

## Sustainable urban transport could save lives

Written by Karima Delli on 22 February 2016 in Opinion  
Opinion

The EU will be unable to play its full part in the global fight against climate change unless it transitions to sustainable urban mobility, warns Karima Delli.



Since COP21, sustainable urban mobility has been the topic on everyone's lips. This is why my report aims to redirect urban mobility towards sustainable modes of transport, with the goal of facing up to the challenges of our century: protecting the climate, the environment and our health, as well as promoting everyone's access to mobility.

At a time when the fight against global warming is a worldwide challenge, the fact that most journeys are taken by car is preventing the EU from fully playing its part. While some sectors, such as agriculture and industry, have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions, the transport sector's emissions have increased by 30 per cent since 1990.

Transport alone is responsible for a fifth of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, most of which comes from road traffic. To achieve its emissions targets by 2030, the EU must reverse this trend, particularly in cities, where 80 per cent of the world population will live by 2050.

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This is a social emergency. Mobility is a prerequisite for people's participation in city life, but it has also become a factor in inequality. In 2016, too many European citizens are forced to spend a large portion of their time and income on transport.

EU citizens, freight transport operators and other stakeholders must be involved in information sharing and in urban mobility consultations - this will make planning, development and decision-making more transparent and affordable.

The European Parliament believes that the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) should be an important element when considering granting funding to EU projects in the area of urban transport. They have an essential role to play in reaching EU targets on CO2 emissions, noise, air pollution and accident reduction.

We also face a health crisis. According to the UN, by 2050 pollution will be the leading cause of death worldwide. Major European cities are now used to pollution peaks, and every year fine particles, mainly emitted by diesel engines are responsible for around 430,000 premature deaths.

To avoid this scourge, the EU must adopt ambitious targets at all decision-making levels. Hence, priority must be given to SUMP that focus on clean transports such as tramways, cable cars, bikes and car sharing, while actively working in modal shift and inter-modality. That is why Parliament proposes doubling the share and use of public transport by 2030.

MEPs also call for ambitious bicycle use rates in urban areas by the 2030s, as well as a car-free Sunday each year throughout the EU. Policymakers must also guarantee the concentration of pollutants does not exceed the levels set by the World Health Organisation guidelines.

There needs to be a holistic approach to air pollution in European cities. Parliament calls on the Commission to implement effective measures to comply with the ambient air quality directive, by setting a clear timeframe for the implementation of real-world driving emissions testing for private vehicles.

We also face a climate crisis. That is why the report urges the Commission, the member states and local authorities to act to gradually reduce - by half - conventional petrol cars in cities by 2030 and for their disappearance by 2050.

This will allow the EU to achieve its targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2050. Alternative fuels are part of the solution, which is why we need new technologies such as, for example, second and third generation biofuels together with hydrogen-based renewables.

My report clearly highlights the importance of intelligent transport systems (ITS) as an opportunity to make mobility safer, more efficient, environmentally friendly and fluid.

By continuing to focus on cars, the current urban mobility model is endangering the lives of road users. Each year in Europe, 42,000 deaths are caused by road accidents, at an estimated cost of €45bn. The report therefore calls on member states and local authorities to review safe speed management before 2020 and to set up low emissions zones.

We should not forget the transport of goods can also contribute to congestion and environmental problems. It is time to launch a European freight recovery plan.

Whereas sustainable urban mobility requires investments for the sake of public interest, I propose to allocate a significant share of revenues from the Eurovignette to the improvement of urban mobility, according to the 'polluter pays' principle.

The Commission should invest in research projects and innovation related to urban transport, through its research framework programmes and the European strategic investment fund.

We need to face reality: alternative mobility is not just possible - it is indispensable. All transport systems must now be seen through the prism of sustainable development. This means constantly balancing the social, environmental and economic impacts of transport against the needs of both present and future generations. This report is a first step towards rethinking mobility and moving towards a better life in the cities of tomorrow.

## About the author

Karima Delli (Greens/EFA, FR) is Parliament's rapporteur on sustainable urban mobility

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