



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/AC.21/2003/2
EUR/03/5040828/2
14 February 2003

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Regional Office for Europe

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

THE PEP Steering Committee

(First session, 10 and 11 April 2003,
agenda item 4 (a))

**CLEARING HOUSE ON TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH
(THE PEP Clearing House)**

Project proposal by the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariat

I. MANDATE OF THE PROJECT

1. The present outline of a project towards the conceptual preparation and implementation of a web-based THE PEP Clearing House on Transport, Environment and Health is in line with the priority areas and actions constituting the policy framework of the THE PEP, adopted by the High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (Geneva, 5 July 2002).

2. The adopted work plan of THE PEP contains under the priority area: "Integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policy" in the field of: "Dissemination of information, good practices and capacity building" the establishment of a web-based Clearing House on Transport, Environment and Health in English and Russian - as an example of possible actions.

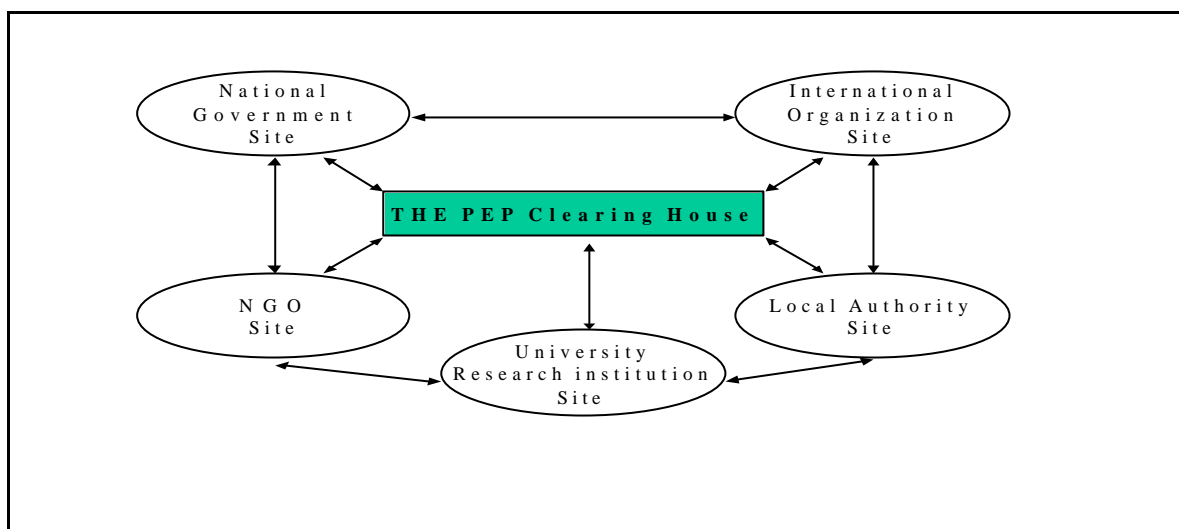
3. Such a clearing house, jointly administered by the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariat, should ensure effective coverage of relevant scientific, methodological and policy aspects, wide dissemination of information and good practices and maximize possible synergies with existing initiatives. It was also envisaged that by creating additional opportunity for networking, such a project could lead to the development of pilot as well as joint and cross-sectoral projects and to the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of expertise and cross-fertilization between the eastern and western parts of the region (e.g. through twinning projects, secondments, joint project management arrangements, multi-country/partners ventures, etc.). Initial costs-estimates were in the order of US 150,000 – 200,000 per annum, including staff, site maintenance, development of ad hoc documents and reviews as well as translation services (ECE/AC.21/2002/9 –EUR/02/5040828/9, annex 1).

II. OBJECTIVE AND VALUE-ADDED OF THE PEP CLEARING HOUSE

4. Initial work on the objectives and the value-added of a web-based clearing house had been undertaken already earlier by WHO/Euro in the framework of the London Charter. Such a clearing house could become a highly cost-effective tool to provide easy access to information on transport, environment and health (both in terms of policy and scientific developments) and could also be used as an inter-active tool for the exchange of information and good practices among its participants and users.

5. THE PEP Clearing House would also contribute to further improving the cooperation between international organizations in facilitating the coordination of the relevant ongoing activities and in making use of the synergies they offer. Moreover, a calendar of relevant meetings could be established to facilitate the planning of work at the international and national levels.

