Interreg Europe

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Unlocking the benefits of active mobility

*A Policy Brief from the **Policy Learning Platform** for a greener Europe*

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GREEN

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Summary

Active mobility – usually considered as walking and cycling – are low-carbon and low-cost transport options, which also bring with them societal and health benefits. However, to stimulate use of these modes, particularly in urban areas, they need to be better supported and integrated into urban mobility policies.

Both modes are frequently overlooked in car-centric urban planning, but cities across Europe will need to consider how to better promote them, as set out in the EU's Urban Mobility Framework and the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) regulation. This will make it mandatory for the 430 largest cities in Europe ('urban nodes') to develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and increase their rates of active mobility. At the same time, active mobility will contribute to solving other urban challenges, such as reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and improving public health and social inclusivity.

For this, local authorities need to take a first step of really considering active transport as modes that need support, devising specific strategies, and integrating these modes into wider transport, environment and development policies. They can then support increased active transport use through participatory planning and consultation with citizens and the development of infrastructure that makes active transport both safe and pleasant. As part of the broader integrated planning approach, they should also consider carefully the link with public transport, ensuring that active modes can act as first and last mile solutions while enabling multimodal journeys. Authorities must also consider the citizen themselves, giving the skills and confidence to users and facilitating behaviour change with targeted campaigns and support, with a special focus on people with reduced mobility, and marginalised groups.

While this may all sound like a tall order, many support instruments, funding schemes, guidelines and good practices are available for local authorities to use and to learn from. All EU Member States will be required to set up support programmes that enable their cities to develop SUMPs and support sustainable transport, but cities and regions should already get started in identifying what works and engaging their citizens for more active mobility.

The knowledge, solutions and good practices showcased in this policy brief come mainly from Interreg Europe projects.

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The case for policy intervention

Active mobility is commonly understood to mean two types of mobility – walking and cycling. However, under some definitions, it also includes activities such as running, skateboarding, push scooters, skating and even rowing.

Under the Trans-Europe Network-Transport (TEN-T) Regulation, the precise definition for an 'active mode' means:

> *"The transport of people or goods, through non-motorised means, based on human physical activity, including vehicles with electric auxiliary propulsion".*[1]

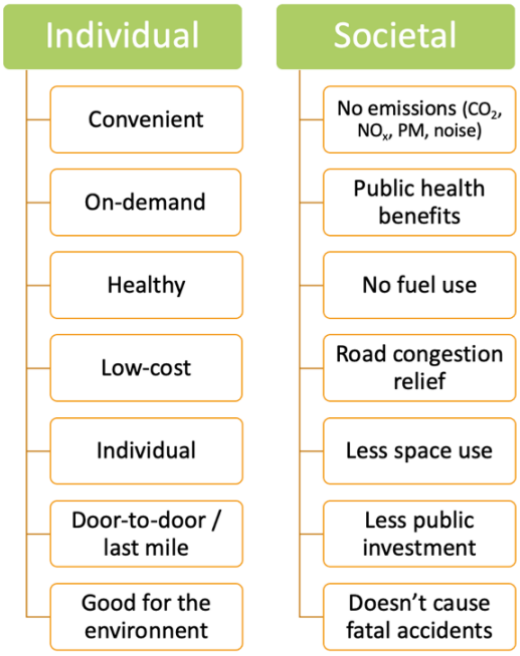
The definition of 'vehicles with electric auxiliary propulsion' is in turn set out in Regulation 168/2013 as:

> *"**Pedal cycles with pedal assistance** which are equipped with an auxiliary electric motor having a maximum continuous rated power of less than or equal to 250 W, where the output of the motor is cut off when the cyclist stops pedalling and is otherwise progressively reduced and finally cut off before the vehicle speed reaches 25 km/h".*[2]

For this policy brief, we will focus on active modes defined as walking and cycling, including use of electric-bikes, but not on the various other forms. However, all of these active modes of transport have many advantages, compared to other modes, both for individuals and for society.

At the individual level, active mobility provides a flexible, convenient and on-demand transport mode, not reliant on others or on either public or private transport services. Active modes help to keep people healthy through physical activity, while also being low-cost compared to motor vehicle ownership. Additionally, while cars are designed for multiple passengers they are frequently used for single occupancy journeys, while active mobility inherently cannot be over-capacity. The flexibility of active transport also makes it perfect for last-mile trips to and from transport hubs.

On the societal side, active transport modes do not generate emissions or noise, they use up less street space, and they have health benefits for other people who are less likely to be injured in collisions and do not have air pollutants inflicted upon them. Additionally, they are inclusive and low-cost mobility options for those who do not own cars or other motorised vehicles.



[1] *Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network*

[2] *Regulation (EU) No 168/2013 on the approval and market surveillance of two- or three-wheel vehicles and quadricycles*

Barriers to active mobility

While there are significant benefits to active mobility, they are still not as widely used – particularly cycling – as they could be in cities and regions. Public authorities need to create the right conditions to promote their use, taking account of the main barriers.

Specific barriers to active transport are highly dependent on the individual's environment and its characteristics, as well as in the individual's profile, with factors such as age and physical ability being key, as are culture and the role of cars as status symbols.

