

# ACTION PLAN

co-shaped with the citizens  
promoting sustainable mobility  
in Thessaloniki, Greece.



### **Disclaimer**

The contents of this document reflect the views of the authors of the Transport Systems Research Group of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (TSRG/AUTH), as a PE4Trans project partner. The conclusions and outcome do not commit in any way the European Regional Development Fund, nor the Managing Authority of the Interreg Europe program.

This document is an English summary of the Action Plan elaborated and produced in Greek by the Transport Systems Research Group of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (TSRG/AUTh), which comprises the final and most important deliverable of the PE4Trans project. All involved project partners are expected to compose a relevant Action Plan adapted to the needs and challenges of their own regions, while incorporating the results and lessons learnt from the activities which took place during Phase 1. Then, the actions that are described in the Action Plan, hereafter, will be implemented under the auspices of the respective beneficiary during Phase 2 of the PE4Trans project.

In the frame of the participatory nature of the project, the content of the proposed actions was developed and co-shaped with the contribution of the citizens-Members of the Citizens' Panel for sustainable mobility, through specific methodologies and co-creation workshops that were carried out. Local Citizens' Panels were established in all five participating regions in the frame of this project.

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## ACRONYMS

The acronyms found in the text of this document in alphabetical order are as follows:

AP = Action Plan

AUTh = Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

CO<sub>2</sub> = carbon dioxide

GP = Good Practice

ESIF = European Structural and Investment Funds

ERDF = European Regional Development Fund

EU = European Union

JS = Joint Secretariat

PT = Public Transport

PTA = Public transport authorities

PTO = Public transport operators

RCM = Region of Central Macedonia

ROP = Regional Operational Programme

SUMP = Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

TheTA or OSETh = Thessaloniki's Transport Authority

TSRG/AUTh = Transport Systems Research Group of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Action Plan comprises the final output of Phase 1 of the European interregional cooperation projects which are being funded and implemented in the frame of the Interreg Europe program. It is produced by each region as a document providing details on how the knowledge gained from the consortium's cooperation will be put into action in order to improve the policy instrument addressed within the region.

Thus, all public/private bodies, that are involved as partners in the projects, are expected to produce such an officially endorsed document which should be adapted to the needs and challenges of their own regions, while incorporating the results and lessons learnt from the activities which took place during Phase 1. The actions that will be included in the local Action Plans will be implemented during Phase 2 of each project, which is the monitoring phase for partners, under the responsibility of the respective beneficiary. In practice, it can also include possible actions that started in Phase 1 or refer to other relevant policy instruments if needed.

The criteria for a comprehensive and successful Action Plan are:

- ✓ Adaptation to the project and partner responsible
- ✓ Clear link and relevance to the theme of the project
- ✓ Focus on the interregional character and inspiration derived through the interregional learning process, exchange of experiences
- ✓ Concrete actions and measurable results
- ✓ Link to the improvement of the policy instrument addressed (changes in justified cases)
- ✓ Policy endorsement of the plan, if needed

Complying with the above criteria, this document was drafted by the Transport Systems Research Group of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (TSRG/AUTH), as an Action Plan concerning the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki in Greece in the frame of PE4Trans project. It is a short English version of the Action Plan whose full version was produced in Greek by TSRG/AUTH team (national language). Its aim is to support local policy makers and decision takers at a strategic level, seeking to provide them with evidence-based proposals of actions, co-designed with citizens, that could lead to the promotion of sustainable mobility and change of citizens' transport habits towards more sustainable ones.

As mentioned above, the title of the project itself reflects the inclusive participatory approach it adopts: “PE4Trans – Public Engagement for Sustainable Public Transport”. Aligned with the guideline “for the people, by the people and with the people”, its main objective is to improve the regional policies by including citizens to the process of design of sustainable transport strategies with the view to change their daily habits incorporating findings of behavioural sciences. In other words, the project is focused on promoting sustainable mobility solutions to reduce significantly the carbon footprint and to make them more effective, both through a participative/engaging process and adopting insights from behavioural sciences. Co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the umbrella of the territorial cooperation Interreg Europe program 2014-2020, the project brings together a consortium of different partners coming from Poland, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, and Germany as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1 Partner consortium of PE4Trans project*

<b>A/A</b>	<b>PARTNER ORGANISATION</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>
<b>1</b>	Adam Mickiewicz University Foundation, Poznan Science and Technology Park (PSTP)	Poland
<b>2</b>	Kalisz-Ostrow Agglomeration Association (SAKO)	Poland
<b>3</b>	Coventry University Enterprises Ltd (CUE)	United Kingdom
<b>4</b>	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUP)	Greece
<b>5</b>	City of Valladolid (Valladolid)	Spain
<b>6</b>	District of Grafschaft Bentheim (Bentheim)	Germany

The participatory concept of PE4Trans project, which is one of its assets, focuses on developing and co-shaping the content of the actions of the final Action Plan with the contribution of the citizens-Members of the Citizens' Panel for sustainable mobility, through specific methodologies and co-creation workshops that were carried out. Local Citizens' Panels were established in all five participating regions in the frame of this

project. In order to achieve and maintain the high level of public engagement and citizens participation throughout the duration of the process, the same group of people was assigned to attend all the foreseen meetings. The success of such a panel depends strongly on the heterogeneity and inclusiveness achieved during the identification and selection of the mixture of participants. Thus, emphasis was given to the first stage of the invitation and recruitment. Each meeting, in the form of co-creation workshop, had a different aim, while being fed by the outcomes of the previous one. It led to a step further on the participatory planning of transport policy improvements. The following Figure 1 presents the process followed and the main objectives set per meeting/workshop. Due to the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic, the 4<sup>th</sup> panel was postponed and held virtually according to the restrictions for the protection of public health. During the 4<sup>th</sup> panel, a pool of actions was co-designed with the citizens, which comprised the basis of the elaboration of ideas for this Action Plan.

