

**European Forum on Transport, Environment and Health (TEH),  
Vienna, 28-31 July 1998:**

- (1) International Conference on Environment Related Health Impacts of Transport,  
(2) 1st Preparatory Meeting of the WHO member states for the TEH segment at the  
3rd Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in London 1999**

**- Summary report -**

In preparation of the TEH segment of the 3rd European Conference on Environment and Health, London 1999, there was a "twin" meeting in the Vienna Hofburg, Großer Redoutensaal. The reduction of environmental pollution and health risks posed by transport activities is a priority of the EU presidency of Austria. Therefore, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family affairs (BMUJF) and the Federal Ministry for Science and Transport (BMWV), together with WHO and the Austrian Medical Association (ÖÄK), held two meetings in order to evaluate the health risks of transport and to discuss strategies and measures to achieve an environmentally responsible and healthy transport.

**(1) International Conference on Environment Related Health Impacts of Transport**  
July 28-29, 1998

This was an open meeting attended by representatives of WHO member states, experts, international organisations, NGOs, and interested individuals. The program included sessions on key impacts, presentations on activities of international organisations and of non-governmental organisations, reports on case studies, and conclusions (encl. 1, 2). For most of the presentations, a handout was available (listing: encl. 3; specific papers available from LÖGD on request). A proceedings volume is planned to be published.

Participants were particularly interested to learn about recent improved insights into the role of particulate matter including ultrafine particles for human health. According to a comprehensive assessment of Diesel exhaust by Cal-EPA, the role of Diesel engines may need to be re-evaluated. Another topic of special interest was the fact that 30 minutes of daily exercise, integrated into everyday routine, would lead to measurable health benefits. Obviously, there is a chance to use our daily needs of locomotion to achieve this health benefit. WHO expressed the wish that the transport industry would be a partner in the preparation of the London conference. The European Council of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) acknowledged the relevance of public health issues and expressed their willingness to cooperate with WHO. The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) sees the health sector as a potential catalyst for bringing transport and environment issues closer together; they stressed the need to have "fast, efficient and productive procedures of Health Impact Assessment". OECD pointed out that sustainable development is now one out of their five top priorities.

Ambitious case studies of Austria, Switzerland and France on transport and health are in the making; here, the first step included the development of a common methodology which is now to be applied empirically. Nine NGOs presented their views: International Society of Doctors for the Environment; Women, Transport and Health; Transport and Environment; Association of European car producers; International Railroad Union; UITP; European Cyclists' Association; International Society of Environmental Medicine; European Business Council on Sustainable Development.

Concerning Environmental Health Impact Assessment, the wish was expressed to apply this approach not only to specific projects, but also to policies and technologies. A recurring theme was the need to focus strongly on integration both within impact assessment (e.g. concerning

agents, pathways, health effects) and with other fields, especially surveillance. There was an attempt to "occupy" the issue of Health Impact Assessment from an economic perspective, but this approach did not find majority support. Enclosed are the background paper on EHIA, the oral presentation and transparencies (encl. 4 to 6).

## **(2) 1st Preparatory Meeting of the WHO member states for the Transport, Environment and Health segment at the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in London 1999**

July 30-31, 1998

This meeting was restricted to official delegates of the 51 European WHO member states and of NGOs plus invited experts. The objective was to prepare the TEH segment of the London conference especially to discuss a first draft of the TEH charter (agenda: encl. 7; participants: encl. 8). Meeting participants received a handout containing expert conclusions (available from LÖGD on request).

Participants of the meeting showed high interest in the results presented at the preceding international conference, e.g. concerning particulate matter, Diesel exhaust, noise, walking and cycling. There seemed to be agreement that economic valuation of health impacts should be explored, without restricting impact assessment to this method. The EC pointed out, that "benefits of transport" is a highly complex issue and that it is perhaps not necessary to define them in detail, in order to reduce negative impacts.

UN-ECE stated that the charter should be "simple, concise, very clear, to the point". There should be balanced reference to health and environment reflecting full partnership of both fields, especially full integration of environmental and health impact assessment. There was consensus that transport, environment and health should be brought together much closer. It was stressed repeatedly that, besides health, the environment itself deserves full protection. Lithuania pointed out that we need natural areas, not just natural resources. In the whole charter, more attention should be given to environmental concerns. The UK, however, held that health should be stressed because it has been marginalized for so long.

Environmental health impact assessment was seen as a key issue. Participants expressed the wish to have methodological assistance from WHO concerning impact assessment and environmental health indicators. The UK pointed out that impact assessment guidelines are currently being developed; the contents need not be too complex - even simple steps will help.

Although the conference organizers and WHO had stressed the point that the charter need not be legally binding, a number of participants said they would nevertheless prefer if the charter was so. It was stressed that the charter itself should be brief, with all details of operationalization transferred to a separate document, called action plan. A drafting committee was set up. The possibility was discussed that there could be a separate protocol on Environmental Health Impact Assessment, detailing methods and procedural steps. Participants agreed that there should be a mechanism to insure implementation of the action plan, including monitoring of progress. - The meeting was seen as an unusual and rewarding mix and interchange of scientists, administrative offices, international organizations, and NGOs.

### Additional materials available at the conference:

- Environmental balance of transport, Austria 1950 - 1996 (in German) (title: encl. 9)
- Environmental balance of transport, Austria 1950 - 1996 / Data handbook (title: encl. 10)
- Flyer concerning the Austrian National Environmental Health Action plan (NEHAP) (encl. 11).