

# Sustainable Mobility: For consumers now and in the future






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# Europe faces major mobility challenges



Whether it be for a child's trip to school, a commuter's journey to work or a pensioner's visit to the bank, **mobility is an essential right for citizens** and is vital for quality of life. Transport is a key element in generating positive effects for the economy and society as a result of providing citizens access to goods, services, education, employment, and leisure activities.

Our current transportation system has been developed largely on the **availability of cheap fossil fuels**. With oil being a non-renewable resource and on the basis that it could become so expensive that exploitation becomes economically unviable, it is of fundamental importance to **find ways to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels** so that everyone can afford to remain mobile in the future.



Moving away from such a system, to one that is rather based on renewable energy forms is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

**Numerous negatives to our fossil fuel addiction:**  
Climate change; traffic congestion; air pollution; noise; lack of space for leisure activities; and concerns about increased safety risks i.e. for cyclists.

## Major cost...

Transport-related expenditure plays an important part in private household budgets. More specifically, private households in the EU spend approximately **13% of their household budget** on transport-related goods and services, this is more than what people spend on food and non-alcoholic beverages. On average, European citizens spend on an individual basis €1,900 per year on transport; this figure ranges from €500 spent by Slovakian citizens on average to around €2,500 per Dane.<sup>i</sup>



## Major emitter...

The **transport sector** is responsible for approximately a **quarter of all EU greenhouse gas emissions**. Despite a slight downward trend in emissions since 2009, in comparison with other sectors, transport is the only one which has shown increasing greenhouse emissions since 1990. Estimates by the European Environment Agency have revealed that emissions from transport actually fell by 2.3% in 2012 in comparison to 2011, following the trend of the previous years<sup>ii</sup>. This development may however be linked to the economic and financial crisis and may not continue once the economy recovers.

A substantial decline in transport emissions will still be needed however, if the target set by the European Commission in the White Paper on Transport is to be achieved. The White Paper defines a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction target from transport of 60% by 2050, compared to the 1990 baseline. In order to reach this target, a substantial drop in emissions of at least 68% from today in this sector by 2050 is still needed.



# Response to future challenges

## Fuel price protection for motorists

Many people are still highly dependent on the car. Passenger cars account for around 85% of inland passenger transport across the EU and in countries such as Germany and the UK a **large proportion of all households own at least one vehicle**. Car dependency in rural areas, where there is a lack of public transportation infrastructure, is even higher.



For motorists, **the fuel costs of a car is a significant concern**<sup>iii</sup> - whether or not oil prices are relatively high or low. However, when oil prices spike of course the impact on consumers can be severe, not least for those on low incomes.

Studies also consistently show that a **key criterion for prospective car buyers is the fuel consumption performance of a vehicle**.<sup>iv</sup>

Evidence also indicates that consumers are willing to pay more up front for a new vehicle, to a certain extent, in order to gain from a better fuel economy performance.

Consumers therefore deserve an 'insurance package' to protect them against rising global demand for oil and geopolitical tensions that can result in severe oil price hikes. In this, it is **further improvements in the energy efficiency of cars** that **is needed** and here the EU has an important role to play.

### UK consumers lock in fuel savings

Despite a drop in UK fuel prices in 2014, research indicates that motorists have not resorted to simply driving more, but rather have used these cost savings on shopping, entertainment or paying off debts. This goes to show that reducing the cost of driving can help consumers on tight household budgets.

Source: AA, 2015

## Mobility needs a mixed solution response

In order to tackle the multiple mobility challenges that the European Union will face in the years to come, it is essential to develop in parallel a large number of measures. **Substitution strategies** including the development of new technologies such as **electric vehicles** and to a limited extent also the further deployment of **sustainable biofuels** will play a fundamental role in the transition.

However, such measures should not be portrayed as “silver bullet solutions”. Many problems such as congestion in cities will not disappear in thin air, after all, **‘green congestion still remains congestion’**.

This is particularly important as current trends indicate that **more and more Europeans will be moving into cities over the coming decades**. This development has obvious implications for the quality of life of many people as externalities of transport including noise and air quality pollution, congestion, and land use for roads and parking are issues of particular concern within urban environments.

It is essential therefore, that transport policy at both the national and European level strongly considers this projected growth in urbanisation and plans appropriately to reduce congestion for now and in the future.



In the 1950's, 50% of Europeans lived in cities, now it is 75%. It is expected to hit 85% by 2050



# Response to future challenges

## Investing in public transport is crucial



The development of **public transportation** will represent a key opportunity in tackling the higher transport demand in cities. In this respect the effectiveness of **existing infrastructure** must be improved; the **interplay between various existing public transport modes** must be enhanced; information about **transport schedules** must be made more available; and **timetables** between different modes of transportation must be better coordinated and **ticketing systems** must be better integrated.

Integrating and enhancing the combination of different transport modes would also have the effect of incentivising more consumers to **forego the use of their private car.**<sup>v</sup>

For instance, surveys have shown that half of EU citizens would definitely consider using public transport more often in case there would be an offer for a **single ticket which can be used for a complete journey.**

Such measures, alongside further investment in providing a more reliable and frequent service, and ensuring the safety of users, would go a long way towards reducing consumer detriment in the area of public transport.

### EU motorists not keen on public transport:

- 71%** think that public transport is not as convenient as the car
- 64%** have criticized the low frequency
- 54%** think public transportation represented to them low reliability
- 40%** of car users highlighted security concerns of public transport



## ‘Last mile’ requires innovative approaches

Although public transportation is enormously effective in transporting large numbers of passengers, it often suffers from what is known as the **“last mile problem”**. This phenomenon concerns the additional time and hassle passengers are confronted with when accessing public transportation stations at the start of their trips, and again at their final destination.