It worth mentioning at this point that a special logo was designed and created by TSRG/AUTh for the PE4Trans Citizens Panel in Thessaloniki, Greece (see Figure 2). It is used in any local Panel-related activity in order to nudge its Members and engage them more with their “mission” by developing the feeling of belonging in a team and being part of an official process. It is also used in the Facebook page that has been created and managed by TSRG/AUTh specifically for the Greek PE4Trans Panel<sup>1</sup>. This social media page is fed with regular posts which are based on the activities and outcomes of the Citizens’ Panel meetings in Thessaloniki, sustainable mobility, as well as on material derived from the project. During the semesters, emphasis was placed on the dissemination, and therefore, the followers of this Facebook page at local level have been radically increased, exceeding by far the initial expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/SumvouleutikiEpitropiPolitonPE4Trans/>

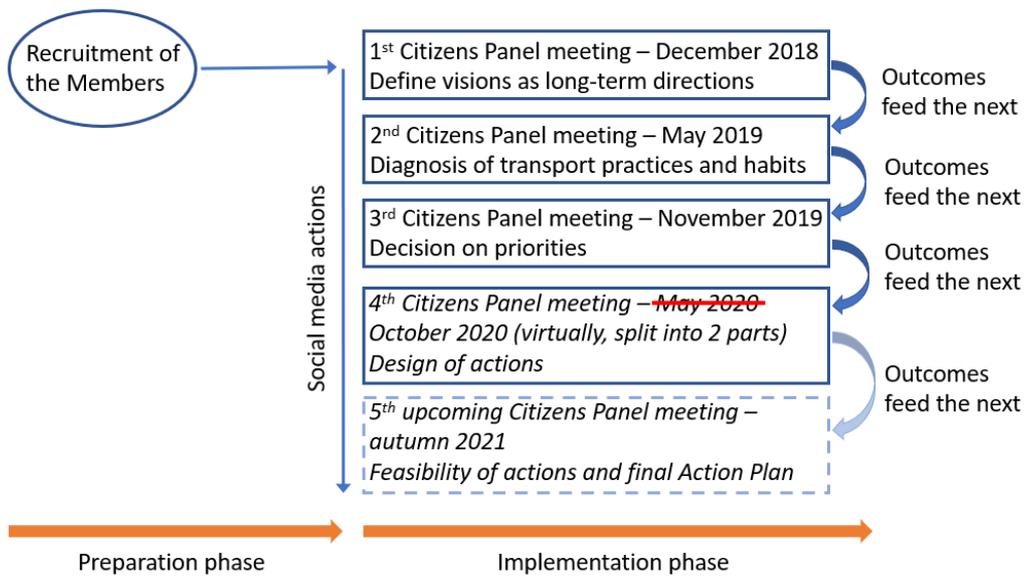


Figure 1 Process followed and main objective of each Citizens' Panel meeting



Figure 2 Logo specially designed by TSRG/AUTH for the Citizens' Panel for sustainable mobility in Thessaloniki, Greece

Apart from the public engagement panels' initiatives, all the regional and especially the interregional activities implemented in the frame of PE4Trans project, were intended to provide knowledge and share inspiration for the final deliverable of Action Plan. As a result, AUTH team was able to see the situation in other European regions, to learn through the exchange of experience process, as well as to gain useful insights towards the improvement of policy instrument, while following the steps in line with the consortium's guidelines:

- Baseline policy report: Project partners in each territory provide baseline policy description in a form of short report on existing policy instruments for sustainable transport and their rationale. Baseline policy reports feed the interregional capacity building workshop. It is an analysis of the current state of the regional transport innovation framework and mapping of the relevant ecosystem.
- Questionnaire survey: with 50 responses received per territory for the participatory diagnosis of mobility related behaviours and their carbon footprint
- Territorial reports: mapping behavioural practices accompanied by relevant facts on travelers' profiles and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- Citizens Panels meetings: meetings in the form of co-creation workshops per semester, to involve citizens in the design of improved transport policies and influence their mobility habits into more sustainable ones. Local stakeholder meetings, individual interviews with representatives of key transport stakeholders and other dissemination and feedback events
- Good Practices: GPs identification and selection, followed by the exchange of territorial Good Practices among partners and evaluation of their potential transferability. It was an important part of the exchange of experience process.
- Interregional project meetings: Interregional meetings per semester for enhancing the exchange of knowledge, experience and know-how through study visits, capacity building workshops, presentations.
- Schedule of PE4Trans study visits: a mini interregional workshop was realized for each partner along with the identification of GPs from all other partners every time aiming to provide him with experiences that answer the challenges and needs he stated. After the realization of all mini workshops, the development and agreement of the schedule of PE4Trans study visits took place.
- Study visits: 12 were conducted in total in the frame of the project. AUTH participated as visiting partner in 6 of them, while AUTH was the organizer and host partner in other 6 out of the 12 in total during which Greek Good Practices were presented and analysed.
- Meetings with the owner of the policy instrument addressed: Meetings and communication with the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM) as the beneficiary

of the policy instrument stated in the Application Form. Additional meetings and close cooperation with the Thessaloniki's Transport Authority (TheTA or else OSETh) as the beneficiary of the new policy instrument addressed by the project after JS' approval during semester 6.

