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## Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

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### Clearing House on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme

Information Note prepared by the UNECE

1.      The Clearing House on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) is a web portal designed to facilitate exchange of information and knowledge across the transport, environment and health sectors in the pan-European region.  The Clearing House was officially launched on 6 December 2005 and operates in English and Russian.  The framework of the Clearing House and the description of topic areas are also available in French.  The Clearing House is accessible at the following website: http://www.thepep.org/CHWebSite.[1]   THE PEP and its work plan provided the policy framework and the mandate for developing THE PEP Clearing House.[2]

2.      The Clearing House serves to collect, disseminate and exchange information on sustainable transport policies, legislation, research and good practices with a particular focus on the 12 countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)[3] and 6 countries of South-Eastern Europe (SEE).[4]  Its present information content covers 110 topics relevant to the transport, environment and health sectors, including as priorities: health and environmental effects of transport, policy integration, urban transport and transport demand management. These topics reflect the priority areas identified by UNECE and WHO/Europe member States as being of central importance for the promotion and implementation of sustainable transport in the pan-European region.

3.      The Clearing House is primarily targeted at policy makers.  It aims at addressing, in particular, the needs of national and local authorities as well as transport planners and experts in the design, communication and implementation of sustainable transport policies.  It has a practical organization and an intuitive method to access the available information by using a dedicated search engine and an information tree that allows for intuitive search by topic areas.

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[1]  The Russian version is available at http://www.thepep.org/CHWebSite/?lang=ru .

[2]  THE PEP background information is accessible at the following weblink: http://www.thepep.org/en/welcome.htm

[3]  EECCA countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

[4]  SEE countries: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. Bulgaria and Romania belonged to this group until 1 January 2007 when they joined the European Union.

4.      The information collected, validated, structured and disseminated by the Clearing House should mainly stem from national THE PEP focal points and other information providers in UNECE and WHO/Europe Member States and is, to a large extent, kept and maintained by the original information providers.  Information providers need to be registered by the Clearing House and include at present more than 250 experts from Governmental, inter-governmental, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organizations and scientific and research institutions.

5.      The Clearing House has been developed by the UNECE Transport Division (which cooperates with the UNECE Environment Division and WHO/Europe in the secretariat of the Pan-European Transport, Health and Environment Project).  During the first phase of the pilot operation (January-December 2005) an access to the Clearing House portal, including the credentials that allow authorized uploading of information, was given to all THE PEP focal points.  Following a survey among users to obtain feedback on all operational aspects of the Clearing House, its website has been redesigned to improve user friendliness.  Key messages providing succinct information on each of the topic areas available in the Clearing House database have also been developed.  Furthermore, a special registration form was developed that allows registration of other users than THE PEP focal points.  The secretariat oversees the processing and validation of such registration requests.

6.      The second phase (January-December 2006) saw the Clearing House operating in "automatic" mode, i.e. without a content manager as foreseen originally who would have ensured the necessary interaction with users and information providers and would have professionally accompanied the uploading and classification of data and information.  The secretariat was only able to supervise the automatic operations of the Clearing House and ensured the required validation (verification and authorization) of uploaded data and information on a regular basis (usually once a week).  It also uploaded, to the extent possible, information submitted in hard cover or by e-mail.

7.      The project achieved impressive results in 2006.  The number of persons authorized to upload information onto the Clearing House at the end of 2006 was 255 of which 32 were from EECCA and 35 from SEE countries.  The number of uploaded documents or references available at the Clearing House amounts to around 550 and around 1500 resources are indexed in the search engine.  The very large majority of these documents and references are uploaded by NGOs and by the WHO/Europe and UNECE secretariats.  The latter is also due to the fact that the secretariats often receive relevant information by e-mail or by other means.  The uploading of such documents is then attributed to the secretariats involved.

8.      In spite of the continuous supply of new information, there is clearly some room for improvement.  Close to 70 per cent of the documents or references in the Clearing House are in English, around 25 per cent are in French and less than 5 per cent are in Russian.  The main substantive areas covered are in the order of importance: "Urban transport", "effects of transport" and "demand management".  Only relatively little information is available on "cross-cutting issues".  Within these areas, the most comprehensive information coverage is given in the fields of "pollution and noise", "public transport" and "modal split".  Most of the documents and references relate to international sources.  Still very little information is available on national studies, research or governmental records that are of particular interest for EECCA and SEE countries.  Hardly any information has been uploaded by EECCA and SEE focal points and experts.

9.      On the demand side, both strengths and weaknesses have become noticeable.  Statistical figures on the number of unique visitors of the Clearing House and page views of Clearing House sites, calculated by Internet counters, provide an interesting measure of the use made of the Clearing House.  In 2006, the average number of visitors of the Clearing House was in the order of 340 per month, climbing from around 300 in the beginning of the year to around 500 at the end.  The number of pages visited over the same time period was in the order of 1000 per month with peaks during the beginning and the end of the year. Most visitors came from the countries of Western Europe and the United States, but relatively large numbers were also recorded from the Russian Federation and Ukraine.  Unfortunately, the use of the Clearing House in other EECCA countries, including the SPECA member states, has been at best marginal.  More detailed statistics on the operation of the Clearing House in 2006 will be available at the session.

10.      With the official launch of the Clearing House on 6 December 2005, the design, the technical development and the implementation of the main features of the Clearing House have been completed successfully.  During 2006 the technical features of the Clearing House were further improved and made user-friendly.  The timely development of THE PEP Clearing House, its successful launch and the smooth pilot operation would not have been possible without the generous financial and in-kind support made available to the secretariat by Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.  The challenge is now to enlist the necessary resources to guarantee the continued operation of the Clearing House in 2007 and beyond and to advertise the facilities and services of the Clearing House to policy makers in WHO/Europe and UNECE Member States.

11.      In the past, THE PEP workshops on sustainable transport policies in Moscow (2004) and Tbilisi (2006) have increased the awareness of the programme in some parts of the former Soviet Union.[5]  Should one of the SPECA countries agree to host a similar workshop in Central Asia, then the visibility of the programme and the usefulness of the Clearing House could be considerably enhanced.  If this can be achieved, the Clearing House could become a more powerful tool to promote sustainable transport while supporting efforts to integrate environmental and health concerns into transport policies in the SPECA region.

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[5] Workshop documents can be found at http://www.thepep.org/en/workplan/urban/urban_docs.htm#Tbilisi .