



PRESS PACK

European Mobility Week 2009

“Improving City Climates”



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1. Press Release

EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK 2009 - “IMPROVING CITY CLIMATES”

From 16 to 22 September 2009, hundreds of European towns and cities will participate in the eighth edition of European Mobility Week and invite their citizens to a wide range of activities promoting sustainable mobility. The 2009 campaign theme - “Improving City Climates” - underlines the importance of local level efforts to tackle climate change and improve quality of life through the promotion of alternative transport modes to the car such as cycling, walking, and public transport as well as clever car use schemes such as car-sharing and car-pooling.

Our current travel behaviour, which relies heavily on the use of fossil-fuelled private cars, is not only a major source of greenhouse gases (the transport sector is responsible for 40% of total CO2 emissions in Europe) it also affects the “climates” in our towns and cities, which suffer from traffic-generated air and noise pollution, death and injury on the roads, traffic congestion and a lack of public space and social cohesion.

By adopting “Improving City Climates” as the 2009 focal theme, European Mobility Week wants to establish a link with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2009 in Copenhagen by demonstrating that citizens and local authorities have a key role to play in the fight against global warming by fostering a radical change away from private car use and towards more sustainable travel. By doing so, they also help to improve the quality of life at the local level.

Stavros Dimas, Commissioner for the Environment, stated:

“Private cars are large emitters of the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. They also seriously affect the quality of urban life. It is therefore important for public authorities and citizens throughout the European Union to adopt more sustainable modes of transport. Doing so would help reduce the impact of climate change and improve the living conditions in our towns and cities.”

Participating towns and cities are encouraged to sign the European Mobility Week Charter and register their activities at www.mobilityweek.eu.

In addition, participating towns and cities meeting certain eligibility criteria are encouraged to apply for the **European Mobility Week Award 2009**. This prestigious accolade rewards those cities judged to have organised the most innovative EMW 2009 campaigns in terms of quality of activities linked to the annual theme and range of permanent measures implemented. The city of Budapest (Hungary) was the European Mobility Week 2008 Award Winner, with joint runners-up Almada (Portugal) and Zagreb (Croatia). This year’s campaign in Budapest promises to be as exciting as 2008 with an impressive three car-free days planned in the city’s historic centre and an MTV music concert targeting young people as part of the ‘Play to Stop - Europe for Climate’ campaign.

2. About European Mobility Week

2.1. Overview

The European Mobility Week aims to influence mobility and urban transport issues for the long-term as well as enhance the health and quality of life of European citizens and help meet important environmental objectives. The Week is organised each year from **16 to 22 September**, the last day preferably designated as Car Free Day to coincide with the “In Town Without My Car!” day.

European Mobility Week (EMW) represents an ideal platform for local authorities and other associations and organisations to:

- promote existing policies, initiatives and best practices related to sustainable urban mobility;
- contribute to raising citizens’ awareness on the detrimental effect that current urban mobility trends have on the environment and their quality of life;
- establish effective partnerships with local stakeholders;
- be part of a European wide campaign, sharing a common goal and a common identity with other towns and cities;
- emphasise the local commitment towards sustainable urban transport policies; and
- launch new longer term policies and permanent measures.

Most towns and cities participating in EMW devise a **week-long public programme of innovative activities and events promoting sustainable urban mobility**. They also commit to launching at least one **permanent measure** which will continue to exist after the Week is over, ranging from small-scale improvements such as the development of school travel plans or establishment of an online car-pooling system, to larger infrastructural works such as the creation of new cycle routes or the re-allocation of road space in favour of pedestrians.

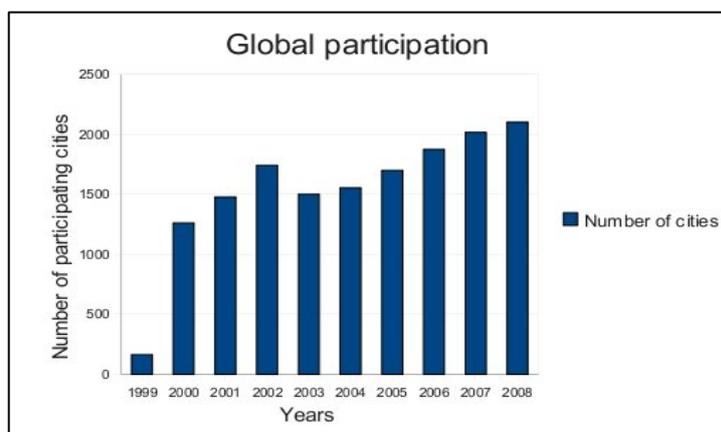
2.2. Facts & Figures

Participation

In 2008, under the focal theme of ‘Clean Air for All!’, a record number of **2,102 local authorities** signed the EMW charter and/or registered their activities on the campaigning site www.mobilityweek.eu. In terms of population, this translates into **220 million citizens in 39 countries** potentially engaged by EMW 2008!

This was also an increase of nearly 4% on 2007 rates, with a good participation of old and new EU Member States, Accession Countries and EEA/EFTA countries. EMW’s successful campaigning model is also increasingly being adopted by countries outside Europe, including Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, with the major cities of Seoul, Rio de Janeiro, Taipei, Montréal, Yokohama and Quito all participants in EMW 2008.