- Local dissemination event: Local dissemination events were foreseen to promote sustainable mobility and engage citizens with the project's goals. AUTH organized and realized a successful online event focused on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mobility habits, where we stand now, what can be done to overcome the challenges, and how to turn it to an opportunity for active mobility. The title of the event was "Sustainable Mobility and Coronavirus: Crisis or Opportunity?", with lots of invited speakers as experts and lots of participants. The report was elaborated in Greek and English afterwards due to the high interest shown by people abroad. Both the project's website and the Interreg Europe COVID-19-dedicated page published the event.
- Elaboration and compilation of the Action Plan: Exploitation of the insights, knowledge, experience, and feedback gained from all the above in order to set up the draft and final Action Plan per project partner. It is the main outcome of Phase 1 which is going to be implemented during Phase 2 of the PE4Trans project.
- Peer reviews of Action Plans and External experts' reviews of Action Plans (to be implemented as delayed activity in Semester 7 with the approval of JS during the mid-term review meeting)

An analysis of the elaborated and finally defined actions follows, containing all the information needed according to the fields of the AP template of Interreg Europe program.

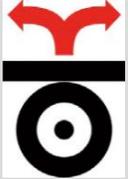
The unprecedented severe situation shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic changed the initial planning of the PE4Trans project as several activities could not be carried out due to restrictions. Since March 2020, the pandemic hit in the middle of the interactive participatory process with the citizens on identifying motivators for encouraging the use of public transport instead of private cars. The main challenges were to adapt both the exchange of experience activities to online format and the intermediate results since all the advice from experts were discouraging the use of public transport. Consequently, certain justified activities were approved by the Joint Secretariat to be

delayed and implemented in Semester 7 (till November 2021). One of them is the Action Plan produced by each partner, since it comprises the final outcome of Phase 1. Despite the extension approved by JS, its implementation is due by the official end date of the PE4Trans project, on 31st of May 2023.

## PART I

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The general information provided in Table 1 below, are based on the requirements of the Action Plan template of the Interreg Europe Program, in the frame of which the PE4Trans project is implemented. The Interreg Europe Program is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

General information for the document	
<b>Project:</b>	PE4Tans - Pubic Engagement for Sustainable Public Transport
<b>Project in national language:</b>	Συμμετοχή κοινού για βιώσιμες δημόσιες συγκοινωνίες..
<b>Partner organization concerned:</b>	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Transport Systems Research Group (TSRG/AUTH) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;">   </div>
<b>Country:</b>	Greece
<b>NUTS 2 region:</b>	Region of Central Macedonia
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## PART II

### POLICY CONTEXT

According to the template provided by the Interreg Europe program which contains the minimum information for regional Action Plans in the frame of the European interregional cooperation projects, there are three policy instruments categories that may be influenced:

- (i) Investment for Growth and Jobs program
- (ii) European Territorial Cooperation program
- (iii) Other regional development policy instrument

Brief description of the policy context and the way the Action Plans should contribute to improve the policy instruments are also required.

The policy instrument that was initially declared to be addressed by the PE4Trans project in the case of PP4-AUTh, was the Regional Operational Program of Central Macedonia 2014-2020 (ROP RCM 2014-2020). It belongs to the above category (i) Investment for Growth and Jobs program, according to the Application Form.

However, the sudden outbreak and the wide spread of COVID-19 pandemic throughout Europe influenced massively the lives of citizens as well as the policy making process on all levels, and especially on transport sector. The severe peculiar situation that COVID-19 shaped not only in terms of mobility, but also in terms of general economy and growth, changed the planning of the Region of Central Macedonia (RCM), Greece, which was seriously hit by the second coronavirus wave in autumn 2020. As it is reasonable, the initial planning of RCM and the money allocation of ROP had to change addressing the emerging need for immediate adaptation to the unprecedented conditions. During an online meeting with high-level representatives of the Region of Central Macedonia, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, AUTh team was informed that the financial resources of the Region, in particular the remaining budget of the ROP (*initial policy instrument*), are going to be allocated for the survival of the enterprises and for tackling any serious challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreaks both in spring 2020&1 and in autumn-winter 2020.

Taking into account all the important factors and focusing on the greatest capitalization of the project's results in the area, AUTh decided that it is better to tackle the "Strategic

Plan for development and operation” of Thessaloniki’s Transport Authority (TheTA) in the PE4Trans Action Plan. The aim is to ensure its impact in the most effective way regarding sustainable mobility in the area as well as to sustain the lessons learnt during the exchange of experience process. After receiving the positive answer of TheTA and the relevant approval of the Joint Secretariat, the present Action Plan addresses the abovementioned strategic document containing the directions and targets set by the organization, which belongs to the category (iii) Other regional development policy instrument.

The rationale of the whole “Strategic Plan for development and operation” (*new policy instrument*) coincides with the whole PE4Trans rationale and all its objectives. 5 out of the 16 strategic targets of the document refer to the Organization itself in terms of structure, funding, innovation, collaborations, and projects, while the rest of them (11 out of 16) are about the three elements of sustainable transport, meaning economic, social and environmental sustainability, and about the attractiveness of the transport modes in Thessaloniki. “Sustainable and attractive mobility for everyone” is the vision of TheTA after all, which indicates its high relevance to the project. Thus, all these strategic targets can be considered to be linked to PE4Trans, while the most relevant ones which are fully associated to the project’s pillars are:

- ❖ **Strategic Target 10:** Ensuring service provision to all citizens → inclusiveness, public engagement
- ❖ **Strategic Target 11:** Ensuring environmentally friendly transport by reducing the energy footprint and CO2 emissions → low-carbon economy
- ❖ **Strategic Target 15:** Enhancing the feeling of safety and attractiveness of transport modes for all passengers → behavioral change, and recognized need during 4<sup>th</sup> local Citizens Panel

The structure and rationale of this policy instrument are a bit different than a Regional Operational Program. For instance, it is not like ROP which allocates the budget connecting calls under specific targets and then evaluates the proposals received under each call to provide the funding to the successful bids. This policy instrument summarizes the guidelines under which TheTA is going to focus by allocating money, implementing projects, producing official documents and/or statements, drafting new procedures for urban transport, etc. Based on the available funding, the Organization decides the activities to be implemented according to the identified needs as well as according to the guidelines of the Strategic Plan, after the approval of the Council.

