

UN Study: Transport for Sustainable Development - The case of Inland Transport

Transport is a precondition for social and economic interactions. Unfortunately, it also has its negative externalities, including accidents affecting human health, air and noise pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Transport is included in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development as a horizontal task and it is essential for achieving most, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), most prominently SDG 3, 7, 9, 11, 13¹.

This study examines issues, progress and challenges in global efforts to achieve the transition to sustainable mobility of freight and people using inland modes of transport (road, railways, inland waterways and intermodal transport). Through a wealth of good and best practices, it highlights results in mitigating the negative impacts of transport systems and paths to adapting them in response to contemporary challenges.

The study also promotes an in-depth and real-world understanding of the five defining dimensions of sustainable transport – **accessibility, affordability, safety, security and environmental performance**. Based on this definition of sustainable transport and mobility, the study brings forth theoretical insights and best practices from all regions of the world. It maps similarities and differences among countries of different income groupings and geographical regions in their efforts towards sustainability of the transport sector.

Decoupling the growth of transport from increasing their negative impacts like air pollution, traffic accidents and climate change requires a visionary, strong and persistent political will. Statistics analyzed in the study show that only UNECE countries managed to decrease the per capita CO₂ emissions from transport in the decade 2001-2011, at the same time they remain responsible for roughly fifty per cent of the total, therefore still requiring further progress. In terms of road safety, only UNECE countries have achieved absolute decoupling of the link between increasing levels of motorization and fatalities (i.e. the latter decreases while the former increases). Two other regions (UNECLAC and UNESCWA) have achieved relative decoupling (the latter increases at a slower pace than the former). ECA region stands out as one with the lowest share in the global vehicle fleet, while having the highest share of road casualties.

Sustainable transport is central to development and a driver of sustainable growth by providing access to markets and supply chains. Yet, many people do not have access to affordable and clean transport, and many countries lack efficient and affordable access to world markets. In order to achieve a successful transition to sustainable mobility, the sector is ahead of major transformation that warrants not only political support, but also well-chosen investments as well.

This study is the result of cooperation established among the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations, and key global inland transport organizations, particularly, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the International Union of Railways (UIC), led by UNECE. <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40662>

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- ¹ SDG3. Good health and well-being, which includes a target to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020;
 - SDG7. Affordable and clean energy that calls for reducing the energy intensity of transport and increasing the share of renewable energy in the transport energy mix;
 - SDG9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, to develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all;
 - SDG11. Sustainable cities and communities, calling for providing access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons; and
 - SDG13. Climate action that sets as targets to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity (of transport systems) to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries and to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.