However, as an example, studies performed for Transport for London identified that the top barriers to cycling for non-cyclists were concerns about road safety and collisions, concerns about personal safety, cycle theft and air pollution, and practicalities such as travelling with children or with bags. Other considerations included lack of access to bikes, costs of maintenance, lack of storage space at home or at destination, and a belief that cycling is viewed as low status. For walking, barriers were lack of time, too much traffic, concerns about personal safety/crime, street environments not being pedestrian friendly and traffic being too fast.

Many of these barriers are specific to urban areas, with rural areas facing their own challenges such as longer distances to cover, and even more limited infrastructure for cycling and walking making active transport more dangerous. Rural populations are also frequently older than in cities and have fewer alternatives to private car use in general, as they can be essential for reaching public services.

Policy Framework

Given the benefits of active mobility, the European Union has sought to support these modes in several frameworks, regulations and instruments, particularly in the overarching **Urban Mobility Framework (UMF)** and **Trans-European Network – Transport (TEN-T).** Together, these set the overall direction of travel for urban mobility – greater integrated planning, more sustainable and active transport, and a more citizen-focused system.

The **UMF** of 2021 notes the growing challenges that cities face in tackling congestion, poor air quality, and excessive noise. Cities account for 70% of the EU population and produce 23% of its transport related greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, 38% of road fatalities take place in urban areas, and 70% of these deaths are amongst vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists.[3]

For these reasons, the Framework aims to enable people to move safely and sustainably within cities, to make life easier for rural and suburban commuters, and to support cities in their role as mobility hubs. In particular the Framework focuses on active, collective and shared mobility, including improved active mobility infrastructure, public transport, and multimodal hubs.

The UMF sets out that active transport should be fully addressed in urban mobility policies at all levels of governance and funding, including transport planning, awareness raising, allocation of space, safety regulations and adequate infrastructure, with a special focus on people with reduced mobility. At the same time, public and private organisations are encouraged to develop mobility management plans and actions to promote active transport, including incentives for employees and installation of necessary infrastructure, including bike racks and lockers.

[3] *EU factsheet: The New European Urban Mobility Framework (2021)*

Additionally, the Framework gives specific mention of e-bikes under active transport which it notes can open cycling to those living in hilly areas, older people and people with reduced mobility, as well as being useful for commercial cargo delivery services. It also notes that with the rise of micro-mobility, in particular e-scooters, accidents are becoming more frequent and more needs to be done to protect vulnerable road users by giving them more space, including through physical separation of walking and cycling/micro-mobility infrastructure from other modes of transport. The document also discussed UVARs (urban vehicle access regulations) which can be used to create low-emission zones but also incentivise use of active transport as an alternative mode, while creating safe spaces away from motor vehicles.

The UMF was used to inform the TEN-T regulation and aims to support Europe's urban nodes by outlining a common list of measures for these cities, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions and improving transport and mobility. Specifically, the framework includes guidance on how to address air pollution, congestion, accessibility, road safety, and other challenges.

The **TEN-T** is a major initiative of the EU to improve connectivity between Europe's cities and regions, which will be empowered to implement infrastructure projects, but also obliged to meet requirements for sustainable transport planning. The TEN-T Regulation, finalised in June 2024, requires all EU Member States to establish national Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) contact points and a national support programme by July 2025, and the 430 largest cities in the EU (identified as 'urban nodes'), will be required to define a SUMP by the end of 2027. There will also be requirements on multimodal passenger hubs in these urban nodes to integrate active transport modes, enable connectivity between hubs, and improve first and last mile connectivity. Nodes will also have to collect and submit urban mobility data covering greenhouse gas emissions, congestion, deaths and injuries caused by road crashes, modal shares, and air and noise pollutants.

> *"The promotion of active modes, particularly in urban nodes, contributes to the Union's climate goals, improves public health, reduces congestion, offers last mile solution for passengers and provides economic benefits. When planning or upgrading transport infrastructure, due account should be taken of active mode infrastructures, including walking and cycling infrastructures."*
>
> *TEN-T Regulation, Recital 66*

With the publication of the TEN-T Framework, an updated **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) concept** was also released, in 2023.[4] The original SUMP concept was released in 2013 as part of the Urban Mobility Package, and needed updating to bring it in line with the changing and the Urban Mobility Framework. This Updated SUMP Concept was included as an Annex to this EC Recommendation and prioritises sustainable solutions including active, collective and public transport**,** as well as improving traffic safety and security for vulnerable road users. Under this new concept SUMPs should cover non-motorised transport, with a plan to make walking, cycling and micromobility more attractive, safer and more secure, aiming to achieve Vision Zero to reduce fatalities in road users.

Although not a legislative act, the European Institutions adopted the European Declaration on Cycling in early 2024, which will be used to set the overall strategic direction of cycling policies. It represents a landmark commitment by European nations to elevate cycling as a central component of sustainable transport and urban

[4] *Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/550 of 8 March 2023 on National Support Programmes for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning*

development and sets ambitious targets to double cycling use by 2030 and integrate cycling policies into broader urban planning, health, and climate strategies. It emphasises cycling's role in reducing carbon emissions, alleviating urban congestion, and promoting public health. The declaration also encourages the expansion of safe cycling infrastructure, enhanced access to bicycles, and the development of supportive legislation to make cycling accessible to all demographics, including children and the elderly.