In conclusion, TheTA's general (day-to-day) operation follows this document, thus, any influence on the organization's activities or target groups or priorities, means influence on the policy instrument.

Regarding the new beneficiary, the Thessaloniki's Transport Authority coordinates the transport system of the wider area of Thessaloniki, including the urban agglomeration and main sub-urban areas surrounding it, with 1.012.297 residents in an area of 11 Municipalities. It is supervised by the Greek Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation. Its mission is to develop, coordinate and monitor the urban public transport as well as sea transport services, in the Regional Unit of Thessaloniki, via the provision of integrated, high-quality transport based on the principles of sustainable mobility. To ensure the preservation of the vision of sustainable and attractive transport for everyone, it sets urban resilience as a priority, by adopting new technologies and possibilities, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), and following anthropocentric approach with the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) and the Mobility as a Service (MaaS).

It worth mentioning that the CEO of the Transport Authority is Mr. Yiannis Toskas, who has already been familiarized with the PE4Trans project and has expressed his genuine interest for the work done within PE4Trans consortium, through his active participation at the project meeting in Valladolid in February 2020, as a Greek stakeholder invited by AUTH. In addition, a representative of TheTA organization, Mr. Sam Salem, attended the PE4Trans online study visit in May 2021, during which two Good Practices of their interest were analyzed. This way the Authority has already been involved in order to find inspiration through the interregional meetings and exchange of experience and integrate lessons learnt into actions for changing travel perceptions and behaviour, shifting citizens from private cars towards more sustainable ways of transport.

## Policy improvement

Improved governance in terms of developing and following a more structured, continuous, sustainable, and cohesive approach to strengthen public engagement and widen the audience reached, are the main targets set by the team while drafting the

Action Plan. These targets can lead to considerable increase of sustainable mobility share since the more people receive the “message” and build relationship of trust with the Organization, the more likely they are to be influenced to change their behaviors and adopt new transport habits. In addition, they can achieve improved governance

- (i) by establishing a pattern of more sustained mutual communication with the citizens towards their engagement with sustainable mobility (**Action 1**)
  - The main aim is to provide the basis in order to enhance TheTA’s openness to the public in a more structured way and, thus, help the Authority improve its governance with a longer-term perspective. It will influence positively the way the Organization works. Also, it will improve the brand image, build relationship of trust between TheTA and the citizens of Thessaloniki, and lead to influence on behaviors after all.
- (ii) by developing effective coordination habits for implementing regular dissemination activities open to the public (**Action 2**)
  - The cultivation of such culture within TheTA will influence positively the way they work, and the way things are being done until today. Small changes of designing activities will be introduced to the responsible departments aiming to incorporate effectively the public engagement aspect into their mission. These changes and improvements, which may be brought about by the Action Plan, will be visible both during the implementation phase as well as after the 2-year period of Phase 2.

Consistency and adequate structure on public engagement and sustainable mobility are the values that we want to cultivate within TheTA’s approach and culture since it has been proven that they are crucial in this domain.

Through these two actions, TheTA will be able to realize how important the consistency is towards influencing citizens’ mobility habits. The foundations of its new approach on how consistently to proceed with public engagement can be laid on the conclusions of this Action Plan. This way its general operation, culture, mindset, and policy will be improved with the support of the PE4Trans project.

In principle, TheTA places emphasis on changing citizens’ mobility habits and behaviour. It realized that increasing the impact on the citizens’ behaviours and habits towards sustainable transport is necessary to fully exploit the “hard” investments, especially infrastructure development, indicatively mentioning the new bicycle paths

developed as a COVID-19 measure. Thus, they should be definitely combined with “soft” activities, e.g., provision of adequate information, awareness of citizens, in order to achieve the goals of the instrument and to reduce the private car usage shifting travelers to other more environmentally friendly modes of transport.

Having recognized the importance of public engagement on adding value to the results, any relevant future measure or action taken by the entity on awareness raising and dissemination, in line with the targets of the policy document, can be enhanced and better coordinated with the contribution of PE4Trans local Action Plan. The two Actions presented hereafter, aim to a more systematic engagement which will ensure that the citizens would make better informed choices in terms of urban mobility, since they will be familiarized with sustainable transport understanding its valuable benefits. Therefore, improved policy governance of TheTA is planned to be achieved.

In addition, new activities will be implemented which would not be foreseen without the contribution of our project. They will reinforce TheTA’s relationship with the citizens, empower its network, and enhance its image and status. Finally, better and more synergies with other organizations and stakeholders will be explored and promoted through the implementation of the PE4Trans Action Plan, as it has been identified needed during Phase 1.

TheTA’s general operation follows the policy instrument “Strategic Plan for development and operation”, thus, any influence on the organization’s activities or target groups or priorities, means influence on the policy instrument.

