Fostering citizen-focused urban mobility

A Policy Learning Platform Event

26 November 2019, Brussels

Summary: This thematic workshop explored the challenges of urban mobility and the transition to a more equitable and inclusive mobility system, with a particular focus on modernising public transportation, encouraging active transportation and integrating urban planning measures. The workshop attracted fifty-five participants to network with other practitioners, hear about policy frameworks and support options, including keynotes from European Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy, and DG Mobility and Transport, and discover good practices from across Europe.

Low-carbon economy

Interreg Europe

European Union | European Regional Development Fund

Highlights

Cities in Europe have largely based their mobility systems around motor vehicles, with particular focus on private cars. As cities grow there is an urgent need to tackle the resulting negative impacts upon citizens, including poor air quality, lack of physical activity, noise and safety. At the same time, changing demographics and rates of car ownership, as well as our commitments to reduce carbon emissions, require us to foster new types of mobility:

- Transport is the largest sector in terms of CO_2 emissions – 27% of total emissions, with 40% of this from urban transport. It is the only sector where carbon emissions continue to rise;
- Every year, more than 23,000 Europeans are killed in traffic accidents, and 135,000 more are seriously injured – 37% of these cases are in cities. Poor air quality and sedentary lifestyle contribute to an additional one million premature deaths;
- Congestion costs the EU economy around €270 billion per year in lost productivity;
- 74% of the EU population live in cities, expected to increase to 84% by 2050.

Whilst the uptake of low-carbon vehicles will be an essential part of the mobility transition (a mixture of electric vehicles, advanced biofuels and renewable hydrogen), simply replacing existing vehicles will not be enough to tackle all of these challenges, and new approaches will be needed. Taking a citizen-focused approach entails recognising equality of inhabitants and giving pedestrians and cyclists as much value as drivers. It involves participatory and interdisciplinary planning processes for land use, transport, housing and cultural and natural heritage, with a focus on quality of life and the use of public space for recreation and socialising.

The European Union has set out a policy framework to support the uptake and development of low-carbon transport, which also aims to support more citizen-focused cities. The EU is aiming to phase out traditionally fuelled cars in cities by 2050, supported by the Urban Mobility Package (2013); Low-Emission Mobility Strategy (2016), and Graz Declaration (2018). Additionally, the European Commission offers a number of support options, as presented to the workshop by DGs Regional and Urban Policy, and Transport and Mobility:

- The CIVITAS Initiative, which supports living labs and public private partnerships to support cleaner, better transport;
- The annual European Mobility Week campaign that encourages European municipalities to support behaviour change, including a car free day;
- The Urban Mobility Observatory (Eltis), which provides case studies, guides to EU legislation and funding, and other resources;
- Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan Concept and Guidelines to guide cities in developing a SUMP, and accompanying topic guides;
- Guidance for Cycling Projects, with case studies and planning guidelines for cycling in cities;
- Urban Innovation Actions, which allow urban authorities to test new solutions, including in low-carbon mobility. Support will continue under the European Urban Initiative after 2020;
- Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicators (Upcoming), to provide support to urban centres across the EU and develop an online benchmarking tool.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) provide significant support for regions to fund low-carbon mobility projects, with 12.7 billion EUR available for urban mobility in 2014-2020. The Commission has also promoted Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) Strategies, enabling investments from different ESIF Operational Programmes to be channelled into individual projects. Post-2020, the ESIFs will have five priority areas, with urban mobility falling under a number of priorities, including ‘A more connected Europe’, ‘A Europe closer to citizens’ and, ‘A greener, low-carbon Europe’.

