

CLEAN TRANSPORT

EVENT REPORT

Prioritising Health in Europe's Mobility Planning: Transformative Pathways Beyond 2024

INTRODUCTION



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Today, road transport remains the only sector where emissions have consistently risen in recent years, underscoring the urgency of addressing its environmental and health impacts. The links between transport and health, along with their wider co-benefits, have long been recognised in European partnerships and policies. This recognition was recently reaffirmed in the Budapest Declaration, adopted by countries of the WHO European Region, which includes a commitment to promote healthy, safe, climate-friendly, and inclusive mobility and transport for all. Leveraging these favourable conditions to achieve transformative change across Europe through local clean transport solutions is crucial. These solutions must prioritise health, safety, and climate-friendliness to create a sustainable future.

To explore these interlinkages, the European Public Health Alliance hosted an event entitled “Prioritising Health in Europe’s Mobility Planning: Transformative Pathways Beyond 2024.” The event aimed to highlight how clean mobility policies can drive positive health outcomes and foster transformative change from city to European levels. The summary report of the event can be found below.



KEYNOTE PRESENTATION



Francesca Racioppi

Head of Office, [WHO European Centre for Environment and Health](#)

In her keynote speech, Francesca Racioppi, Head of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, underscored the intersections between health, sustainable mobility, and climate action. She began by reflecting on her extensive experience with the [WHO and the progress made over the past 30 years](#), while acknowledging that significant challenges persist in integrating health considerations into transport policies.

Ms. Racioppi highlighted 569,000 annual deaths in Europe due to ambient air pollution, and 65,000 deaths from road traffic injuries - these particularly affecting young people (ages 5-29). She also referenced the 62,000 deaths attributed to heatwaves in the summer of 2022, emphasising the interconnectedness of transport, health, and climate change. Policies aimed at reducing air pollution provide both immediate and long-term health benefits. In fact, improving air quality serves as a dual benefit policy, addressing both public health and climate change objectives.

Physical inactivity contributes significantly to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Promoting active transportation, such as walking and cycling, can therefore reduce overall mortality by approximately 10%, highlighting the importance of integrating physical activity into daily life through sustainable mobility solutions.

The pandemic served as a catalyst for active mobility, with temporary reductions in car traffic allowing people to experience walking and cycling. While some cities have retained these changes, others have reverted to pre-pandemic norms, indicating varying levels of progress. The advent of electric bicycles has made cycling more accessible, especially in challenging terrains and for older individuals. Recovery funds and initiatives like Repower Europe have provided financial support for sustainable mobility projects.

Shifting from car use to cycling or walking can also significantly reduce carbon emissions, reinforcing the crucial role of active mobility in the climate agenda. Ms. Racioppi expressed optimism about the future, citing ongoing policy developments and collaborative efforts by organisations like WHO and the European Commission. She emphasised the importance of leveraging new evidence and arguments to persuade policymakers and drive change in urban mobility.



PANEL DISCUSSION 1 - Making THE (Transport, Health and Environment) Links:



Francesca Racioppi

Head of Office, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health



Dr. Audrey de Nazelle

Senior Lecturer at the Centre of Environmental Policy, co-chair of International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE) Policy Committee and outgoing chair and founder of Imperial's Network of Excellence on Air Quality (NExAir)



Pierre Dornier

Founder and Director, Les chercheurs d'air

Dr. Audrey de Nazelle presenting online emphasised the need for systemic approaches in policy-making, moving beyond siloed strategies. Policies often focus on technological solutions like electrifying vehicle fleets, which, while important, miss broader health benefits. She advocated for behavioral changes, such as promoting walking, cycling, and public transport, which provide significant health benefits including increased physical activity, reduced noise, and more green spaces. Dr. de Nazelle stressed that health and equity should be the ultimate goals of urban and environmental policies. Research showed that policies promoting active transport can offer five to twenty times more health benefits compared to purely technological solutions. She called for the integration of health impacts prominently in urban mobility plans, particularly as health can serve as a unifying goal motivating diverse stakeholders. Dr. de Nazelle also stressed the importance of countering misinformation quickly and providing robust, evidence-based information to build trust and support changes. She advocated trial implementations so as to give people a chance to experience the benefits firsthand of change, thereby reducing resistance.

Pierre Dornier presented the practical aspects of implementing health-focused policies in urban settings. He emphasised the importance of addressing residents' immediate concerns, such as the impact on daily life. Mr. Dornier shared examples from Brussels, where replacing car parking spaces with bike racks, trees, and public amenities garnered public support by directly enhancing local quality of life. Mr. Dornier pointed out that presenting policies in terms of tangible benefits for residents' daily lives can create more allies and reduce opposition. He also suggested providing clear data to concerned parties, such as local businesses, about how customers travel to shops, as this can alleviate their worries. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of learning from other cities' experiences and highlighted the necessity of offering practical solutions to support businesses during transitions.

Francesca Racioppi then underscored the need for public health advocates to adopt sophisticated marketing strategies similar to those used in the private sector. She emphasised the power of appealing to emotions and lifestyle improvements rather than just presenting rational arguments about health benefits. Ms. Racioppi also discussed the need for humility and flexibility, acknowledging and learning from mistakes. She advocated for experimental approaches to introduce changes gradually and gain public acceptance, and pointed out the value of high-profile endorsements and clear communication to counteract disinformation and build broader support.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2 - Health-Driven Mobility: Bridging this nexus from Cities to the EU level



Thomas Lymes

Policy Advisor Mobility & Air Quality, Eurocities



Anna Krajinska

Manager Vehicle Emissions and Air Quality, Transport & Environment



Peter Defranschi

Head, Local Governments for Sustainability

Thomas Lymes emphasised the crucial role of EU policies in fostering healthier cities. Representing over 200 European cities in his work, he highlighted the importance of bridging local ambitions with EU-level decision-making. Mr. Lymes provided examples from cities like Stockholm and Paris, showcasing successful initiatives such as zero-emission zones and ambitious air quality plans. He stressed the need for a common EU framework with flexibility to accommodate diverse local realities, ensuring that cities, regardless of their starting point, can achieve significant improvements in air quality and mobility.

Anna Krajinska presented her organisation's efforts in decarbonising transport and reducing its environmental impact. She highlighted the growing issue of larger, heavier vehicles, particularly SUVs, which contribute significantly to air pollution and pose risks to pedestrian safety. Ms. Krajinska advocated for regulations at all government levels to address this trend, including EU-wide standards and local measures like weight-based taxation and parking charges. She emphasised the need for a coordinated approach to promote smaller, more efficient vehicles and improve urban air quality. Anna Krajinska also highlighted the importance of considering the struggles of marginalised groups in policymaking at all levels of government. She stressed that transport policies should include impact assessments and key performance indicators that specifically address the needs of these communities. She argued that private transport should be a last resort, advocating for incentives for shared and active mobility, affordable public transport, and shared mobility hubs in underserved areas. Additionally, she underscored the need for inclusive subsidy schemes for activities like bike purchases.

Peter Defranschi stressed the importance of health as a unifying and powerful narrative for urban sustainability in a politically divisive climate. He highlighted the role of multi-level governance in achieving sustainable outcomes. Mr. Defranschi also advocates for more regulatory power for local governments to implement health-promoting policies and endorses a One Health approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health.