Overall, the two actions hereafter will support the realization of TheTA vision to achieve sustainable and attractive mobility for everyone and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

### New self-defined indicator

Number of participants and/or citizens reached = 300

## PART III

### DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

**ACTION 1: Exploitation of social media networks for the engagement of citizens and promotion of sustainable mobility**

#### **Relevance to the PE4Trans project**

The idea of exploiting social media was included in the pool of actions co-shaped with the citizens during the 4<sup>th</sup> virtual Citizens' Panel meeting in Thessaloniki in the frame of the PE4Trans project. The Members of the Panel recognized the great influence that the social media have on people and especially on teenagers. After that, the interregional exchange of experience process of the project played an important role for drafting and specifying it.

So, the action of exploiting the social media accounts of TheTA and conducting activities such as social media campaigns, challenges, transport #hashtags, etc., was inspired by the relevant *Good Practice* [«#retofotograficoAUVASA - Social media campaign fostered by AUVASA»](#) coming from Valladolid partner. The details of the nature and implementation of the action that has been included in ATh's Action Plan were collected during the online study visit which was dedicated to the presentation of this GP on 27.5.2021.

A representative of TheTA organization, Mr. Sam Salem, attended the PE4Trans online study visit in May 2021, during which this Good Practice of their interest was analyzed. He had the opportunity to gather knowledge first-hand and understand the key points of success which were shared among participants.

The invited representative of Valladolid's urban public transport company, called Autobuses Urbanos de Valladolid S.A. (AUVASA), Mr. Adrián Rodríguez, presented in detail the social media campaign in the form of "photo challenge" on Facebook and Twitter which was promoted during the European Mobility Week 2020 in the city. People completing the challenge were awarded with vouchers for free public transport for 1 month. A one-hour ceremony was organized for that reason.

Mr. Adrian Rodriguez mentioned that no Marketing or Social Media Department is needed for such campaigns, since they do not have one, which is also the case for TheTA in Greece. The employees of the company can implement it easily, which is an important note for us and our AP beneficiary.

The whole duration was one week, with a different challenge announced each day and completed with another winner daily. The award was a monthly travel card for public transport per winner per day. Thus, one day comprised one different challenge, e.g., “take a photo of a bus in front of a historical monument of the city”, “take a photo of you using the bus”, “take a photo of an articulated bus”, “take a photo of a bus anywhere in the city”, etc. This way they found that more people were engaged due to the variety of interesting challenges to be completed, and the users waited for the new thing to search in the city. The above is a useful conclusion which can be considered as a **lesson learnt** and integrated in AUTH’s Action Plan.

As he highlighted, it is important to combine this campaign with a series of other activities to draw the attention of the citizens, which is a **lesson learnt** by their experience. In fact, AUVASA has carried out some different challenges and activities during the European Mobility Week focusing mainly on the World Car Free day, on 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. They were briefly explained to the participants of the study visit.

He also stressed out how their collaboration with the local online newspaper of Valladolid, Tribuna, supported the dissemination and success of the activities, answering to a relevant question posed by AUTH team during the online study visit. Thus, the important role of synergies derived as a **lesson** from their experience. Also, the information of users at least 15 days before the challenges is necessary, e.g., through posters in buses and bus stops, or via web.

It was a successful action with great social impact measured during the days of the social media challenges. The number of followers in social networks were seriously increased, as were the twitter displays of the public transport company. As a result, the visualization and visits of social media pages were increased with a highlight on the World Car Free day, 22.9.2020, which was the final day of #retofotograficoAUVASA challenge, as well as on 26.9.2020 where another social media activity took place.

The social media campaign by AUVASA is a Good Practice that can provide inspiration to PP4-AUTH and TheTA beneficiary in Greece, as interest towards that direction has already been expressed. In addition, it is easily transferable. It is a low-cost practice

with measurable social impact as derives from the abovementioned indicators which are presented in Fig.3. Consequently, it can effectively promote sustainable mobility and can engage citizens with its principles by making it a game of capturing and uploading the photo requested each day.

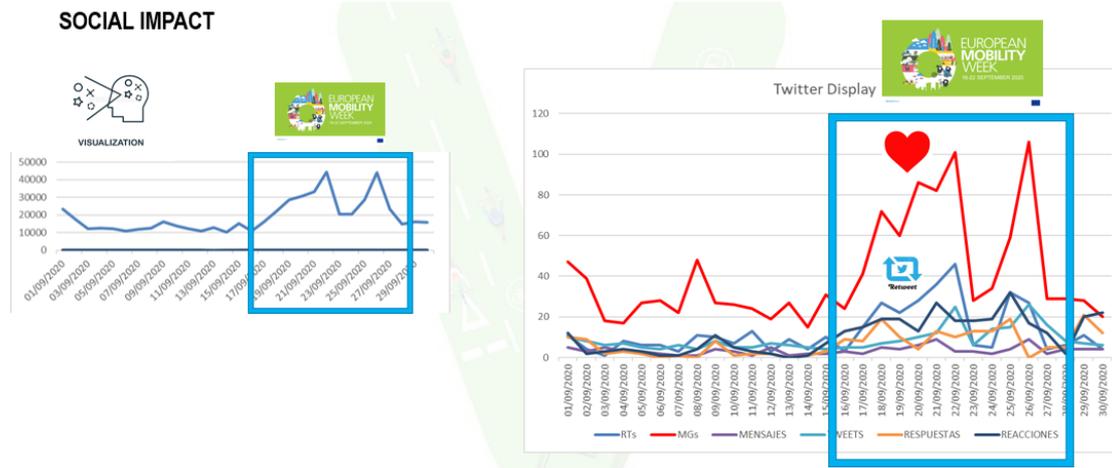


Figure 3 Social impact results of the social media campaign in Valladolid (photo challenges)

### **Nature of the action**

The importance of social media and hashtags on creating trends nowadays is widely proven on several sectors. This can and should definitely be leveraged for promoting sustainable mobility effectively. According to a research conducted in Greece in 2017, information that users can access through social media may affect to some extent the way they travel. Understanding the influence of social media on the behavior and choices of commuters can be a valuable tool for mobility managers to alter the trip characteristics for various activities such as work, but mainly trips for entertainment, shopping, etc.