Good practices

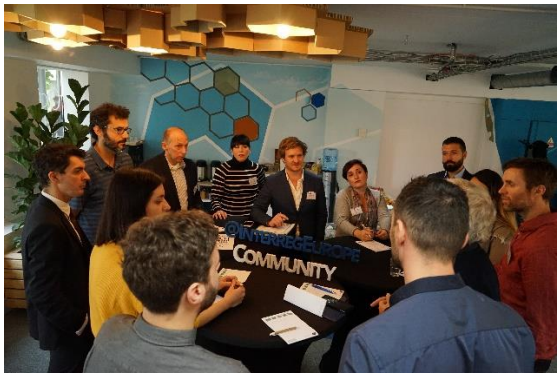
Modernising Public Transport

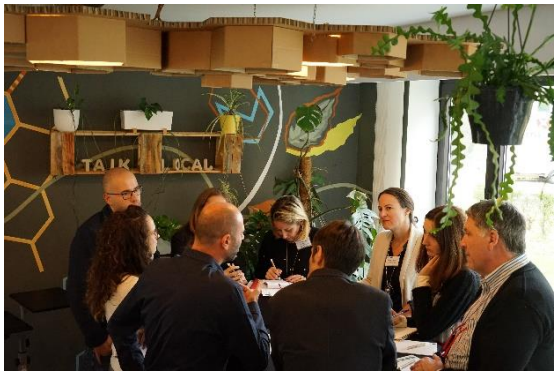
- ANDA – The ticketing system of Porto metropolitan area (SMART-MR) – provides one intermodal ticketing system for buses, trams, metro and urban trains, to overcome previously complex ticketing across transport providers. The simplified system ensures that users are charged ex-post for the most cost-efficient ticket type, receiving a bill at the end of the month, amounting to no more than the cost of a monthly ticket.
- The transport consortium of the metropolitan area of Zaragoza (DEMO-EC) has brought public transport companies together to ensure that public transport operates in an integrated manner. It is a joint initiative between the Aragon Government, the provincial council of Zaragoza and 30 municipalities, to improve mobility, quality of life and urban spaces. As well as integrating services into a single system, the consortium established the Lazo card, providing integrated ticketing in a single card for public transport, as well as rental bikes and parking metres.
- Budapest's public discussion on the surface network changes after opening the new metro line (SMART-MR) has demonstrated participatory planning processes, with the public asked to get involved in public transport planning. With the creation of the new M4 metro line, it was necessary to reduce some of the existing on-surface transport links. Via a survey, the Centre for Budapest Transport and Budapest Municipality were able to take account of public preference in their proposals, resulting in high public acceptance for the changes proposed.

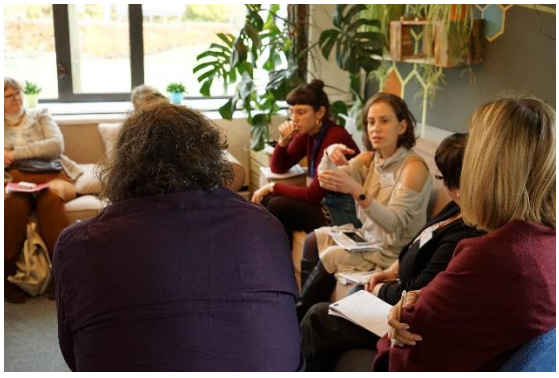
Promoting Active Modes of Transport

- The Regional Government of Andalusia has explored the use of gamification platforms to boost sustainable mobility (TRAM), using competition and prizes to stimulate greater use of active modes of transport. Companies pay an annual fee to use the application and encourage their staff to cycle or walk to work. The mobile application tracks steps taken, and distances cycled, and compiles league tables of which companies are performing best. The added benefit of the collected data was that it could be used to see which routes people were frequently using, but which were not adequately supported with bike paths.
- In an attempt to increase the use of multimodal transportation, and reduce use of private motor vehicles, the Municipality of Funchal set out to support universal and inclusive mobility for pedestrians (MATCH-UP). Following the SUMP development cycle, Funchal began by collecting data and implementing a public survey to analyse conditions and understand receptiveness to change. They then defined and implemented interventions, including pavement improvement, inclusive road markings, urban furniture and traffic calming measures, and communicated the processes with their main target groups. Funchal was able to reduce the use of light passenger vehicles by 82.3% between 2015 and 2018, with pedestrianisation also contributing to the development of local businesses.
- Vitoria-Gasteiz, in the Basque Country, has implemented the superblock concept (INTENSIFY) to support sustainable mobility. The main principle of the superblocks is to give public space back to the people and improving safety and quality of walking, by closing off certain roads to motor vehicles and redirecting them to external roads, introducing traffic calming measures. In tandem, public transport was adapted to accommodate the superblocks. The measures saw a 5% modal share increase in walking, a 9% increase in cycling, and reduction in private cars of 12%.

- Mulhouse Alsace Agglomeration's case study showed, in the context of urban revival, how its integrated long-term strategy comprising of a large number of individual measures from various disciplines (mobility, housing, cultural and natural heritage, start-up support etc.), implemented across municipal boundaries over two decades have had a positive transformative impact in terms of economic activity and quality of life.
- The Helsinki Metropolitan Region has implemented an Integrated planning process of land use, housing strategy and transport (SMART-MR), combining the regional land use plan, the housing strategy and the transport system plan for the first time. The plan runs from 2015 to 2050 and covers 14 municipalities, requiring not only the co-operation between different services and departments, but also between different municipalities. This integrated planning process itself is the good practice.
- The local action plan of the city of Pecs (SHARE) is a holistic strategy for the economic turnaround of a region having experienced industrial decline. It focuses on cultural heritage sites and green infrastructure planning embedded in a smart shrinking approach that re-centres Pecs around its most important cultural, natural and knowledge assets.
- The city of Baia Mare (Romania) has pedestrianised and renewed its historic centre (TRAM), to both encourage more walking, reduce car traffic and strengthen the city's cultural heritage. The plan focused on a main city square, which was completely pedestrianised, as were roads leading into that square. Accompanying this, historic monuments and buildings were restored, to increase the attractiveness of active transport, linked up by pedestrian zones. The pedestrianisation policy has been integrated into the city's SUMP.
- Graz has managed to integrate green infrastructure into strategic spatial planning at all levels (PERFECT). Benefiting from a spatial planning law, many spaces, public and private, have been designated as green spaces making other uses illegal. Thus, the city has ensured the preservation of its natural assets to the benefit of its citizens.