While not an EU declaration, the Pan-European Master Plan on Walking can provide a high-level framework for walking. It was adopted by the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe. The Plan promotes walking as a cornerstone of sustainable mobility and public health across Europe, and advocates for the development of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, such as safe crossings, wide pavements, and accessible public spaces, to make walking convenient and attractive for all. It also advocates integrating walking into urban planning and transportation strategies to create inclusive, walkable cities, ensuring that walking is accessible to people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds, and calls for cross-sectoral collaboration among governments, urban planners, and health organisations to prioritise walking in mobility strategies.

Funding and support

While the EU has set the framework and made many requirements of its urban nodes, it has also made significant amounts of funding available for the promotion of active transport, enabling the roll-out of proven solutions, as well as experimentation and piloting of new approaches.

The **European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIFs)**, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF), are the main funding instrument for active mobility infrastructure and support schemes. In particular, the ERDF's Greener Europe priority enables investment into sustainable urban multimodal urban mobility, and the Connected Europe priority supports investments into sustainable and intermodal TEN-T.

> *"Investments under the ERDF should contribute to the development of a comprehensive high-speed digital infrastructure network, and to promoting pollution-free and sustainable multimodal mobility with a focus on public transport, shared mobility, walking and cycling, as a part of the transition to the net-zero carbon economy."*
>
> *ERDF Regulation, Recital 12*

The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) have analysed the use of structural funds for promoting cycling and found that despite significant funds being available, a large amount has not been absorbed. They argue that politicians need to make cycling a political priority and ensure the right political framework is in place, including setting long-term strategies and assigning responsibility to a cycling co-ordinator to provide training on how to access the funds and increase capacity in local authorities to be able to set up projects.

The new Social Climate Fund can also support investments in active transport, including infrastructure and bike sharing schemes. Member states are currently preparing their Social Climate Plans which will set out where and how these funds are to be spent. This includes measures that "incentivise the use of affordable and accessible public transport and support private and public entities, including cooperatives, in developing and providing

sustainable mobility on demand, shared mobility services and active mobility options."[5] The Social Climate Plans are expected to be submitted to the European Commission by the middle of 2025.

The scale of the planned TEN-T required a specific funding programme to meet its ambitious goals. As such, the **Connecting Europe Facility** (CEF) **Transport** was created, aiming to improve transport infrastructure and connectivity across the continent. It plays a critical role in financing projects that can address the gaps in Europe's transport network and promotes multimodal and sustainable transport, though it is primarily focused on long-distance and cross-border infrastructure. It can however cover investments in actions implementing safe and secure infrastructure, including road safety**.**

Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research & Innovation, includes many topics and calls relevant to active transport, focused mainly in the Work Programmes for Cluster 5 on Climate, Energy & Mobility and in the Missions (see below), under the Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission calls. These include topics related to reducing road fatalities, improving infrastructure and public space, and using AI and other new technologies for connected, co-ordinated and automated mobility (CCAM).

In the framework of Horizon Europe, EU has also set up the **Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities** aiming to create 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 (112 including those in associated countries), with sustainable mobility as a core challenge. The aim of the Missions is to focus research and innovation efforts on a number of moonshot priorities, and in this case, for these cities to enable testing of innovative solutions which can be replicated in other European cities by 2050. All cities are testing innovative, cross-sectoral approaches including looking at citizen engagement, stakeholder management and internal governance to accelerate the path to climate neutrality. The Missions are inherently cross-sectoral, looking at energy, mobility, use of public space, safety, and citizen engagement aspects, though there are specific calls under the Horizon Europe programme consider how to increase active mobility as well as how to improve road user safety. Missions are governed by climate city contracts, available through the NetZeroCities website, as are case studies, factsheets and good practices

Also under Horizon Europe, the **CIVITAS** platform and actions also support the uptake and roll-out of active transport. It is a network of cities dedicated to urban mobility, that supports peer exchange, networking and training, providing a knowledge bank of publications and tools for cities to replicate and learn from, with active mobility as a core of their thematic focus.

Advice is also available under at **EU Urban Mobility Observatory**, which enables exchange of information and experience between mobility and transport experts, and is funded by the European Commission DG Mobility & Transport. The support included by the Observatory includes the SUMP Guidelines which help cities in developing their SUMPs, setting out the development steps, which are illustrated with case studies and good practice examples.

[5] *Regulation (EU) 2023/955 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, Article 8.*

Interventions for active mobility

Mainstreaming into mobility planning

Cycling and walking are often underappreciated in transport planning, which is frequently focused on motorised vehicles, particularly private cars. Mobility plans instead need to actively recognise walking and cycling as key components of sustainable urban mobility. This means also allocating sufficient resources, with a dedicated manager to consider these modes, devise projects and co-ordinate stakeholders (see Good Practice 1). A clear starting point for any region or city looking to increase its levels of active transport is to take stock of where they currently stand, understand their citizen's needs, and devise a comprehensive strategy to develop and guidelines, with ambitious targets from this baseline (this can also include participatory approaches, see next section).