However, TheTA did not exploit social media so far. It has little experience on that domain without owing relevant accounts until recently. TheTA’s new accounts count only few followers, less than the Facebook page which is dedicated to the Greek PE4Trans Citizens Panel and is managed by AUTH team. Thus, it is necessary to promote and empower them properly through the focused online activities in the frame of this Action 1 in order to obtain more followers, have access to more target groups and influence behaviors. By addressing to a wider audience through social media, TheTA will be able to encourage more citizens to use sustainable transport modes in

the city. PE4Trans Action Plan will support the Authority and assist towards that direction.

This Action 1 was drafted with the view to **influence the Organization's governance** by establishing a pattern of more sustained mutual communication with the citizens towards their engagement with sustainable mobility. The main aim was to enhance TheTA's openness to the public in a more structured way and, thus, help the Authority improve its governance with a longer-term perspective.

The implementation of this Action 1 can lead to **measurable results** such as citizens participation on online contests, reactions on posts, likes/shares/comments, photos uploaded, people reached by the campaign. The measurement can be accurately performed through online statistics which are gathered and stored on social media accounts and are available to their administrators. So, TheTA will be able to measure the impact achieved through the exploitation of social media channels, as well as the audience reached. These are small steps towards influencing behaviors through the constant public engagement of Action 1, which is also one of the main objectives of PE4Trans project. The more people will receive "messages" as stimuli for sustainable mobility via their "connection" with TheTA brand, the more likely they are to change their behaviors and adopt new transport habits influenced by social media campaigns and constant virtual messages.

The objectives of the action are the following:

- ✓ To provide the basis for a more structured and sustained public engagement through mutual communication
- ✓ To enhance TheTA's openness to the public and the brand image
- ✓ To make sustainable mobility a new trend, e.g., using the bicycle, or walking in the city, or using the bus alone/as a company
- ✓ To promote sustainability and engage citizens through social media which is an interactive direct communication channel
- ✓ To enable teenagers to gain confidence in traveling alone in the city and enhance their feeling of independence by approaching them in their own terms since they love social media

Taking into account the inspiration of the GP from Spain, social media campaigns will be launched by the beneficiary as a means of effective public engagement on transport towards behavioral change. The campaigns will be organized per semester and will include, indicatively and not binding, e.g., (i) a week of different "challenges" with

photos and #hashtags, (ii) establishing transport #hashtags among the citizens while posting a transport-related post, (iii) online contest "The most beautiful mask" for the design of a coronavirus protection mask on the subject of sustainable mobility, (iv) campaign with photos and short interviews-statements of distinguished personas of Thessaloniki using the bike or walking, in the role of influencers, (v) photo safari for pointing out e.g. obstacles to the way to school, for little cyclists with QR codes and parents' social media accounts.

Following the lesson learnt through the social media campaign GP, it will be accompanied by additional activities, either physical or virtual, such as (vi) regular posts on social media in the meantime of the realization of the campaigns, (vii) dissemination of the results through local press, TV channels, and social media groups and pages, (viii) on-site information under kiosks hi-jacking other events which are planned in the city, (ix) online demonstration of available PT equipment, bus disinfection process, location of shared bicycles stations and use of the system, proper protection measures throughout the "travel chain", (x) live streaming on social media of the award ceremony dedicated to the winners of the challenges.

In order to reach the different levels of society and involve even people who are unfamiliar with technology, more diverse forms of additional activities to spread the information will be used as mentioned above. It is our goal to include also those with limited abilities to use all the higher-level social media tools, such as hashtags, and engage them to participate reaching the message of the campaigns. In general, the inclusiveness of different target groups will be realized. A more specific definition of the group, the communication channel/method used, the message addressed per group, will be developed during the preparation of each campaign.

In addition, the cooperation with different stakeholders will be explored as it will contribute in disseminating the information to a wider spectrum of target groups. Shop owners, entrepreneurs, chambers, and civic society will be involved.

### **Stakeholders involved**

- ❖ Thessaloniki's Transport Authority, as the beneficiary of the Action Plan and responsible for the implementation of Action 1
- ❖ Public Transport Operator (PTO)
- ❖ Citizens who are either users or non-users of public transport
- ❖ Local Authorities engaged to participate and promote the campaigns

- ❖ NGOs, clubs, schools, etc. engaged to promote the activities and the online campaigns to their members
- ❖ Media channels to widen the target groups reached
- ❖ Potential sponsors of the prizes to be provided

### **Timeframe**

At least one social media campaign per semester is expected to be realized and ran by TheTA until the end of Phase 2 of PE4Trans project, which is on 31.5.2023.

During this period, the aim is to prove the effectiveness and impact of media networks on transport trends with little effort needed by the organization's side. ATh's goal through this Action Plan is to mobilize Thessaloniki's Transport Authority to continue exploiting social media and realizing such campaigns/activities over the next years, after the end of Phase 2, with the view to promote public engagement on sustainable mobility towards behavioral change.

### **Costs & Funding sources**

The costs refer to the human resources needed for the design, preparation, dissemination, and management of the different aspects of Action 1. They will be covered by TheTA's own operational funds. No additional Interreg Europe funds will be required. Any prizes for the winners will be provided by contacting relevant local sponsors.

