traffic congestion, pollution and accidents, for example, has been estimated at EUR 502 billion per year for European Union countries alone. The benefits of a shift towards more active mobility and public transport arise mainly from increased life expectancy, increased productivity and lower health care costs related to non-communicable diseases. This shows a strong case for investing in and promoting walking and cycling in cities and beyond.
12. Inequalities related to transport and urban sprawl can be found in exposure levels and negative health impacts from air pollution, noise and road safety hazards. Furthermore, the benefits from transport are also unequally distributed. Not all socio-economic groups have equal access to healthy transportation, public transport networks and recreational or green areas.
13. The conditions and circumstances in which people live determine their health and physical activity levels. The settings in which people live (cities, workplaces, schools, etc.) should make healthy choices the easiest ones: active transport (walking and cycling) in this case.
14. Countries differ in economic and socio-cultural circumstances, population density, local climate, geography and topography. These differences need to be taken into account when developing tailor-made approaches and solutions for the challenges posed by transport at regional, national and local levels.

15. To allow for effective monitoring of the impacts of transport, harmonized data on transport, environment and health is crucial. For all the themes addressed in the brochure, data is available at the Pan-European level. However, there are also significant gaps in data-availability and quality, which need to be resolved for a better understanding and comparison of data between countries.
16. Transforming the transport and mobility sector requires a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, collaboration between decision-makers and experts in transport, environment, health, spatial planning and economy is crucial to design transport-related policies that deliver benefits to environment, health and climate simultaneously. Moreover, international, cross-sectoral and multi-level (countries, regions and cities) cooperation is needed to drive the change to sustainable, environmentally friendly and healthy transport.