Strategies should consider the wider transport network and take account of all aspects related to active transport including infrastructure, programmes, bike sharing schemes or bike subsidies, behaviour change and training initiatives, road safety and pedestrianisation, bike facilities (parking, lockers) as well as connectivity with transport hubs, such as bus and train stations. Planning needs to also consider all types of road-users and their specific needs, including children, the elderly and people with disabilities. The strategy tool should have a long-term perspective, and buy-in from across the entire administration, with measurable targets and a schedule of actions backed by adequate human and financial resources.

GOOD PRACTICE 1: Zaragoza's Cycling Master Plan

The City of Zaragoza, Spain, has developed a comprehensive Cycling Master Plan with the aim of making cycling a daily part of sustainable transport in the city and its surroundings. The Master Plan covers infrastructure design criteria, road safety and how to promote a cultural shift. The process of development started with a political decision to increase cycling rates and tackle urban challenges and with recognition that cycling needed to be integrated into multiple policy areas. To oversee this process, a Bicycle Office was created to act as a single point of contact and bring together the relevant departments and stakeholders.

The Master Plan sets out to create a city-wide cycling network, installing cycle lanes and bike racks, and establishing ordinances to make roll-out of cycling infrastructure mandatory rather than voluntary. They also sought to change behaviour and encourage more cycling, with safe school route projects, donation of abandoned bicycles, and establishment of a bike registry to prevent theft. The city also noted the need to limit cars and implement traffic calming measures. As a result of the master plan, and focused collaboration between stakeholders, Zaragoza increased its daily cyclers from 0.5 to 10% of the population, with 19% of the population cycling regularly.

Click here to find out more about this practice.

Cities should also consider integrating cycling into a full SUMP (see Good Practice 2) – especially those which will act as urban nodes in TEN-T, since they will soon be mandatory developments. The SUMP Guidelines, as updated with the TEN-T regulation, are also a good starting point for cities looking to develop active transport, as they can provide a holistic planning approach for all transport modes, considered together.

GOOD PRACTICE 2: Promoting Walking in Tampere's SUMP

Tampere, Finland's third largest city, developed a SUMP (adopted 2021) to strategically address its mobility needs, and chose to prioritise sustainability and reduce car dependency by promoting walking, cycling and public transport. To ensure that mobility was contributing to broader environmental goals, the SUMP was also aligned with the city's climate neutrality roadmap. Within this framework, Tampere set a target for 69% of all trips to be made by sustainable modes by 2030, requiring persistent efforts and resource allocation.

Tampere has therefore invested in new walking infrastructure, with connected pathways, wider sidewalks, pedestrian only zones, improved streetlighting, high-quality traffic crossings and traffic calming measures. They have also specifically explored integration with public transport, to ensure that walking routes connect to bus stops, tram stations, and park-and-ride facilities. Additional measures are implemented in winter to ensure safety, such as snow removal and de-icing of frozen pavements.

In designing the measures to implement, Tampere has co-ordinated work between the city planning, transport and public works departments, as well as bringing in community groups and citizens, who have been engaged with surveys and workshops. Tampere measures impact of its walking interventions by tracking pedestrian traffic, accident numbers and satisfaction amongst citizens

Click here or here to find out more about this practice

Participatory planning

Good planning starts from an understanding of the current situation, ongoing challenges, and of the needs of citizens. Participatory planning processes are therefore becoming more and more common as proven tools for engaging citizens and discovering from them what they need. This in turn increases the chances of acceptance of new measures. Participatory planning involves local communities, stakeholders and users in the decision-making process to design active mobility friendly environments, ensuring that infrastructure and policies reflect the needs, preferences and behaviours of those who use them.

Tools such as public workshops, surveys and interactive mapping allow for residents to identify barriers to active transport, suggest improvements and prioritise projects (see Good Practice 3). IT solutions can also be used to enable ongoing data collection and input (see Good Practice 4). Engaging diverse groups, including marginalised communities, women, children and seniors can help to address inclusivity and equality, with their specific needs and concerns taken account of. Such collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and trust, increasing public support for active transport initiatives.

Participatory planning leads to more effective project planning and implementation, but also unlocks innovation, as local insights can highlight solutions which would otherwise be overlooked in typical top-down approaches, while also helping to identify possible conflicts which may be missed by developers. Finally, involving the public in shaping their urban environment can build community cohesion and empowers residents as advocates of sustainable mobility.

GOOD PRACTICE 3: Participatory Planning for Coimbra's Cycling Network Plan

Coimbra, Portugal, set out to increase its cycling rate and established a detailed proposal in 2018 for implementing cycling lanes. Having used a top-down process, Coimbra switched to a new methodology in 2023, enabling co-design and participatory planning with citizens. The city implemented events to show its cycling network plans and invited people to explore them in depth with maps and visualisations on which they could write and make suggestions for new routes and the most important interventions. Coimbra made sure to include both frequent and infrequent cyclists, to get perspectives from different levels of experience.

Image source: EMBRACER

The city noted some important success factors including keeping presentations easy to understand and going back to citizens to inform them on what has been integrated into the final plans, as well as why certain things were left out, to show that inputs are valued. They noted also that the reception to the process was very positive and that implementing the approach was neither time nor resource intensive, while leading to more successful implementation.

