

Establishing a dialogue to support the on-going activities towards sustainable mobility in Sofia - new ways to improve public transport in the Bulgarian capital

The situation of public transport in selected candidate countries

At present about 80% of the European population live in towns and cities. However, the essential issue for the future will be whether changes of the urban environment due to increasing environmental pollution will be a threat to the traditional European city or whether this model can cope with the challenges involved.

At present the main reason for growing air pollution and disturbances from noise in CEEC are higher volumes of traffic due to increased preference of private car use. In all major towns and cities of candidate countries an increased car ownership per 1,000 inhabitants indicates this for the period between 1990 and 2001. For example, in Warsaw car ownership rose from 281 to 411 cars per 1,000 inhabitants during this period, in Prague from 276 to 600 and in Sofia from 240 to 435.

Local authorities in candidate countries are well aware of the problems involved and first steps have been taken to change this situation. Particularly major cities in the accession states continuously renew their fleet of busses and trams.

The situation of transport in the City of Sofia

In Sofia the past three to five years various measures to improve the road network have been realised such as the construction of inner-city ring roads. However, the constantly increasing volumes of traffic, particularly private car use, lead to congestion but do not contribute to improved PT services.

A specific form taxi services which is still under operation from the socialist

era is a service along dedicated routes. This special PT service has been extended to the whole city and is carried out by mini-buses but under current conditions with rising private car use the quality and effectiveness of this affordable service is threatened.

In addition, selected measures for the rehabilitation of PT have been carried out such advanced maintenance and renewal of vehicles. In this context the intended purchase of new buses and trams through a loan of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development offers the unique opportunity to promote PT and to carry out a project demonstrating its advantages to citizens.

This modernisation of the public transport system in Sofia is an essential step to sustain mobility as it helps

- ☐ to better PT services, e.g. low-floor buses and trams, new ticketing system etc.;
- ☐ to lower air pollution by outdated buses;
- ☐ to reduce energy consumption, by using less diesel in bus engines and energy efficient drives for trams,
- ☐ to mitigate noise pollution by low-noise engines for busses and electrical drives for trams.

1.2 Current framework for the proposed activities in the light of EU accession

Important issues for the harmonisation of the local transport policy to future EU requirements in the field of transport - a number of directives to tackle air pollution and noise from vehicles as well raising awareness for improvement of the quality of life at local level for citizens.

Changes in the transport sector - liberalisation of the transport market in the European Union imposes changes on PT transport in towns and cities.

Raising awareness for the interlinked problems of transport

and environment - the Car Free Cities network, which was renamed to ACCESS. This local authority network aims at promoting a new mobility culture throughout Europe

In 2002 over 80 Bulgarian towns and cities participated in the campaign, amongst them the city of Sofia.

Overall objectives, aims, expected results and activities carried out in the framework of the proposed project

A comprehensive approach is required in implementing the concept of a passenger advisory council by sensitising decision makers and the general public for the need of awareness raising measures to be implemented.

Overall objectives

The overall objectives in the current project will be:

- subsidiarity is to be demonstrated to local authorities and the public against the background of EU accession,
- long-term decision making through active involvement of stakeholders and the general public,
- diversity will be safeguarded due to existing differences in a community with regard to of social, cultural and economic backgrounds and interests.,
- community will be re-defined in new ways: it is more than just a city's public administration, citizens will acquire a new sense of community, which will strengthen their commitment to participate to a greater degree in municipal and community activities.

Aims of the project

The project aims are

- ☐ to improve and further develop the attractiveness of public transport in Sofia;
- ☐ to assist in establishing a dialogue between the Sofia Transport Company, the City administration and the PT users by an independent passenger advisory council;
- ☐ to optimise customer-oriented services and to gain new experiences for the introduction of new strategies and concepts;
- ☐ to bring to the attention of decision makers at political and administrative level the necessity for restructuring PT due to the liberalisation of the transport market in the light of EU accession,
- ☐ to present and discuss examples of 'good practice from other candidate countries and Germany to discuss transferability of ideas and approaches;
- ☐ to raise awareness of local administration to the implementation of EU directives such as in the field of air pollution and noise to further the quality of life in towns and cities;
- ☐ to set an example for other Bulgarian towns and cities in the field of developing public transport and disseminate and promote the transferral of the project's results.
- ☐ to communicate the different stages of the project to citizens in Sofia by raising awareness to the economic, ecological and social aspects of transport (European Car Free Day 2004)
- ☐ to encourage the formation of networks between representatives from towns and cities in EU member states and candidate countries,
- ☐ to make investments in PT more effectively and prospectively in an properly and transparency way of implementation.