## ACTION 2: Bicycle rallies towards familiarization and public engagement with active mobility

### Relevance to the PE4Trans project

The idea of realizing regular bicycle rallies for enhancing the governance of public engagement of TheTA derived from the interregional exchange of experience process in the frame of PE4Trans project. Action 2 was inspired by the relevant *Good Practice* coming from Poland which was about “*bicycle rallies as a promotional campaign including three elements: savings, health benefits and environmental protection*”. The project’s study visit on 19.05.2021 was dedicated to this GP during which all the details for its implementation and potential of transfer to other regions were provided by representatives of the Kalisz Ostrow Agglomeration entity.

A very interesting presentation was delivered and then, the representatives answered ATh’s questions about understanding better the way of realization and the factors of success of the 49 rallies which have been organized in the agglomeration so far. The concept of rallies relies on the already popular notion of using the bicycle for recreation. A useful **lesson learnt** was the importance of highlighting the safety both of the infrastructure and of the rally itself while disseminating it. This way the citizens feel more confident to participate and parents feel more relaxed to take their children with them to a bicycle rally like this. Securing the organization with the engagement of police, or firemen volunteers, or having an ambulance stand-by and a doctor for the elderly, enhances the safety feeling and can lead to higher participation.

The fun of participation and going on a ride all together was the biggest motivation for citizens to participate in Poland. Thus, the **lesson** derived is that the fun and joy perceived should be used as an argument for them, along with the healthy lifestyle, thematic motivators such as sports, culture, charity, environment-friendly activity, etc.

Towards that direction, according to the **experience shared** by the Polish partners in the frame of the GP, advertising each bicycle rally much earlier than its realization is key. Media were contacted even one month before each event, and the dissemination took place through every possible communication channel stressing out the abovementioned main arguments of safety and joy.

In fact, Polish GP consists of a number of regular bicycle rallies with a variety of different themes and addressing specific target groups. According to the GP owner,

the thematic rallies draw citizens attention more easily, provide a motive for them, and they are widely disseminated through relevant clubs, NGOs, schools and stakeholders involved. For example, there are rallies as part of bigger campaigns, rallies for nature lovers, for history lovers, for schools, for families, for seniors, for charity, and many more, indicatively mentioning the titles: “Time for your move”, “Trail of Wooden Churches”, “With a preschooler on a bike”, “Welcome autumn”, “Bicycle Festival”, etc. In many cases the bicycle rally was accompanied with additional activities at a certain point, such as reaching a hill for bird watching, reaching a point for planting trees, workshops for children, reaching monuments and learning about their history, and many other ideas which are particularly interesting and would not have been thought to be implemented in Greece without the PE4Trans partnership. This indicates the **added value** on transferring ideas regarding public engagement on sustainable mobility that has been achieved through study visits and Interreg Europe project.

All the above are important **lessons learnt** which have been integrated in this Action Plan, however they would not have been exploited by AUTH and TheTA if it weren't for PE4Trans project and interregional learning.

Another reason for drafting this action was the results of the territorial report on behavioral profiles which was conducted in the frame of PE4Trans project. One of the conclusions and **lessons derived** was that the profile of the category “Mainly cyclists” was less than 5% of the sample, less than all participating regions. As it became clear in the survey, the bicycle is not widely used in Thessaloniki. Safety feeling, lack of infrastructure, parking spaces, were the main reasons. Apart from “hard” investments, familiarization with the transport mode as well as with the bike sharing system is necessary. The unsafe feeling and concerns may be due to dealing with the unknown. By addressing the unknown factor and getting citizens to know the bicycle infrastructure and culture, the situation may be improved, and behaviors may be changed. Change of mobility habits may start with leisure activity, get acquainted and later on can expand the use of bicycle to other areas of life, e.g., work, shopping, school, as it was discussed during the interregional project workshop in February 2020 in Valladolid with the participation of the external experts on behavioral sciences.

Many aspects which were co-shaped with the citizens and derived from the 4<sup>th</sup> Citizens Panel, were integrated while drafting this action.

### **Nature of the action**

The COVID-19 momentum was in favor of active mobility all over the world. Many European countries, including Greece, benefitted from this occasion and investments were made on new bicycle infrastructure and paths which were put into traffic. The same applied in Thessaloniki too. Temporary and permanent measures were taken in favor of bicycle. However, it has been identified that many citizens may not be aware of the whole network and its connections with certain points of interest in the city. Towards that direction, a new map has been developed with the cooperation of TheTA and the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Including all the old and new bicycle lanes, it was released on this year's World Bicycle Day, on 3.6.2021, to promote them to the citizens and tourists. It comprises a great opportunity for public engagement on active mobility and influencing transport choices. Although the map has been printed and is available in different spots, such as the City Hall, the airport, etc., no other dissemination and distribution events are foreseen to take place.

This Action 2 of the PE4Trans Action Plan was drafted with the view to **improve the participatory culture within TheTA** and tackle the public engagement around sustainable mobility which is at a low standard now. The cultivation of such culture within TheTA will influence positively the way they work and the way things are being done until today. Also, it will improve the brand image, build relationship of trust among TheTA and the citizens of Thessaloniki, and lead to influence on behaviors after all. Small changes of designing activities will be introduced to the responsible departments aiming to incorporate effectively the public engagement aspect into their mission. These changes and improvements, which may be brought about by the Action Plan, will be visible both during the implementation phase as well as after the 2-year period of Phase 2 leading to the improvement of the Organization's management.

Small but regular changes lead to behavioral change which also leads to policy improvements. By achieving large participation, the need for relevant infrastructure will be highlighted and the pressure to the responsible organizations will be succeeded.