Click here to find out more about this practice

GOOD PRACTICE 4: Walkability App for Participatory Mapping

Walking is the foundational mode of sustainable mobility, being available to almost everyone. However, walking frequency is influenced by many factors, not least comfort, safety and ease. Getting people walking needs a focus not only on infrastructure but also on improving the experience of walking and making it enjoyable and convenient.

The Walkability App, developed by Walk21, is a participatory mapping tool in which citizens can record data on walking and highlight areas in their travel that need improvement, as well as indicating their enjoyability of the their walking experience, and uploading pictures to highlight problems. The data gathered can help in understanding walkers' experiences, consider safety, comfort and enjoyment, as well as understanding their environmental determinants, such as footpaths, crossings, furniture and green environment.

The app can also be used by transport experts to perform interviews with walkers to gather inputs for audits which can identify things that can be changed, as well as the different attitudes of walkers based on their age, gender, activity levels and other characteristics.

Click here for more information on the Walkability App.

Infrastructure

For many people, active mobility infrastructure, in particular bike lanes, is a 'chicken-and-egg' problem, with some people arguing that there is no need for infrastructure if a region has few cyclists, while others argue that infrastructure needs to be in place to encourage people on to their bikes. Amongst cities which have already increased their use of active mobility, the view seems to be unanimous – infrastructure needs to come first.

Indeed, for cycling, infrastructure is the backbone of a cycling-friendly city, enabling safe, efficient and enjoyable bicycle travel. This includes bike paths, separated from motorised traffic, and shared streets which prioritise cyclists. Infrastructure needs to provide continuity, allowing seamless travel across the territory, connecting residential neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools, transport hubs and other areas of interest, to ensure that

cycling is a viable option for everyday travel. Ultimately, safety and comfort are essential to get people to cycle – this includes good street lighting, clear sign-posting, smooth roads, and secure bike parking.

For walking, infrastructure needs to provide spaces that prioritise pedestrian mobility – pavements, quick pedestrian crossings, footbridges and walking trails, particularly those which embrace cultural and natural heritage, providing pleasant and attractive walking environments, such as greenways and walking trails (see Good Practice 5). As with cycling, clear sign-posting and public maps can also help to get people walking. At crossings, traffic lights and transport calming measures such as speed bumps, raised crossings and narrowed roads can reduce the risk of accidents but also contribute to quieter, greener neighbourhoods

GOOD PRACTICE 5: Green-Blue Axis

Image source: PROMOTER

The Eixo Verde-Azul (Green-Blue Axis) is a joint project between the municipalities of Sintra, Oeiras, Amadora and Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua in the Lisbon District of Portugal. Its aim is to create an active mobility corridor along the Jamor River, while also improving ecosystem services and natural heritage. The mobility corridor connects sites of interest, as well as connecting to major transport hubs and routes. Providing pleasant routes such as this can be instrumental in getting people active.

The project was part of a wider initiative to revitalise Sintra city centre and the surrounding villages, rehabilitate public space and buildings and connect settlement areas to improve economic integration and create social and cultural vitality.

Click here to find out more about this practice

Ultimately, in both cases, there is a need to make active transport comfortable and enjoyable. This can include incorporating shaded areas, proper lighting, seating and rest stops, remembering that active transport is not just about getting where you need to go, but also enjoying the process and appreciating your surroundings. This can be part of a broader urban regeneration efforts, with new public space and developments.

For improving safety, it's also advisable to take a holistic approach and reconsider mobility and transport in cities as a whole – increasing active transport is often reliant also on adequate public transport provision and reducing the role of cars. Pedestrian zones transform urban areas by creating safer, more enjoyable environments for citizens, often in city centres and shopping or cultural districts. By eliminating vehicles, pedestrian zones reduce air and noise pollution, and thoughtful design elements such as seating, greenery, and public art, further enrich the experience, fostering vibrant, people-focused spaces. Many politicians can be scared by such approaches,

often facing significant push back from drivers – but once they are implemented, few want to go back to how things were before.

Integration with public transport

Integration of active transport modes with public transport is essential for enabling multimodal journeys. Most public transport users make their first or last mile journey by active transport modes – making this process comfortable and easy can also help to increase use of public transport, and reduce private vehicle use on roads.

Public authorities therefore need to support collaboration between public transport operators and urban planning. Mobility hubs that bring bus, train, bike-sharing and pedestrian-friendly spaces together should be encouraged, and design standards for such hubs should account for citizen's needs, including ample signage, infrastructure for avoiding adverse weather conditions, and provision of streetlighting. They should also provide secure parking and easy to access bike-sharing docks to encourage commuters to use bicycles for the first or last mile of their journeys. Train and bus operators can also be encouraged to provide bike racks on board, enabling the active journey to continue at the other end (see Good Practice 6).

GOOD PRACTICE 6: Bus & Bike Service

The City of Funchal in Madeira, Portugal is characterised by hilly land and narrow streets, making cycling a challenge for many citizens. In response, the local public transport operator made efforts to improve multimodality and integrate cycling into the daily public transport use.

Under the CIVITAS MIMOSA project, the Bus & Bike service was launched as a pilot to integrate modes. Bus routes link steep and hilly areas with flat areas, bike racks were installed in the bus so they can also be transported, and bike parking facilities were installed next to interchange bus stations.