The proposed project will be a good opportunity to accompany the modernisation of Sofia's PT vehicle fleet. Furthermore, synergetic effects between the on-going activities regarding LA 21 in Sofia and the future passenger advisory council can be expected as both forums will deal with public transport issues.

Expected results

The overall expected result for the proposed project is to permanently set up a **passenger advisory council**.

In a project documentation (on CD-ROM) the results of the workshops, roundtable meetings, study visit and the introduction of a passenger advisory council will be published. s.

Activities carried out

a kick-off workshop, an interim workshop and a dissemination workshop.

The kick-off workshop will be followed by setting up a round table with local experts to develop a structure for and prepare the inauguration of a passenger advisory council in Sofia.

Regular information about the project will be provided to the public.

A study visit in Germany will give the experts of the round table an in-depth view and provide more detailed information on how to successfully inaugurate a passenger advisory council.

Experience will be shared with Passenger advisory councils in different EU member states

Thus selected experiences gained in Germany will provide good examples for discussion on how to develop a structure for a passenger advisory council in the City of Sofia.

Based on the experiences for the establishment of passenger advisory council the following issues are essential:

- ☐ Preparing the procedure for the creation of a passenger advisory council
- ☐ Establishing a passenger advisory council
- ☐ Setting up a framework for continuous work
- ☐ Outlining the scope of the issues to be dealt with

Project structure and steps

Preparational phase - Study visit - Interim workshop and introductory phase - Inauguration phase -Final workshop and dissemination of results

Target groups

The principal target group are political decision makers of Sofia City Council, experts of Sofia's city administration and transport company, other experts from local, regional and national administrative level, stakeholders from the local business community, environmental and social non-governmental organisations as well as interested citizens.

Partners :

the European Academy of the Urban Environment, Berlin Germany

the Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration „Ecoregions“, Sofia, Bulgaria

Expected results and activities carried out



Organisational issues

Provisional schedule :



Agency for Sustainable Development and Eurointegration (ASDE)

Activity / steps :		
1. Preparational phase: preparation of kick off workshop in Sofia: identification and invitation of local politicians and experts drafting of concept for 'round table forum', schedule and issues for roundtable meetings, preparation of research studies	5. Introductory phase in September 2003: presentation of the project's first results during the European Car Free Day / European Mobility Week 2003 by means of a public event, public announcement calling for the participation of interested citizens in the passenger advisory council, trip with tram to present project to the public on 22 September 2003	10. Second meeting to establish passenger advisory council in Sofia, evaluation of the second meeting final workshop and dissemination of results: a 1.5 day workshop in Sofia for presentation, promoting and disseminating the project's results to Bulgarian town officials, representatives from ministries and NGOs, evaluation of the conference results
2. Kick off workshop takes place in Sofia: presentation and final discussion of proposed issues with experts from Sofia, finalising of concept for roundtable forum, start of roundtable meetings (approx. every 8 weeks), presentation and first discussions on outcome of research undertaken, preparation of study visit of experts from Sofia to Berlin	6. Evaluation of the outcomes of the activities carried out in M 07, networking activities via internet and fax to experts which participated in the workshop, finalising of concept for passenger advisory council, deadline for application	11. Start on the summary of the project's overall outcomes and preparation of draft report
3. Study visit of selected experts from Sofia to Berlin, evaluation of study visit and conclusions for approach chosen in Sofia to establish passenger advisory council	7. Inauguration phase: selection of interested citizens for the passenger advisory council, preparation of the first meeting of passenger advisory council, beginning for preparations of the project's final conference in Sofia in month 12	12. Third meeting of passenger advisory council
4. Development of concept for passenger advisory council in Sofia, regular roundtable meetings to discuss the different issues, interim workshop: invitational expert workshop with selected experts from Germany; EU member states and candidate countries for discussing experiences in other EU member states and candidate countries on the relevant issues regarding passenger's/customer's advice to transport authorities	8. First meeting to establish passenger advisory council in Sofia, evaluation of the first meeting, start of compilation, evaluation and analysis of the project's overall outcomes and results	13. Draft report revised
	9. Sending out invitations to Bulgarian towns and city representatives, organisational preparation for the final conference	14. Report published, final report sent to BMU, UBA and City of Sofia, dissemination of report in Bulgaria

Project budget: - 95 000 EURO

Necessary support to achieve the objectives set out The 'Local agenda 21 - Sustainable Sofia'

This programme, initiated by ASDE and supported by the City of Sofia.

In this context, the proposed joint project will support and help the implementation of better public transport practices. It will provide better social understanding and transfer of information and experience to administrators, professionals and citizens, fulfilling the necessary changes and challenges for public transport in a better way, supporting and enhancing the on-going activities for the LA 21 in Sofia but also to set an example for other local authorities in Bulgaria and possibly other candidate countries.

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