

VISIONING SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY WITH USERS

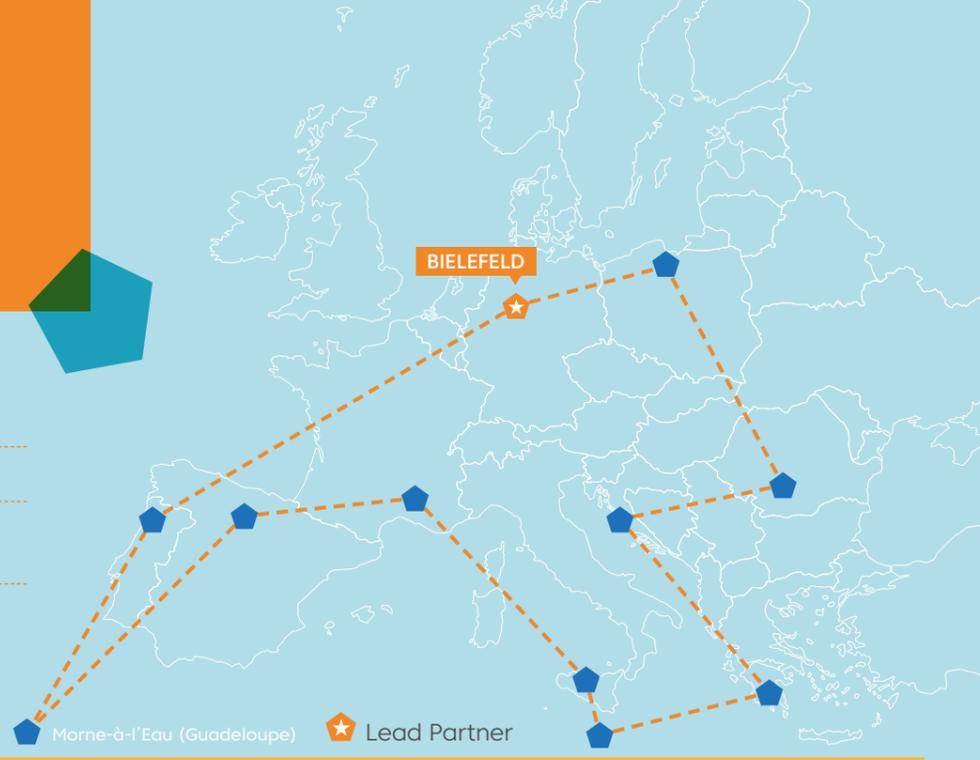
Key information

Location: **Bielefeld (Germany)**

Population: **340 000**

Involved in URBACT network: **CityMobilNet**

More information: <http://urbact.eu/citymobilnet>



Bielefeld has a strong tradition of environmental politics. With population growth and an intensive commuter culture putting demands on infrastructure, the municipality sought innovative tools from URBACT to design a new sustainable mobility plan.



A panorama of Bielefeld

There's a saying in Germany that Bielefeld doesn't exist. It's an affectionate joke, perpetuated by locals to celebrate their community's provincial reputation. In reality, this medium-sized city, located in North Rhine-Westphalia, is a centre of economy, science and culture for the surrounding region. Administrations from across the political spectrum have demonstrated a particular commitment to environmental principles. Public transport is efficient, and cycling a relatively common mode of transport.

With its high quality of services and planning techniques, the city has seen a population increase of over 10 000 since 2010. In addition, more than 80 000 people commute daily to Bielefeld, many of them by car. Improving transport infrastructure has subsequently emerged as a priority.

"Change in this sector cannot stop at replacing fossil fuels," insists Olaf Lewald, European Affairs and Project Manager at the City of Bielefeld. "We need to critically scrutinise

our previous habits and develop or refine new forms of cooperation, as well as new approaches of planning in order to address the big issues of the future, such as climate change."

Turning to URBACT for new ways to encourage greener travel

In order to formalise this process, the municipality identified the need for a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, to help change public behaviour in relation to mobility by incentivising green options. In 2015, as the city worked on a draft document, practitioners approached URBACT in search of innovative tools that might be integrated into the plan.

Given their relative experience of sustainable initiatives, Bielefeld became the Lead Partner of the CityMobilNet network. As a result, they had a privileged role in coordinating and defining the modes of collaboration within the network, and were able to share their expertise with cities that were approaching these questions for the first time, like Slatina (RO). Nonetheless, their main priority was to learn from far-off examples. "We joined the network from recognition that there is no uniform solution for all cities," says Mr Lewald. "We wanted to hear from others, meet international experts and exchange knowledge and good practices with other organisations from across Europe."

Southern EU cities inspired new campaigns for walking and cycling

During site visits to southern European cities like Marseille (FR), and Agii Anargyri Kamatero (EL), Bielefeld's newly formed group of local stakeholders (URBACT Local Group) discovered urban mobility problems they hadn't seen before – as well as creative solutions to learn from. In particular, they gained a greater appreciation of the value of 'soft approaches', like posters and cultural interventions, as mechanisms for influencing public behaviour. Inspired by their CityMobilNet partners, they organised a campaign in schools and other public institutions to encourage walking and cycling in the city. Bielefeld were also impressed by Braga's (PT) strategy to expand and improve pedestrian areas. Now the two cities are exchanging strategies on how to make their streets more friendly for the elderly and people with disabilities that limit their movement.

Collective drawing of an Integrated Action Plan on mobility

As well as these opportunities to work with other cities, URBACT introduced Bielefeld to new organisational tools, some of which have proved effective at a local level. The most successful was a meeting format called 'Future Workshop'. This innovative approach to organising strategic gatherings makes use of maps, statistics and results from a cross-section of previous studies as stimuli for building action plans and mission statements. In 2017



The municipality of Bielefeld is encouraging people to find alternatives to private vehicles

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Olaf Lewald

the municipality invited influential stakeholders from in and beyond the urban area to identify priorities together using this method. Participants included representatives from the cyclist and automobile-federations and public transport bodies, but also teachers, doctors and police personnel.

This was not the end of the process, however. Next the municipality drew up a seven-year Integrated Action Plan based on stakeholder feedback. In addition to greening commuters, this document outlines a commitment to make the city centre more attractive, ensure equal participation of all road-users and generally improve safety. Finally, these conclusions were validated in dialogue with high level political representatives. "Using the city parliament's committee for transport they liaised with all of the parties, no matter if they were part of the current government or not," confirms Claus Köllinger, Lead Expert for the network. Ultimately, this process enabled the participatory methods of CityMobilNet to be expressed as a political consensus. In recognition of this, in 2019 the Integrated Action Plan will be formalised into a strategic document, conforming to international Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan standards.

In recognition of their successful coordinating role in CityMobilNet, Bielefeld were selected in 2017 to share their expertise at the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership for Urban Mobility. This ongoing transnational initiative is exploring how EU funds might assist more effectively in improving urban mobility across all Member States.