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PLANNING OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY TOOL FOR MUNICIPALITIES ON HOW TO SUPPORT CHANGES OF NEW MOBILITY PLANNING AND TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

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Short Description

Czech cities focus their transport planning on sustaining mobility of their citizens and visitors. They will have a new mobility planning tool at disposal, providing them with information for decision-making, offering mobility management solutions. The tool is designed in cooperation with Czech cities and replies to their planning needs.

Main part

Czech cities are confronted with growing transport problems and a need to change mobility of people and goods. The cities apply the concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) which shifts the focus of transport planning from traffic flows to a higher quality of urban life, paying more attention also to the demand side, users and citizens. By the end of 2019 Czech cities above 50.000 inhabitants should have adopted their SUMP and start their implementation. Mobility management is an important part of transport problems solutions however Czech cities still do not use its potential in full. How do Czech cities deal with the new conditions and challenges in sustainable mobility planning?

To answer this question, we conducted a survey among Czech cities above 10 thousands of inhabitants. We contacted more than 300 experts with an electronic questionnaire during February 2019 and finally received 76 filled-in questionnaires from 49 cities. We asked about experiences of cities with mobility measures and their decision-making process. We analysed barriers and drivers which cities face in all phases of their mobility planning. Furthermore, we focused on monitoring and evaluation and communication with stakeholders, important parts of SUMP, especially for measuring and promoting sustainability of urban mobility and its systems.

An important finding is the major concern of cities “ how to choose, justify, communicate and evaluate the right measures with respect to their impacts on travel behaviour and benefits for urban environment. The need became even more apparent in the SUMP process, mainly in the part where measures, actions and budgets are planned. To cover the need of cities we have been developing a new tool “ a planning model for mobility management solutions, starting from encountered transport problems, strategies to tackle them and selecting relevant measures by criteria. The pilot version of our tool will be ready in late spring 2020 and is based on evidence from case studies and professional knowledge of transport experts. The tool is fed through a database of measures and its design has been discussed with the cities which gave us a very valuable feedback.

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What is new?

A first mobility management tool which Czech cities can use in their language and upon their specifics. The online model will help Czech cities deciding about relevant transport measures, taking into account their expected impacts, a broad range of problems, their solutions and experiences of other cities. First we analysed more than 50 existing analytical, planning and evaluation tools developed in various EU projects and identified their relevance for Czech cities. The model will suggest relevant transport and mobility management measures for all modes of transport with respect to their strategic goals and problems.

What is transferable to other cities and regions?

Possible solutions are fully transferrable as the transport situation e.g. in the Central European countries does not differ much. Some planning processes or legislation will likely be country-specific, but the tool can supply more examples of solutions for one problem. Czech cities are in the stage when new infrastructure for sustainable modes of transport, new technologies, soft measures and public debates on new mobility bring changes in thinking of planners and users as well. We believe the process is transferrable to other countries, at least in the Visegrad area.

What are outcomes and conclusions?

A major outcome in this research phase is the planning model for sustainable mobility in cities " called PLUMM, supplied with a database of measures. We have also results of our survey and interviews with heads of relevant municipality departments in 49 Czech cities which gave us a clear picture on needs, planning, implementation and evaluation practices in the cities. Cities appreciate a technical help in selection of measures for sustainable mobility, they need evidence-based successful measures as an exemplar solution of their problems. They have accomplished the first generation of their SUMP, we track their experiences, processes and facts behind.

Who are the main target groups?

Municipalities with competence in transport planning, transport planners, researchers.

And what now? - what will change? - what is the relevance for the future?

The COVID crisis changed priorities and focus of everyone. Future users of our tool can still get inspired by many practical measures which can be applied regardless the health challenges we are just going through. The tool is primarily designed to help interested cities to choose appropriate measures and grasp the information on their benefits and usual outcomes. The requested criteria or the character of measures sought by potential tool users can change due to the new reality. We assume online services like internet shopping, communication tools or electronic government to eliminate physical journeys will gain importance. The life of a number of companies and organisations will most probably change and personal meetings already are reduced, replaced by online meetings performed from home or other places. The same applies for teleworking or distance learning through webinars and lectures online. Our tool contains also the mobility management measures with a potential to respond to the COVID 19 crisis and we intend to mark them under a special search criterion. Due to the pandemic since late February our works on the tool service got delayed and will be still continued in summer. Nevertheless, this will allow us to embed certain specifics and complete any potential lacks from the test period and our findings based on the newly planned research (see below).

From the mobility research point-of-view, all measures mentioned above started boosting in consequence of the COVID-19 crisis and we expect inevitable modifications of modal splits. Users tend to reduce a number of journeys (which can be more beneficial for the environment) or change a travel mode (which can be positive or negative to the environment and social patterns). Probably most significant changes have occurred in the use of public transport with a respective lower share and in shared mobility (especially carpooling or taxi service). There are more reasons for the situation, all connected to the pandemic measures – mainly restricted PT services, severe regulations of total number of users in PT vehicles or the prescribed distance of 2 m among PT users. The cities look for socially acceptable solutions when the prescribed health standards are set and the mobility status maintained. As researchers we plan a new survey for mobility users in selected areas to get a real picture on mobility changes, their prevalence, user preferences and acceptance of new services and devices (mainly mobile tracking or applications) established due to the COVID risk. There is a remarkable space for mobility management as well in terms of campaigning for „safe mobility“, like more cycling and walking, return of users to public transport (providing accurate information on public transport options, up-to-date measures, using touchless technologies etc.). According to our previous survey, the interest of Czech cities in new mobility solutions is high and we believe even in this complicated period transport planners will have a good inspiration available.