

Brussels, 15 September 2009

European Mobility Week 2009: 'Improving City Climates'

From 16 to 22 September 2009, hundreds of European towns and cities will participate in the eighth edition of European Mobility Week and invite their citizens to a wide range of activities promoting sustainable mobility. The 2009 campaign theme – Improving City Climates – underlines the importance of local level efforts to tackle climate change and improve quality of life through the promotion of alternative transport modes to the car such as cycling, walking, and public transport as well as schemes such car-sharing and car-pooling.

European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, responsible for transport, said: "The European Mobility Week is a clear example of how initiatives at the European level can encourage and facilitate local action. A new Action Plan on urban mobility that I intend to propose shortly follows exactly this line of thinking. The action plan will provide city authorities with set of practical tools to help them to address climate change and make urban mobility more sustainable."

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "Private cars are large emitters of the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, and they seriously affect the quality of urban life. It is therefore important for public authorities and citizens throughout the European Union to adopt more sustainable modes of transport. Doing so would help reduce the impact of climate change and improve living conditions in our towns and cities."

Improving City Climates

2009 should mark a crucial year in the fight against climate change, with world leaders aiming to reach agreement on a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen in December. With over 70% of the European population now living in urban areas, local authorities have significant potential to mitigate climate change, by designing public policies consistent with the global objectives and mobilising citizens to reduce their carbon footprints. Mobility week aims to raise awareness that while transport accounts for around a third of total energy consumption and over a fifth of greenhouse gas emissions, alternative modes of transport can make a significant difference to such figures.

Mobility Week highlights for 2009

In **Almada**, Portugal, on 18 September, citizens will receive "trips for trash" – free public transport tickets in exchange for recyclable materials such as cans, plastic bottles, and batteries. An open air cinema will offer free screenings of several well-known films about climate change.

Budapest, Hungary, is holding three car-free days on 19, 20 and 22 September. The UNESCO World Heritage-listed Andrassy Avenue will be closed to motorised traffic and transformed into a 'Living Street' complete with green grass on the pavements, sporting tournaments, street theatre, demonstrations of clean vehicles, bicycle races, and street painting for children.

Salzburg, Austria, is hosting an action day – Salzburg-Anders Mobil – to raise awareness of sustainable mobility and alternative transport modes, with demonstrations of electric vehicles, rickshaw rides through the city, and meetings with local environmental and transport NGOs.

Growing participation

Mobility week has seen a six-fold increase in the number of cities taking part since its launch in 2002. Last year, under the focal theme of 'Clean air for all', a record 2,102 local authorities signed the EMW charter and/or registered their activities on the campaigning site www.mobilityweek.eu. In terms of population, this translates into 220 million citizens in 39 countries potentially engaged by EMW 2008.

This was an increase of nearly 4% on 2007 rates, with a good participation of old and new EU Member States, Accession Countries and EEA/EFTA countries. EMW's successful campaigning model is also increasingly being adopted by countries outside Europe, including Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, with the major cities of Seoul, Rio de Janeiro, Taipei, Montréal, Yokohama and Quito all taking part in EMW 2008.

European Mobility Week is coordinated by three non-governmental organisations specialising in urban environmental issues: Eurocities, Energie-Cités and Climate Alliance. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Environment provides financial support and organises the annual European Mobility Week Awards for the best programme of activities and measures.

Lasting legacy

Mobility Week is intended to change people's travel behaviour by offering environmentally-friendly alternatives to the car. The public get the chance to sample alternative forms of transport and local authorities have the opportunity to test-run new services and infrastructure. A lasting legacy is ensured as participating cities are encouraged to launch at least one permanent practical measure. Recent examples include a money back guarantee for customers in Frankfurt if public transport is more than 10 minutes late and the city of Edinburgh's website (www.educatedtravel.info/) encouraging people to consider their travel options, especially if they are new to a school, college or university. In many cities, the highlight of European Mobility Week is a car-free day.

For further information visit the European Mobility Week website:

www.mobilityweek.eu