6. A web-based clearing house could be described as an organized “network of networks” that uses the decentralized capabilities of the Internet. As such, it provides links and search mechanisms to all related sites maintained by Governments, inter-governmental, regional and local authorities as well as by international and national organizations, non-governmental organizations and scientific and research institutions.



7. A clearing house acts as an “information broker” and contains a set of common elements and issues that are shared by each participating site. The information and the content of these sites remain under the responsibility of the “owner” of the individual site, who is responsible for access, quality and maintenance of the data and information provided. The operator of the clearing house may establish quality criteria for the selection of cooperating sites and for standards of information and data provided.

8. The establishment and operation of THE PEP Clearing House has the potential to be a highly effective tool and could become one of the cornerstones for an effective and visible implementation of THE PEP, both at the national and international levels. THE PEP Clearing House would also be fully in line with the key priority areas and actions of THE PEP and would foster in particular:

- a cost-effective exchange of information, transfer of expertise and best practices among all countries at the pan-European level (particularly with Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Trans-Caucasus, reaching also local level authorities and organizations);
- the dissemination of evidence-based knowledge and of methods and tools (e.g. to carry out economic valuations, and environmental and health impact assessment of transport policies, plans and projects);
- the integration of transport, environment and health issues and policies;
- the development of capacity and skills at the pan-European level in all relevant sectors.

9. Numerous web sites exist already today that are administered by Governments, international Governmental as well as non-governmental organizations and contain a vast amount of information, data, studies and views on transport, environment and health issues. Few sites, however, focus on the inter-relationship and interdependence between these sectors and provide specialized information going beyond national and sub-regional levels. Fewer sites, if any, address specifically the pan-European context and offer information and advice for users outside Western Europe and in languages other than English.

10. There is thus a niche and there exists a value added that can be provided by THE PEP Clearing House if its objective, scope and audience are well-defined and fully in line with THE PEP priorities and its policy framework. Furthermore, THE PEP Clearing House could serve as a reference base for the activities undertaken by all actors and organs within the framework of THE PEP and could become the main platform for exchange of views and good practices among all parties involved in the implementation of its programme of work. Such a well-structured and maintained clearing house could then also become a powerful advocacy tool promoting forcefully the objectives and ideas of THE PEP.

11. In line with the priorities of THE PEP and with the support of the Governments of Finland and the Netherlands, the UNECE and WHO/Euro secretariat has initiated, in early 2003, work on the establishment of THE PEP web site (www.the-pep.org). The purpose of this new site is to ensure, already at an early stage, visibility of THE PEP and its programme of work and to provide for a smooth operation of its organs, in particular THE PEP Steering Committee, through the provision of contact information, documentation, calendar of meetings, etc.). This new web site will be jointly administered by the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat. The site has been designed in such a way as to be able to become the nucleus of a fully-fledged THE PEP Clearing House once the Steering Committee has approved this project and the required resources for the expansion of the clearing-house are secured.

III. CONCEPT AND DESIGN OF THE PEP CLEARING HOUSE

12. Taking account of the mandate and the objectives described above, the concept and the design of THE PEP Clearing House need to be defined in some detail. The Steering Committee is invited to consider these issues at its present session with a view to providing guidance on the approach to be taken. This would allow participating Governments and organizations to define more precisely the roles they could play in this project and their possibilities to contribute to it either financially or in kind. Such guidance would also assist the secretariat to further develop the design and the concept of such a clearing house and to estimate more precisely the required resources as

well as the necessary administrative and institutional support, as a function of the desired content and services to be provided by THE PEP Clearing House.

13. Taking account of the preliminary work of WHO/Euro, it seems that at least the following issues need to be considered with a view to arriving at a clear concept and sound design of THE PEP Clearing House:

A. Target audience

14. In view of the priority areas to be pursued and the pan-European character of THE PEP, the potential customers of the clearing house have to be clearly identified. Given the initial limited resources and in order to keep the site manageable, a step-by step approach may be considered, focusing, in a first phase, on policy makers and Governmental authorities, including local authorities in all member States. Other interested user groups could be non-governmental organizations, private sector interests, such as public transport companies, the media, scientists and interested private persons.

B. Information and data content

15. The advantage of a clearing house lies in the fact that all information and data provided do not necessarily have to be collected, analyzed and inserted by the “owners” of the site alone, as the clearing house refers to and provides links to other sites that are responsible for their content. Thus, while the content of THE PEP Clearing House and the amount of information to be provided can be defined and developed in a flexible way, to respond to the needs and expectations of its target audience(s), it is of utmost importance in the planning phase to determine the structure, type and quality of information and data as well as possible analytical, translation and search possibilities to be provided. The range of information to be covered could be very large ranging from press releases, documentation considered in international fora, national and international legal texts to restricted scientific and policy papers.