Click here to find out more about this practice.

Access to bikes

Although often regarded as a cheap transport mode, many people do not want to invest in acquiring a bike, which needs to be maintained and securely stored. As such, bike rental, or bike sharing, systems are increasing common, enabling access to bikes which are maintained by the rental company. In particular, bike sharing schemes can help to bridge the last mile from public transport to final destination, or to fill gaps in public transport networks (see Good Practice 7). These programs allow users to rent bicycles for short trips, typically through a mobile app, with docking stations strategically placed across the territory. Some systems also offer dockless bikes that can be parked anywhere within designated zones. By providing an affordable, convenient, and eco-friendly alternative to motorised transport, bike-sharing programs have gained popularity among commuters, tourists, and casual riders alike. Integration with public transport systems, such as discounted rides for transit users, enhances accessibility and promotes multimodal transportation.

In other cases, public authorities may instead want to consider providing subsidy schemes to enable individuals to purchase their own bikes. Governments can provide incentives such as grants or direct subsidies for purchasing bikes – in particular, many schemes focus on either electric bikes or cargo bikes, which are be more expensive than the traditional pushbike. Schemes can target specific groups such as low-income households, students or SMEs.

GOOD PRACTICE 7: Prleški bicikl – Automated Bike Renting System

In order to improve connectivity between settlements, the Municipality of Ljutomer (Slovenia), implemented a bike sharing scheme in its Local Action Group (LAG), comprised of six municipalities. The area lacked public transport options, with most residents instead reliant on private cars.

The scheme provides both normal and electric bikes, to make cycling more accessible for all residents, regardless of physical ability. Four bike stations were installed in three villages in the region, with further roll-out expected into other settlements in the LAG.

Image source: EMBRACER

The scheme was introduced in the framework of the project 'Cycling Chain in the Countryside', which covers 12 different LAGs and 23 municipalities. This practice stands out in particular as most bike sharing schemes are implemented in urban areas – this one demonstrates that such schemes can also be implemented on a smaller scale in villages and rural areas.

Click here to find out more about this practice.

Behaviour change

Ultimately, active transport needs to be the choice of citizens, and many people are simply not in the habit of walking or cycling, instead reverting to private car use. Promoting active transport requires strategies to shift behaviours and to foster a culture of cycling and walking through education, community engagement, and incentives.

These can include education and awareness raising campaigns that highlight the health, environmental, and economic benefits of active transport. Leveraging technology through apps that track active travel, provide route recommendations, or gamify participation can encourage active mobility amongst tech-savvy users.

Various initiatives and events can also be implemented in collaboration with businesses, the public sector and schools to target citizens. These include bike-to-work days, provision of workplace benefits for cycling commuters, the development of personalised mobility plans or competitions and public recognition for frequent active transport users (see good Practice 8). Indeed, actions targeting commuters are fundamental to achieve large-scale behaviour change.

GOOD PRACTICE 8: Bike-to-Work

The Bike-to-Work campaign was implemented in the commune of Reggio Emilia (Italy) during the COVID pandemic, when people were reluctant to use public transport and instead were returning to use of private vehicles. The campaign was targeted at employees of private companies, public bodies and education institutes. Participating organisations signed a Mobility Management Agreement and appointed a mobility manager to oversee implementation. Employees were encouraged to download a mobile app to count active minutes in commuting to work.

Based on this, employees were then incentivised for their activity with a financial reward of 20 cents per kilometre cycled, up to 50 EUR per month, funded from the regional budget. Each month the organisation would receive a report from the app with the total number of kilometres cycled by staff, as well as CO_2 emissions saved.

Within the first year, around forty organisations participated in the initiative, with 590 people tracking their activity, cycling more than 72,000 kilometres and saving more than 12,000 KG of emissions.

Click here to find out more about this practice.

Guided walking tours and workshops on safe cycling can help individuals experience the ease and enjoyment of these modes firsthand, helping to overcome initial scepticism. Cycling training can be personalised to individual goals, such as better health and independence, or to societal ones, such as inclusiveness and integration of vulnerable groups. A core target group for such activities is school children, who can learn a lifelong behaviour when engaged at an early age (see Good Practice 9) To maximize success, they should be implemented as part of a wider campaign and accompanied by incentives for turning cycling into a permanent habit once training is over.

GOOD PRACTICE 9: Cycling campaign in Rezekne

Rezekne (Latvia) has implemented a comprehensive set of activities to encourage the community to use bikes and adopt a cycling culture. Working together on the initiative, the local Youth Centre, the state Fire and Rescue service, the Road Traffic Safety Directorate and the State Police developed and implemented a safety class to teach children about cycling and road safety, with participating children able to acquire a bicycle driver's license as evidence of their work. The consortium also arranges a cycling day, on 4 May each year (Day of the Restoration of Latvian Independence), to encourage people to try cycling, who would otherwise not do so, during leisure time on a national holiday. Finally, the city has also participated in a project to connect cycling networks with the International Cycling Route EuroVelo11, and marking up the bicycle route.

Click here to find out more about this practice.