Through this Action 2, communication and dissemination activities will be coordinated in order to promote and familiarize the citizens with the network of new bicycle paths. The best way to do so is the experiential learning, therefore the bicycle rallies are considered the most suitable activity to be implemented.

Also, the culture and history of the area is limitless and there are many important monuments and points of interest along the bicycle network. So, promotion of the culture along with the use of sustainable transport modes by coordinating and realizing thematic cultural routes, under the theme “Heritage routes for all”, can be of great success as it was in the case of Polish GP.

The main objectives of the action are:

- ✓ Coordinate effectively all the regular dissemination activities regarding active mobility and cultivate the relevant culture in TheTA
- ✓ Raise awareness regarding active mobility
- ✓ Familiarize citizens with bicycles and bicycle infrastructure to be able to use it for their daily trips, either for recreational purposes or not
- ✓ Promote new bicycle infrastructure released recently
- ✓ Test and receive feedback on the new paths by the participants
- ✓ Way to socialize while keeping the protection measures against COVID-19, promote outdoor activities, enjoy cultural routes
- ✓ Highlight health benefits and an active lifestyle
- ✓ Engage citizens and encourage them to invite others to the next rally which will be organized in the city

In the frame of Action 2, thematic rallies will be organized in the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki under a specific theme each time in order to act as motivators to attract citizens’ interest and address many different target groups, e.g., (i) “Get to know” new available infrastructure - Promotion of the new map demonstrating new bicycle paths, (ii) Cultural bicycle rally with a tour guide, (iii) Bicycle rally for children in the form of a treasure hunt among schools for little cyclists and parents with QR codes, (iv) “Bring a friend” bicycle rally, (v) Charity rally, (vi) Family rally, etc.

As a complementary action, a stand will be set up at the starting or end point of the rallies with bicycle map distribution, active information of citizens, and provision of user’s feedback via a questionnaire. Ideas for next rallies will be gathered on-site through post its on a board in the form of short participatory workshop.

It will be investigated to combine bicycle rallies with pedestrian rallies, walks, other outdoor activities, depending on the case, the aim of each event and the target group. For instance, among others, there is the idea of involving people with disabilities, retired population near their neighborhoods, employees of transport stakeholders and public Authorities, children’s attractions, cultural walks and routes.

Dissemination activities will take place through social media pages before and after each rally, inviting participants as well as promoting public engagement, bicycle use and low-carbon economy. Also, communication with local press and media will start much earlier than the date of each event with many reminders along the way to keep them engaged and reach as many receivers as possible. The factor of safety will be highlighted during dissemination to enhance the confidence of residents to participate. Therefore, NGOs, volunteers, or entities like Traffic Police, firemen, Red Cross will be contacted to accompany the rallies. The fun of participation will be also highlighted.

Synergies with other Municipalities of the area or other bodies will be explored.

The inclusiveness of the actions will be of high level. Different society groups will be addressed as it can be concluded by the many different ideas of the themes of bicycle rallies which were mentioned above. Both present cyclists and potential ones will be the target groups to be engaged to participate by adopting different communication channels and messages to address to them. For example, children will be encouraged to cycle both with their families and with their teachers and classmates by working with schools. This way, the new potential cycling enthusiast generation could be raised, and kids would be aware of their mobility patterns and possible effect to the environment. Also, the inclusion of people with disabilities will be explored as there are double bikes for blind people (tandem bikes), and bikes for wheelchair users as well. A more specific definition of the group, the channel, the message, will be developed during the preparation of each rally.

In case of another COVID-19 outbreak during Phase 2, certain alternative formats of the implementation of the rallies will be investigated in depth by the team, in order to protect everyone's health as well as achieve the desirable results.

The action can lead to **measurable results** in terms of participants which will both enjoy the fun of the bike ride and will be actively informed about sustainable mobility by team members, hi-jacking the same occasion. The participants of the first bicycle rally in the frame of Action 2 of this Action Plan, and those of the corresponding last bicycle rally will be properly measured and compared to understand the impact achieved and whether the continuity of the activity leads to positive results. So, TheTA will be able to realize how important the consistency is towards influencing citizens' mobility habits. The foundations of its new approach on how consistently to proceed with public engagement can be laid on the conclusions of this Action Plan. This way

the attitudes concerning mobility behaviour as well as environmental awareness will be fostered among citizens.

### **Stakeholders involved**

- ❖ Thessaloniki's Transport Authority, as the beneficiary of the Action Plan and responsible for the implementation of Action 2
- ❖ Citizens
- ❖ NGOs, cyclist clubs, Authorities, etc. engaged to promote the activities to their members
- ❖ Tour guide for the cultural rally
- ❖ Schools for the children's rally
- ❖ Traffic Police, or/and Fire Department, or/and Red Cross to enhance the safety feeling and confidence of participants as well as to provide first aid if necessary

### **Timeframe**

Regular bicycle rallies, at least three (3), are planned to be implemented during Phase 2 of the PE4Trans project, which is shorter by 6 months due to the extension of Phase 1 till November 2021, agreed in the mid-term review meeting with JS. Their realization will be linked to other important facts each year, such as the European Mobility Weeks in September, the World Bicycle Days in June, the release of new bicycle path map in Thessaloniki, etc.

### **Costs & funding sources**

Any costs incurred will be covered by TheTA own funds (possible costs are workhours of employees, printing of dissemination material, beverages for participants of long-distance rallies, potential entrance fees to monuments, etc.)

## ENDORSEMENT

Date: **27.01.2022**

Name of the organization:

**Thessaloniki Transport Authority S.A.**

Signature and stamp (if relevant) of the organization:

  
Ioannis Toskas  
CEO