16. Apart from information and data to be provided by other sites, THE PEP Clearing House could make use of its own sources of information originating from the organs and networks established and/or yet to be established in the framework of the THE PEP itself. This refers in particular to the Steering Committee and its task forces or working groups, its national focal points, the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariat as well as to all other parties involved in national and international activities participating in the implementation of THE PEP. Their possible input needs to be analysed, structured and organized to ensure a permanent and up-to-date flow of information.

17. Information and data of THE PEP Clearing House could, in principle, be made freely available through the Internet. Internal contributions and discussion papers for consideration in specific task forces or working groups established in the framework of THE PEP could be password protected, if need be, to allow for an open exchange of views in such groups before its conclusions are published. Such restricted access areas could be established also for networking purposes.

18. In addition to the provision of information, data and documentation, value-added services could also be provided by THE PEP Clearing House, such as evaluation and summary of data and information, search facilities, translation services, technical cooperation facilities (matching of needs and resources, providing access to specialist expertise), news-groups, discussion rooms, news-letter, calendar of events, etc.). In addition, feedback mechanisms could be established to ensure that the clearing house maintains its relevance to users, and addresses dynamically their information needs. Such additional services are, however, resource intensive and will require support on a permanent basis.

19. Given the diversity of interest and level of know-how among countries and actors involved in the implementation of THE PEP, a possible differentiation of the content of the clearing house by target audiences (countries and community groups) could be envisaged. This may not only relate to a possible differentiation between substantive issues (such as epidemiological, economic, policy, research, etc.) or between levels of policy action (regional, national, local), but also to different languages used. Today, most information in the fields of transport, environment and health is available in English only. Many actors, outside the international policy and scientific networks, who are very important for an effective and sustained implementation of THE PEP at the national and local levels, have however often difficulties to understand such information or to have it translated so that the concerned policy or decision makers can use them.

20. Given the emphasis that has to be given in the implementation of THE PEP to the specific needs of the NIS and South Eastern European countries, it seems of utmost importance to ensure that information of particular relevance for those countries is also made available in the Russian language.

C. Administration and organization

21. THE PEP Clearing House could be administered jointly by the WHO/UNECE secretariat under the overall guidance of the Steering Committee which approves, in general terms, its functions and role as well as the information and data content to be provided. If need be, a specific Task Force or group of experts, convening either virtually or physically, could be established to advise on

specific issues linked to the establishment and the operation of THE PEP Clearing House, particularly with regard to the needs of the NIS and South Eastern European countries. All necessary institutional and administrative arrangements for the operation of the clearing house would be agreed between WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat. The operation of THE PEP Clearing House would be in line with all relevant guidelines applicable for Internet publishing in the United Nations (ST/AI/2001/5), particularly as regards the establishment of links to external websites.

D. Technical issues

22. As a start, THE PEP web site and THE PEP Clearing House would be hosted on a server of the UNECE in Geneva. The United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) would provide access for the uploading and administration of data to both the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat.

23. The web-design of THE PEP Clearing House must be as simple as possible to allow easy access, navigation and downloading of information and documents using dial-up connections from remote places.

E. Advocacy role of THE PEP Clearing House

24. THE PEP Clearing House, once operational, could become an excellent tool to promote the idea and the objectives of THE PEP by offering an electronic platform relating to all issues and activities undertaken in the framework of THE PEP, including electronic consultation facilities and video-conferences. Appropriate efforts will need to be made to inform all relevant user groups and stakeholders about the services that are provided by THE PEP Clearing House.

F. Implementation measures

25. The establishment of THE PEP Clearing House and its efficient functioning, in line with the objectives and under the institutional framework of the THE PEP, requires the preparation of a clear strategy addressing all and certainly more than the issues addressed above. This requires thorough reflection as well as time to discuss these issues with all relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, it is equally important to give, as soon as possible, a sign of visibility of the existence and activities carried out under THE PEP. It is therefore proposed to use a phased approach in the establishment of THE PEP Clearing House, starting on the basis of the existing THE PEP web-site that will gradually be upgraded and could lead, within the next 15 months, to a full-fledged THE PEP Clearing House.