*Interview with **Zsombor Aradszki**, West Pannon Regional & Economic Development Public Non-profit Ltd., Hungary & **Philip Amaral**, European Cyclists' Federation, Belgium (CycleRight)*

What are the main challenges to increasing the uptake of cycling in regions?

Regions are facing a range of interconnected challenges including a need to reduce congestion, carbon emissions, and air pollution, requiring a move towards a low-carbon transport system and providing citizens with more liveable cities and improved public health. Cycling can play a key part in this transition, however, several factors hinder this process. These include the lack of acceptance of cycling as a fully-fledged mode of transport, a lack of capacity at decision-making and planning levels, public opposition to certain interventions, and political fear of decisions to be taken in a motorised transport-oriented environment. Regions also struggle to access European funds for cycling, which can be complicated, especially if the region does not have dedicated staff focused on cycling projects. Another challenge is if the region does not have a cycling plan in place, which makes it hard to plan and prioritise projects.

How is the CycleRight project trying to overcome these challenges?

CycleRight brings together a diverse partnership of cities and regional actors, aiming to improve policy instruments. They strive for a more sustainable urban mobility by sharing good practices and knowledge on climate-resilient, accessible, safe cycling infrastructure, and integrating the learnings into their organisational operations. In particular, the project is exploring how to provide interconnected regional plans and well-connected urban-rural linkages with continuous settlement-level plans, and how to develop network plans by involving decision-makers, experts, citizens and cycling NGOs. It also explores how to mainstream cycling elements in all infrastructure developments, such as the road and rail network, mobility hubs, public services and institutions, as well as data-driven planning, awareness raising and behaviour change, and how to ensure safe cycle networks – a prerequisite for cycling uptake.

What would your recommendations be for other regions?

European regions can finance cycling projects by tapping EU structural funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. In the current financial period, €3.2 billion is earmarked for cycling projects in Europe, a 30% increase from the last structural funding period. Regions typically use these funds to build cycle highways or install heavy infrastructure such as cycle bridges. A major challenge for regions is that access these funds can be complicated, especially if the region does not have dedicated staff focused on cycling projects. Regions need to improve their absorption of structural funds in cycling projects, ensure there is a strategic cycle plan or network plan and integrate cycling facilities with other mobility infrastructure. Regions should initially focus on a few carefully selected routes or route segments for development, collaborate with citizens, and strengthen the capacity of local authorities and cycle project managers, including by having a dedicated cycle co-ordinator.

Policy recommendations

Active Mobility has many benefits for regions, but local authorities need to take a lead in getting people to embrace these modes by considering them from the perspectives of different end-users and ensuring that they are fully integrated into regional frameworks with broad cross-sectoral citizen and political buy-in. From the experiences and good practices gathered in this policy brief, several recommendations can be made.

Develop an overarching strategy rather than a piecemeal approach

- Active mobility modes need to be given greater prominence in mobility planning. Consider setting up dedicated strategies and empowering a department to oversee and co-ordinate implementation, as done with Zaragoza's Master Plan and Bicycle Office. Include a pipeline of projects in this to be implemented in stages, but with a clear vision and end point for active mobility networks;
- Cities, particularly those allocated as urban nodes under TEN-T, should already consider the development of a SUMP and the integration of active mobility into it, as implemented in Tampere. Make use of the SUMP Guidelines and available materials to explore best practices and approaches;
- EU Member States will need to provide support and guidance to its urban nodes in SUMP development, but cities should not be passive – now is he time to act in engaging citizens.

Participatory planning is a necessity for optimal implementation

- A key starting point in developing a robust active mobility strategy is to understand your starting point - current rates of active mobility and the current challenges that citizens face. This can help to identify quick wins and prioritise interventions;
- Participatory planning and data collection will help to not only identify these challenges, but also to secure buy-in and build a sense of ownership amongst citizens. As good practice, be sure to involve citizens of different backgrounds, make the process as easy as possible to participate in, and be sure to give feedback on what has and has not been selected for implementation, and why;
- Different methods are available for this participation, from running interactive workshops, as in Coimbra, to using mobile applications, as with the Walkability app. The best approach will depend on the type of information to be sought, the target users, and available resources;
- These participatory approaches are new for many public authorities, so they may need new skills and training for staff members. Learn what has worked in other regions;
- Don't just try to understand what citizens want, but also what stops them from being active. This will include some harder to solve problems, such as overall enjoyability of public space, but can provide the data for major changes.

Consider the experience: put safety, comfort and convenience first

- Providing infrastructure is vital for getting people active but be sure to also consider the overall experience – it is not enough to just proving cycle lanes and wide pavements through unsafe or unclean neighbourhoods. Think instead about the overall use of public space and consider active mobility in relation to broader urban regeneration efforts. Making use of nature and blue-green infrastructure, as in Sintra, can combine benefits of promoting active transports and also revitalising ecosystem services;
- Remember that people need to find it enjoyable throughout – provide shelters from poor weather, seats and rest stops, water fountains and sufficient street lighting;
- Active transport needs to be well integrated within public transport. Most first and last mile journeys are made by active means, so improving these links can also boost public transport usage. Think about walking and cycling routes to multimodal hubs, as well as bike parking facilities and bike rental/sharing hubs.