Thematic Conclusions

Modernising Public Transport

- Public transport needs to be **attractive and demand oriented**, ensuring the latest technologies are integrated into sustainable transport and are easy to use;
- Use of **modern modes of public transport** including electric-powered, hybrid and alternative fuel rapid bus transit systems, metro and trams/trolley buses should be pursued;
- **Digitalisation**, including the provision of real time information through integrated transport services, integrated fare systems (smart ticketing), traffic management systems and, increasingly, autonomous vehicles are emerging solutions;
- Development of **transport infrastructure** should improve convenience, including not only dedicate bus lanes, but also multi-model transport hubs;
- **Changes to city planning** should include new philosophies for use of public space, parking management and pedestrianisation;
- **Communication** with citizens and their inclusion in planning decisions helps build support, as shown by Budapest.

Promoting Active Modes of Transport

- City planners should base their strategies around a **hierarchy of transport priorities**, putting walking and cycling at the forefront, whilst considering links with public transport;
- Infrastructure development can help to improve safety (cycle lanes, pedestrianised zones, traffic calming), but should also have a focus on a **'people friendly' philosophy** that is not only about safety, but also encouraging activity through making public spaces attractive and welcoming;
- **Data collection**, as in Funchal, should always be the starting point for a region or city looking to implement changes, taking account of the current situation to ensure that new measures can have maximum impact;
- Infrastructure alone will not be enough; **communication and behaviour change** approaches are also needed. The Andalusian gamification platform is a good example that can also be used to inform strategy development.

Reviving Urban Areas

- **Political commitment** from top level to lower level, across election cycles, is essential;
- **Long-term strategies and perspectives** for deep transformative impacts are encouraged, as shown in Mulhouse's twenty-year transformation and Helsinki's thirty-five-year plan;
- **Integrated planning** is complex, but has proven very successful, with different services – transport, land-use, housing, economic development, eco-systems, etc., being integrated (Mulhouse, Helsinki, Pecs) or with the systematic integration of one strategy in all other policies (Graz);
- **Holistic approaches** are needed, with one broad objective and many measures from different disciplines to achieve it. Single measures might be a waste of resources as they don't create sufficient critical mass to reach a tipping point, and can even be counterproductive as a change in one area may create accidental impacts in another;
- **Cross-municipality strategies** are emerging that don't stop at administrative borders but that instead take the territory and its real-life dynamics, including the city centre and the outskirts or even the adjacent cities if linked by regular commuter flows, as boundary for mobility strategies.

Next steps

As part of the workshop, parallel sessions were held to stimulate discussion between projects. A number of follow-up topics, and possible activities, were identified, some of which are included below:

- Traffic calming was discussed in multiple groups as a solution for reducing congestion, but also improving safety of cyclists and pedestrians. Interest was expressed in a possible online exchange to further explore this topic moderated by the Policy Learning Platform (PLP);
- Behaviour change was discussed as an issue in multiple groups as well. The Policy Learning Platform has already developed a policy brief on Behaviour Change for Energy Efficiency in Buildings – a similar brief, or workshop session, could be developed for mobility;
- Integrated and smart ticketing were identified as issues of interest. Many good practices are available here, and will be included in the next PLP policy brief on Improving convenience of public transport;
- Low-carbon mobility strategy development was a key issue in all groups as well; InnovaSUMP discussed their process of integrated SUMP and SECAP. The PLP will see what can be done to support dissemination of the developed methodology, which was of interest for other projects;
- Financing low-carbon mobility, including exploration of business models for e-mobility, were discussed as major challenges. It was considered a suitable topic for a webinar or online discussion;
- Numerous projects stated their intention to follow-up bilaterally with other projects to continue their discussions and explore how to work together.

Additional support is already available for project partners, and external authorities:

- The Policy Learning Platform held a **webinar on the impacts of transport electrification on the electricity grid**, on 10 December 2019. You can access the event page here;
- Regions looking to improve their urban mobility frameworks can consider applying for a Peer Review from the Policy Learning Platform;
- The Policy Learning Platform has produced a number of policy briefs, highlighting good practices in e-mobility, active modes, SUMPs and demand-responsive transport.

For more information on the workshop, visit the event's conclusion page, where you can access the presentations, attendee list and event photos.

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