26. The following implementation procedure could be envisaged:

(a) Phase I - Creation and operation of THE PEP web site (February 2003 to April 2003)

27. The WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariat procure the name (www.the-pep.org) and establish THE PEP web site. This site would be the Internet address and constitute the nucleus of all future web-based activities undertaken in the framework of THE PEP, in particular THE PEP Clearing House.

28. The WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariat designs a first web site intended to serve THE PEP Steering Committee and its task forces and/or expert groups by providing documentation, contact points and other information and links supporting their work.

(b) Phase II - Conceptual design of THE PEP Clearing House (May 2003 – April 2004)

29. On the basis of the present document, the Steering Committee may wish to consider, at its present session, the proposal to establish THE PEP Clearing House and to provide guidance on the objectives, concept, scope and the implementation of the project. Should the Steering Committee approve this approach in principle, the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat, assisted by (a) consultant(s), could then prepare the concept, design and operational requirements of a full-fledged clearing house for approval by the Steering Committee at its session in April 2004.

30. In parallel, the existing THE PEP web site could be continuously expanded ensuring that THE PEP Clearing House could become operational without delay once the project is finally approved by the Steering Committee in April 2004.

(c) Phase III – Implementation of THE PEP Clearing House (as of June 2004)

31. Due to the preparatory work that would be carried out under Phase II, THE PEP Clearing House could become fully operational as of mid-2004, in case the required resources are made available.

IV. RESOURCES

32. The establishment and maintenance of THE PEP web site as well as the establishment of THE PEP Clearing House will entail resources that cannot be met by the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat. While some of the resources with regard to technical installations (hard ware) and EDI programmes (software), as well as some technical expertise and maintenance services, could be made available in-house by the two secretariats involved, the major part of the expenses must be met through extra-budgetary resources pledged by member States and interested organizations.

33. At present, it is extremely difficult to estimate the required resources for the establishment and the annual operational costs of THE PEP Clearing House, since the scope, concept, content and the value-added services to be provided have not yet been determined and decided upon. However, in order to provide an order of magnitude, the secretariat gives below some rough estimates on the possible required resources, both for the conceptual design and establishment of THE PEP Clearing House as well as for its operation.

34. Start-up resources to support this project in the order of US 70,000 have already been pledged and/or made available by the Governments of Finland and the Netherlands. These funds should enable the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariat to carry out all scheduled activities under Phases I and II of the project and within the planned timeframe.

Phase I - Creation and operation of THE PEP web site (February 2003 to April 2003)

Procurement of name, conceptual design and establishment of THE PEP web site (including hosting the site on the UNECE web server) (Consultancy: 1 x US 5,100)	US 5,100.-
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Insertion of information and establishment of links (including other operational activities) (Consultancy: 1 x US 5,100)	US 5,100.-
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Phase II - Conceptual design of THE PEP Clearing House (May 2003 – April 2004)

Preparation of the concept, design and operational requirements (including analysis of experiences of other web-based clearing houses (Consultancy: 4 x US 5,100)	US 20,400.-
Preparation of the detailed content of the clearing-house (including survey on expectations of target users) (Possible in-kind contribution or consultancy: 2 x US 5,100)	US 10,200.-
Task Force Meeting (including sub-regional session for the NIS and South Eastern European countries) to evaluate consultancy report(s) and to finalize report to Steering Committee (incl. mission cost to NIS and South Eastern European countries)	US 4,000.-

Phase III – Implementation of THE PEP Clearing House (as of June 2004)

Establishment of THE PEP Clearing House (including specialized EDI staff, software, technical installations, etc.)	US 20,000.-
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Total (set-up) cost of THE PEP Clearing House	US 64,800.-
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Estimated operating costs of THE PEP Clearing House (per annum)

Personnel costs (1 locally recruited expert L-2 level)	US 100,000.-
Software, maintenance costs, etc.	US 15,000.-
Valued added services (translation, search and analytical services, etc.) (to be decided ++)	

Total annual (operation) cost of THE PEP Clearing House	US 115,000.- ++
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35. Information on the transfer of contributions to be made for this THE PEP project will be provided in a separate document. Contributions received will be subject to 13% Programme Support Costs and subject to a Trust Fund Operating Reserve at the level of 15 % in accordance with the relevant United Nations regulations and rules.

V. CONCLUSIONS

36. The Steering Committee may wish to consider and endorse the objectives as well as the substantive and operational requirements towards the establishment of THE PEP Clearing House that is fully in line with the priority areas and actions of THE PEP.