As the graph below illustrates, there has been a gradual year-on-year increase in EMW participation since 2003, with 2008 having the highest ever rates of participation.



Permanent measures

More than **7,677 permanent measures** were implemented all over Europe as part of EMW 2008, mainly focusing on infrastructure for cycling and walking, traffic calming, improving transport accessibility and raising awareness about 'smart' travel behaviour.

Impacts

As for the overall impact of European Mobility Week 2008, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Media coverage was wide, particularly at local and regional level. The initiative gained a positive media response in most countries.
- The reduction of car use was illustrated by a decrease in cars parked in city centres and an increase in citizens using other modes of transport (cycling, walking, car-pooling, and public transport).
- Many partnerships between participating local authorities and schools, police stations, shopkeepers, companies, federations etc. have been created. This demonstrates that broad alliances were built, which will ensure a more sustainable and coherent transport policy at local level.

Success factors

After 7 years of existence, the key success factors of European Mobility Week have proven to be the following:

- Strong political support at national and regional level
- Strong national coordination with sufficient budget and means
- Ownership and support of the objectives of EMW at local level
- Involvement of politicians and technical services at local level
- Establishment of strong partnerships and involvement of local associations and stakeholders
- Activities that have a broad coverage
- Integration of EMW in the local transport policy

2.3. History

The "European Mobility Week" journey started over a decade ago in 1998 with the French "In Town Without My Car!" day. The aim of this initiative, which is still running today and is officially organised on 22 September, is to encourage towns and cities to close one or several streets to motorised vehicles for an entire day. Thus for one day, local authorities can present their urban centres in a different light and implement key actions aimed at restricting motorised traffic in certain areas, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport and raising awareness on the environmental impacts of citizens' modal choice.

Witnessing the success of the "In Town Without My Car!" day and its popularity amongst citizens, the former European Commissioner for Environment, Margot Wallström, decided to further support the project by launching an even more ambitious initiative in 2002: "European Mobility Week".

2.4. Focal Theme 2009

Why "Improving City Climates"?

Climate change is undeniably one of the greatest environmental, social and economic challenges facing our planet. In its latest assessment report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that even with current climate change mitigation policies and related sustainable development practices, global greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise over the next few decades.

2009 could mark a crucial year in the fight against global warming with world leaders potentially passing a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen, Denmark this coming December, committing them to long-term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The European Union is similarly committed to reducing its emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2020, with ambitious plans to increase this to 30% should other developed nations also follow suit under a new global climate change agreement.

With over 70% of the European population now living in an urban area, local authorities are in a key position to mitigate climate change, both in designing public policies consistent with the global objectives and in mobilising their citizens and other actors to reduce their collective carbon footprints.

Looking at the transport sector, it is still the fastest growing consumer of energy and producer of the most greenhouse gases in the EU. Transport accounts for around a third of total energy consumption and for over a fifth of greenhouse gas emissions; private car use is responsible for the majority of emissions within this. Although the latest technological innovations regarding clean and energy-efficient means of transport, alternative fuels and intelligent transportation systems look promising, the effects of global warming can only be countered by making the change towards softer and more sustainable transport modes such as cycling, walking, public transport, car-sharing and car-pooling.

European Mobility Week 2009 under the theme “Improving City Climates” therefore offers an ideal opportunity for cities to take actions on unsustainable modes of transport to improve air quality and reduce energy consumption at the local level in the fight against climate change. It also challenges citizens to think about changing their day-to-day mobility behaviour to cut CO₂ emissions. This year’s theme also highlights how current urban transport patterns affect the urban “climate” in terms of quality of life, noise, health, road safety, social cohesion and integration.

2.5. EMW Activities

Each year, towns and cities are encouraged to develop creative campaigning activities and techniques to promote sustainable urban mobility during European Mobility Week. The examples below offer a brief overview of such activities planned for EMW 2009, and those implemented during EMW 2008.

EMW 2009 - “Improving City Climates”

Almada’s (Portugal) interesting programme for EMW 2009 includes an “Info-Mobility Day” on 18 September offering citizens “Trips for trash” whereby members of the public receive free tickets for public transport on presentation of recyclable materials (e.g. cans, plastic bottles, batteries), and a free open air cinema screening several well-known films and documentaries on climate change.

The EMW 2009 programme for **Budapest** (Hungary) includes an impressive three Car-Free Days! On 19, 20 and 22 September the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Andrassy Avenue will be closed to all motorised traffic, with public transport and hybrid vehicles excepted. The weekend will see the iconic boulevard transformed into a ‘Living Street’ complete with green grass on the pavements, sporting tournaments, street theatre, demonstrations of clean vehicles, bicycle races, and street painting for children.

The city of **Gothenburg** (Sweden) hopes to make big improvements to its climate during EMW 2009 by working with the public and private sector to target commuters. The campaign is collaborating with over 200 workplaces which have pledged to support their 100,000 employees to abandon their cars for the daily commute during the Week in favour of cleaner transport modes.

