

# REDUCING CONGESTION FOR A HEALTHIER, WEALTHIER CITY

## Key information

- Location: **Slatina (Romania)**
- Population: **70 000**
- Involved in URBACT network: **CityMobilNet**
- More information: <http://urbact.eu/citymobilnet>



The municipality of Slatina has been developing a long-term strategy to clear up the city's roads and encourage public transport use. Thanks to participation in URBACT CityMobilNet network, they formed a local group to finalise their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan and received EU funding to build a fleet of hybrid buses.

Slatina is a city paralysed by traffic. In a 2017 survey, just 8.5% of residents travelled principally by public transport and 0.7% by bicycle, while 48% identified private automobiles as their main mode of travel. Air pollution, noise and a high frequency of accidents are among the most severe consequences. Yet congestion has implications on the local and regional economy too. Companies struggle to move resources through the urban area while consumers are stuck in slow-moving queues. Improving urban mobility has become an urgent priority for reasons of public health, but also to make the city more effective as a commercial and logistic centre.

Through participation in the URBACT CityMobilNet network, the municipality of Slatina took its first steps in building a more sustainable transport model. "Nobody had even thought about these questions," says Cristiana Serban, Public Manager at the Slatina City Hall. "What we were proposing was the city's first ever urban mobility document." The long-term goal was to develop a formal Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan in order to apply for European funding to kick-start longer-term transformation. Slatina's main expectation from URBACT was technical assistance in designing a plan, but also support in pitching the project.

### Identifying problems and solutions with a huge local group

After joining URBACT, the city set up a group of local stakeholders (URBACT Local Group) with the specific task of brainstorming towards the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. Far larger than expected, it gathered 97 people, from public officials in roads and transport, to security services, educational representatives, NGOs and the media. It also included local and international businesses whose operations would benefit from improved transport.



Evening in Esplanadă, central Slatina



Representatives of Slatina's new e-bike initiative

"We were particularly surprised by the number of citizens who chose to take part," says Ms Serban. "We had several non-specialists that came and participated in every single meeting."

The size and diversity of the group resulted in a broad identification of problems, yet this also brought challenges for rationalising the data. Using URBACT-recommended techniques, like defining problems (causes and consequences), learnt at transnational workshops with the CityMobilNet partner cities, the URBACT Local Group was able to identify shared grievances across different groups of stakeholders. This enabled them to create a full picture of the problems at hand. "We usually don't get the community point of view, just their reaction after enforcing measures," says Claudiu Dascalu, Head of the city's Street, Parking and Lighting Department. "URBACT was different. From my perspective, working with the people in the URBACT Local Group proved that good ideas can come from everywhere and not necessarily from specialists. These were effective meetings that resulted in a comprehensive set of actions."

### Educating the public

After months of preparation the municipality gathered the proposed actions together as part of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, which was completed ahead of schedule in October 2017. Among other things, the document outlined a strategy to improve the road system and open new bike lanes. Its priority, however, was to modernise public transport. Plans were outlined and costed for a fleet of hybrid buses, free wifi at all stops and a new transport management system. The municipality was able to secure regional operational programme funding of EUR 19 774 100 (article 5 of EU regulation on urban mobility) and is now working to implement the ambitious strategy.

"The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan is in full gear," confirms Birin Adrian-Ciprian, Head of the Urban Planning

Department of Slatina. "We've met with engineers, with road and mobility specialists to shape bike lanes and the public transport system. We are taking all the necessary steps to implement the measures identified by the stakeholders." According to projections from the municipality the implementation of the strategy should see a notable reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and a healthier, more environmentally friendly city. The minimum ambition is to double public transport use to 16% in the next decade – a modest target but one that would pave the way for further changes in the future.

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Claudiu Dascalu

### Traffic solutions transferred from partner cities

The impact of CityMobilNet did not begin and end with the mobility plan. The immediate need to reduce congestion will be aided by the construction of a central control room, where different traffic models can be integrated. This initiative was based on an example from partners in Aix-Marseille-Provence (FR). Slatina has also set up a project promoting walking to school, based on a successful practice shared by Bielefeld (DE). This is part of a more general effort to shift public attitudes to mobility through educational and cultural intervention. "Working with URBACT was a breath of fresh air," concludes Ms Serban, "we are used to thinking about mobility through national and local bureaucracy, but in this network we were inspired by soft measures to support our work. CityMobilNet really helped us speed things along."



The municipality of Slatina has been working to beautify the city's roads