Behaviour change needs consistency

- Behaviour change is always a major challenge, with no easy fix, but several practices are well tested and demonstrated. Incentives, competitions and trainings all have a role to play. Ultimately, many activities and actions need to be implemented to consistently engage citizens, as in Rezekne, which devised a package of measures to be implemented;
- Measures need to be targeted to specific end-users types – different actions are needed to tackle business commuters, compared to engaging school children, for example.
- Behaviour change measures will have most impact when also implemented together with the other recommendations above – make active transport easy, safe and convenient rather than expecting people to rise to the challenge of unsafe streets. Remember that infrastructure comes first.

Tackle the car challenge

- While we may discuss methods of getting more people to be active, the other side of the coin is also getting fewer people to use private cars.
- Pedestrian zones and low-emission zones can provide safe and healthy areas of active transport, but may face political resistance.
- Streets where cycling and walking is a priority but where cars are allowed to pass, provide a more flexible option while reducing speed and increasing safety for active modes.
- Traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, raised crossings and narrowed roads can also help to change driver behaviour and improve safety for active mode users.
- Parking policy is also an essential tool to influence car use behaviour and should be used proactively as such.

Make use of European opportunities

- Many funds are available at the European level, primarily under the ERDF, but regions have struggled to absorb them. Make sure you have an overall strategy and pipeline of projects to fund, and ensure that public administration has the skills and capacity needed to access and administer these funds;
- Horizon Europe provides the opportunity to test new approaches, particularly under the Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. These calls are open to all cities, not only Mission cities – so be sure to engage in these opportunities;
- Learn from others who have already made progress! CIVITAS, NetZeroCities, the Urban Mobility Observatory, and the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform can all provide guidance and good practices. Consider the services of the Policy Learning Platform (see the inside back cover) to guide you in your journey.

Sources and further information

The Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform experts provide a tailored set of resources, contacts, or in-depth analyses to help you find the answers you are looking for. Explore our services that can help you solve regional policy challenges.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform information

- Collection page on Cycling Cities
- Policy brief on cycling cities
- Cycling Cities webinar series:
  - Cycling Cities I – Strategic planning for cycling
  - Cycling Cities II – Infrastructure development
  - Cycling Cities III – Getting more people to cycle
  - Cycling Cities IV – Cargo bikes for the last mile
  - Cycling Cities V – Cost-benefit analysis of cycling vs cars
- Webinar on cycling tourism
- Active Transport webinar series
  - Promoting cycling in cities and regions
  - Integrating walking into mobility and transport planning
- Connecting Europe: A regional perspective on the Trans-European Transport Network

Other sources

- European Commission – Communication on the European Green Deal
- European Commission – SUMP Guidelines and Decision Makers Summary
- European Commission Factsheet – The New European Urban Mobility Framework (2021)
- European Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/550 of 8 March 2023 on National Support Programmes for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning
- European Declaration on Cycling
- Pan-European Master Plan on Walking
- European Cyclists' Federation – Cycling investments by EU Member States using EU Structural Funds
- Peer, et all. – Which policy measures can motivate active mobility in rural and semi-rural areas? (2023)
- Transport for London – Cycling potential in London's diverse communities (2021)
- Walk21 – Policy brief on integrating walking and public transport (2024)
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network
- Regulation (EU) No 168/2013 on the approval and market surveillance of two- or three-wheel vehicles and quadricycles
- Regulation (EU) 2023/955 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, Article 8.
- Knowledge Repositories:
  - NetZeroCities website
  - CIVITAS
  - EU Urban Mobility Observatory
  - PATH Coalition

Interreg Europe Programme

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme co-financed by the European Union. With a budget of 379 million euros for 2021-2027, Interreg Europe helps local, regional and national governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policies through interregional cooperation projects and its Policy Learning Platform services. The programme promotes good practice sharing and policy learning among European regions in 36 countries – the 27 Member States, as well as Norway, Switzerland and the 7 EU candidate countries. Interreg Europe contributes to the EU cohesion policy together with the other European Territorial Cooperation programmes known as Interreg.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

The Policy Learning Platform is the second action of the Interreg Europe programme. It aims to boost EU-wide policy learning and builds on good practices related to regional development policies.

The Platform is a space where the European policy-making community can tap into the know-how of regional policy experts and peers. It offers information on a variety of topics via thematic publications, online and onsite events, and direct communication with a team of experts.

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform expert services

Our team of experts provide a set of services that can help you with regional policy challenges. Get in contact with our experts to discuss the possibilities:

Via the **policy helpdesk**, policymakers may submit their questions to receive a set of resources ranging from inspiring good practices from across Europe, policy briefs, webinar recordings, information about upcoming events, available European support and contacts of relevant people, as well as matchmaking recommendations and peer review opportunities.

A matchmaking session is a thematic discussion hosted and moderated by the Policy Learning Platform, designed around the policy needs and questions put forward by the requesting public authority or agency. It brings together peers from other European regions to present their experience and successes, to provide inspiration for overcoming regional challenges.

Peer reviews are the deepest and most intensive of the on-demand services, bringing together peers from a number of regions for a two-day work session, to examine the specific territorial and thematic context of the requesting region, discuss with stakeholders, and devise recommendations.

Discover more: www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning

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