



National Seminar on Urban Mobility, Ljubljana, 17th of April 2008

National seminar dealing with the issues of urban mobility in relation to the Green Paper presented by the European Commission took place on 17th of April in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It was organized in the form of the public round table by the local NGO Institute for Policies of Space and supported by the City of Ljubljana. The panel consisted of representatives of the national Ministry of Transport, three key departments of the city administration, one distinguished transport planner and two NGOs dealing with urban mobility.

Each of the panelists first pointed out one key problem related to urban mobility in Ljubljana. The list of problems was comprised from »the usual suspects« including congestion, pollution, bad quality of public transport, bad conditions for cycling and lack of long-term urban transport policy. One key issue pointed out by several panelists was also the wide gap between the declared goals and plans on the one hand and their implementation on the other hand, which was continuously widening for the last 25 years.

The representatives of national and local authorities then described the on-going activities for tackling the identified problems within their field of responsibility. It turned out that many initiatives were started by different departments in the last year or two, which are not widely known in the general public yet, and they seem to be going in the right direction. Several departments of city administration are collaborating in implementing the actions, which are spanning from the preparation of sustainable urban transport plan and the preparatory activities for the collaboration within the functional region in the field of public transport, to the gradual implementation of Park&Ride system in the region and separate bus lanes in the city. More public spaces for pedestrians and cyclists are also planned and some form of congestion charging is also being considered.

Fears were raised immediately that piles of paper will be produced again while the major actions will not be implemented due to lack of funding. The response from the city authorities was that most of the actions are already included in the municipal budgets for the coming years. Substantial funds will also be available from the new CIVITAS ELAN project, in which Ljubljana is a lead city, and which is turning into the main framework for actions.

A major issue of the debate was also the relation between the municipal and national level in tackling urban mobility. Although the presented activities by the national Ministry of Transport for implementing integrated public transport seem to be relatively well coordinated with the municipal level or at least not in conflict, several major issues were raised by the panelists and the public regarding this relation nevertheless. Firstly, the national level does not really consider urban mobility as a noteworthy issue. Apart from the very welcome but relatively modest activities for integrating public transport systems at the national level there is hardly any other activity going on. Secondly, no investment in infrastructure for urban or regional public transport is planned at the national level for the period before 2013. Also, none of the substantial support from European Structural Funds in this period could be used for this purpose. Thirdly, national priorities in relation to the development of railway infrastructure are in direct conflict with the local ones, obstructing the development of regional public transport on the one hand and the urban development of the city on the other. Last but not least, political relations between the national level and the City of Ljubljana are at the lowest point ever.

Finally, a few other issues were also pointed out by the public. One was the inadequate communication activities of the city administration, causing lack of public awareness for the issues of urban transport. Another one was the importance of collaboration with other municipalities in the wider functional region on issues of transport as well as other common problems.