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New framework for monitoring urban mobility in European cities

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Abstract

The Europe 2020 strategy (COM (2010) 2020 final) for smart, inclusive, and sustainable growth highlighted the importance of an innovative and sustainable European transport system for the future development of the Union. It also stressed the importance of addressing urban dimension of transport. A key issue in the changes is to understand that urban mobility must be handled as a part of a wider shift: namely within the sustainable city concept. Urban mobility have to serve Europe's urban areas develop along a more sustainable path (both environmentally and financially) and that EU goals for a competitive and resource-efficient European area are met. While the integrative target is clear, practical elements of the urban mobility development and decision making time-to-time reserve earlier approaches

The integrated decision making at local, regional, national or EU level have to be helped with a similarly coordinated data, statistical, monitoring and evaluation system of urban transport. This paper's aim is to set up a framework for monitoring urban mobility by a criteria set which helps determining indicators from general objectives through urban (mobility) objectives. Indicators set up this way should be suitable to benchmark and compare progress of urban areas across the EU, paying special attention to integrated approach while defining the methodology.

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1. Introduction

The Europe 2020 Strategy (COM (2010) 2020 final) for smart, inclusive, and sustainable growth highlighted the importance of an innovative and sustainable European transport system for the future development of the Union and stressed the need to address the urban dimension of transport. As referred in the 2013 Urban Mobility Package (COM (2013) 913 final) of DG Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) of the European Commission, a Eurobarometer survey (Special Eurobarometer 406) investigated attitudes towards urban mobility. The survey showed that considerable differences exist across the EU. There is an increasing 'urban mobility gap' between Europe's few advanced cities and the majority trailing behind.

There is a need for reinforcing the support to European cities for tackling urban mobility challenges. A step-change in the approach to urban mobility is needed to ensure that Europe's urban areas develop along a more sustainable path and that EU goals for a competitive and resource-efficient European area are met.

While the European documents determine the main directions the urban development and mobility have to follow, in the detailed processes leading to the objectives sometimes there are steps that are still didn't change and partly or entirely reserved the past routines. One of those sections is the set of indicators used to evaluate the promotion of the new mobility changes. This paper aims at searching new, integrated sets of indicators to a sustainable mobility system that is well integrated into a sustainable city concept.

The further structure of the paper is the following: the next block introduces the context of monitoring urban mobility fitted into the SUMP process while the third part deals with the methodological details. Finally, further steps are mentioned towards an operating urban mobility indicator system.

2. Context of monitoring urban mobility in European cities

The White Paper on Transport 2011 (COM(2011) 144 final) states that the European Commission should establish procedures and financial support mechanisms at European level for preparing Urban Mobility Audits, as well as Urban Mobility Plans, and set up a European Urban Mobility Scoreboard based on common targets. According to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee an effective, efficient and sustainable transport policy should be based on ongoing monitoring of the results achieved and on swift adjustments of measures that are not working at local and regional level.

One of the interventions is the improvement of quality and availability of data and statistics for urban transport systems operations and decision making at local, regional, national and EU level. As a first step, the paper emphasizes the role of objectives in indicator set development.

As the policy objectives of urban mobility are complex objectives, the starting point of the paper is that the task is not simply to take over sustainable mobility tools and fit them into the urban environment, but rather starting from the requirements of the sustainable urban life and to serve it with suitable transport tools.

That is why the paper distinguishes the sustainable urban mobility approach (hereafter SUM: that is the mobility solutions of a sustainable urban system) from a traditional environmentally oriented transport approach. The latter is rather a traditional transport attitude plus an attention to environmental, energy and health factors; still not the sustainable urban area-based mobility approach.

The new approach is well represented in the concept of developing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP Guidelines (2014): thereafter referred as SUMP). The concept of SUMP considers the functional urban area and proposes that actions on urban mobility be embedded into a wider urban and territorial strategy. Therefore, these Plans should be developed in an integrated way: that means cooperation (a) across different policy areas and sectors (transport, land-use, health, etc.); (b) across different levels of government and administration; as well as (c) with neighboring urban and rural authorities.

Objectives formulated in SUMPs are subsequently locally oriented, in one city many ways different from those of other cities and necessarily the solutions are not easily comparable between cities.

Hence, what a program-level indicator should measure for evaluating SUMP implementation is not the content of the single measurements or the specific objectives to be achieved, but rather the degree of the policy integration: whether and to what extent the SUMP objectives (or part of them) are derived from the wider city development objectives.

Therefore this paper pays special attention to the integrated approach while selecting suitable indicators for policy objectives, expressing that SUMPs are about fostering a balanced development and a better integration of the different urban activities, including mobility modes. This planning concept highlights that urban mobility is primarily about people; emphasizing citizen and stakeholder engagement, as well as fostering changes in mobility behaviour.

We took note of the DG Regional and Urban Policy Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation (European Commission 2015) relating the definition and use of the indicators, because a great share of urban mobility investments will be financed from Structural and Investment Funds, and it seems plausible to harmonize urban mobility indicators

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