Salzburg (Austria) will host a dedicated day of action-“Salzburg-Anders Mobil”-to raise awareness of sustainable mobility and alternative transport modes to the car with interactive demonstrations of electric vehicles, rickshaw rides through the city, and opportunities to meet representatives from various local environmental and transport NGOs.

In **Vilnius** (Lithuania), thousands of teachers and schoolchildren will be encouraged to cycle to school from 16-22 September in recognition of the importance of influencing travel behaviour and modal choice at an early age. If successful, this activity will hopefully lead to the development of permanent School Travel Plans across the capital.

EMW 2008 - “Clean Air for All!”

Almada (Portugal) joint runner-up for the EMW Award 2008, cleverly linked EMW with existing local initiatives promoting sustainable living such ‘Healthier Almada Day!’, ‘Local Shopping Day’ and ‘Commute by Bike Day’, significantly raising its profile amongst the general public and saving money on promotion in the process.

During EMW 2008 **Bologna** (Italy) unveiled their improved ‘C’entro in Bici’ bicycle sharing system with 19 stations across the city, extended the existing cycle network by 7.3 km, bringing the total length of cycle paths to 108km, and distributed cycling safety guides and free maps covering the network. In keeping with tradition, the city also organised a guided evening bicycle tour with ice cream tasting for participants!

The city of **Budapest** (Hungary) which sufficiently impressed an independent jury of experts with their activities to win the EMW Award 2008, implemented a diverse EMW programme for citizens working with a variety of different stakeholders (e.g. district municipalities, environmental NGOs, special interest groups and public transport companies) to deliver the different activities. These provided their political and financial backing for the campaign, thus helping to engender greater public support. For example, the Critical Mass bicycle

demonstration in the historic centre of Budapest was organised to coincide with Car Free Day on 20 September, attracting in excess of 25,000 participants.

In **Gavle** (Sweden) the city experimented with a trial closure of three streets in the city centre to cars for the entire duration of the Week. In order to minimise disruption, buses, taxis and delivery vehicles remained free to circulate during the closure. Quantitative measurements were carried out on traffic flow, traffic noise and the average speed of buses to provide evidence to city decision-makers on the benefits of a permanent closure of the same streets. A survey of local stakeholders was also conducted to gauge public reaction to the closure.

In **Murcia** (Spain) the city drew attention to the focal air quality theme by offering stationary hot-air balloon rides to members of the public at the launch of a real-time air quality monitoring system in Cardenal Belluga Square. The organisers also took advantage of the crowd gathered for the event to distribute questionnaires to citizens on their travel behaviour by specially trained 'mobility hostesses'.

The city of **Sheffield** (UK) successfully launched 'Walkit Sheffield', in cooperation with the walking route planners 'Walkit' - an online tool allowing users to map their journeys on foot as well calculate the distance, time, calories burnt, CO2 emissions saved and even the gradient of their chosen route.

Zagreb (Croatia) made a strong long-term commitment towards improving accessibility in the city for vulnerable citizens. The city offered interactive demonstrations of low-floor buses and trams to be rolled out before 2010 and 2012; promoted tactile surfaces for pedestrian crossings to be implemented city-wide; and introduced free travel on public transport for disabled people, senior citizens, unemployed people and school children.

2.6. Permanent Measures

From awareness → permanent action → change

European Mobility Week provides a unique opportunity to test, launch and/or inaugurate sustainable transport measures that become permanent after the Week has ended. From 2004, the introduction of at least one permanent measure within the framework of EMW became obligatory, with a new recommendation in 2007 that at least one of these measures should be the permanent reallocation of road space in favour of walking, cycling or public transport. The permanent measures guarantee the long-term effects of the campaign beyond the duration of the Week and help to ensure that sustainable mobility and its benefits remain visible to citizens all year round. Year after year, step-by-step, sustainable mobility will become reality in cities and towns.

While the Week's temporary activities could be viewed as quite interchangeable from one city to the next, the type of permanent measures implemented depends on the cultural and urban tradition, political context, climate and of course on local mobility, environment and sustainability policies. Since European Mobility Week started in 2002, the most popular permanent measures that were tested and launched include:

- Creation or extension of pedestrian zones
- Cycle lanes (improvement, creation, extension, renovation etc)
- Public transport and intermodality: improvement or extension of the network
- Regular forums or surveys to gather public opinion and ideas
- Permanent information procedures for the general public
- Creation of car-pooling systems/car clubs
- Traffic calming, with reduced speed limits or limited access
- Safer school routes
- Workplace travel plans

3. Website & Contacts

The European Mobility Week website contains a wealth of information on the current campaign. For more information on the latest participation figures for EMW 2009, city-specific activities and links to national EMW websites, please visit: www.mobilityweek.eu

European Mobility Week is an initiative supported by the European Commission, DG Environment, based on a partnership between the European Coordination - a consortium featuring the three city networks of EURO CITIES, Climate Alliance and Energie-Cités - and a dedicated network of National Coordinators representing national ministries or stakeholder associations and organisations. Local coordinators are responsible for the EMW campaigns at local level.

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