Therefore, public transport must be complemented by flexible offers which are tailored to suit market demand. In this respect, new mobility solutions such as **car and bike sharing schemes** must be further developed and expanded, and better combined with public transportation systems.

In addition, we see a strong need for better access to mobility for vulnerable consumers including the elderly and disabled and for those who do not drive a car or ride a bike, in order to guarantee affordable mobility.

Thus, in cases where public transportation with fixed schedules is economically unviable, cheaper and more flexible components of public transportation, including **shared taxis** or **dial-a-bus services** should be offered.



# A consumer action plan for sustainable mobility

## Application of the polluter-pays principle to define policy in general

It is impossible to establish a level playing field between different transport modes unless prices reflect the true costs caused by users. In general, it is therefore important to follow the **principle of correct pricing of externalities** of different means of transportation in order to give the right price signal which provides an incentive to consumers to change their behaviour.

Recent studies have shown that a large majority of Europeans support the **polluter pays principle**, which states that those who are responsible for pollution should also be the ones responsible for the costs that society bears for dealing with negative side effects on health and the environment.

It is important to consider however that under implementation of the polluter pays principle, low-income households might be affected adversely.

Addressing such **equity issues** must be at the core of any mobility strategy. In addition, in order for the price signal to be effective, there must be reliable alternatives. For instance, road pricing schemes will most likely only gain public acceptance when parallel policies are put in place that improve alternative modes of transport. Thus, addressing the issue of **external costs needs to be analysed on a case-by-case basis**.



## Wider promotion of multimodal mobility

The **development of intermodal transport systems** should enjoy the **highest political priority** in the transition towards sustainable mobility systems. Intermodality is a principle that describes allowing different means of transportation to be combined in an integrated journey by using the advantages of different transport modes to enhance the efficiency without reducing the level of comfort.

Improving the interoperability of different transport modes will require **joint planning of networks** and **coordinating timetables** between different modes of transportation in order to allow for the seamless interchange of passengers between different modes of transport.

Travellers need to be able to rely on integrated trip services, which include **better information** provision and the use of **common reservation** and **ticketing systems** for the entire trip. Integrating and enhancing the combination of different public transport modes, whilst also investing in their performance, would also have the effect of incentivising more consumers to forego the use of their private car.

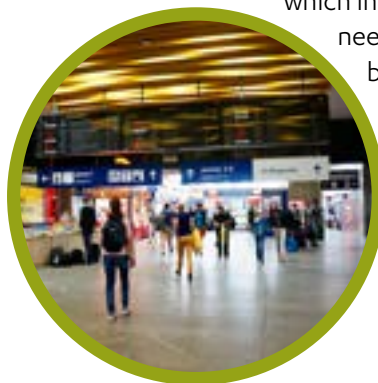


# A consumer action plan for sustainable mobility

In addition, it will be of absolute importance that **passenger rights** (and their implementation) are strengthened and enlarged to encompass multimodal transportation. Passenger rights are particularly important in order to **strengthen the confidence of consumers in public transport**, and they should be enlarged to encompass multimodal forms of transport, particularly with regards to the problem of disruption at connecting points in an intermodal journey.

**Passenger rights differ depending on the means of transport used**, which in turn can trigger difficulties in multimodal trips. Passengers need the guarantee to travel to the final destination without bearing any financial or associated risks concerning transport delays.

While we acknowledge that each means of transport has its specificities, it is essential that **the rights of passengers in all means of transport are codified** so as to ensure that a coherent and passenger friendly framework is established.



## Further market penetration of energy-efficient cars

An increased market penetration of more **energy-efficient cars** and the development of new powertrain technologies will play a fundamental role in the transition towards a low carbon future. Developing ultra-low carbon vehicles, coupled with a decarbonisation of the electricity mix, will help achieve the EU target of significantly reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport by 2050 and help to reduce the dependence on foreign oil imports. In addition, reduction in harmful substances from combustion engines would lead to significant health benefits for consumers.

However, despite the many advantages that vehicle electrification offers over conventional combustion engines, such as lower running costs, there are still a number of barriers hindering a fast market expansion of such vehicles, including: **limited drive range; lack of availability of refill stations; long recharging times of the battery** or the **high initial costs** of the battery.

During a transition period until many of the so-called infancy problems of electric vehicles can be overcome, mass uptake of these technologies will be unlikely. Up until 2025 it is most likely that demand for electric vehicles will still be driven by “early adopter segments”, and here there is potential that those market segments who have a clear grasp of the vehicle’s total cost of ownership will be involved. Therefore, and going beyond the expected demand from private owner early adopters, there is also the potential for **government and company fleets**, taxis and car-sharing schemes to name a few to also become early adopters of electric vehicles.



# A consumer action plan for sustainable mobility

It is vitally important that **charging systems for electric vehicles across Europe are fully standardised** e.g. in terms of paying systems, charging plugs, charging points. This would allow consumers to charge their vehicles easily if they are driving across borders or when travelling within their own Member State. In turn, this approach would improve interoperability and ensure against fragmented market developments across Europe.

As a key instrument to achieve further market penetration of more energy-efficient cars and new powertrain technologies in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and lower the cost of driving, we therefore **support setting ambitious emissions targets** for cars as this is the smart route towards cutting fuel costs.

‘Nobody wants multiple charging cables for their electric car’

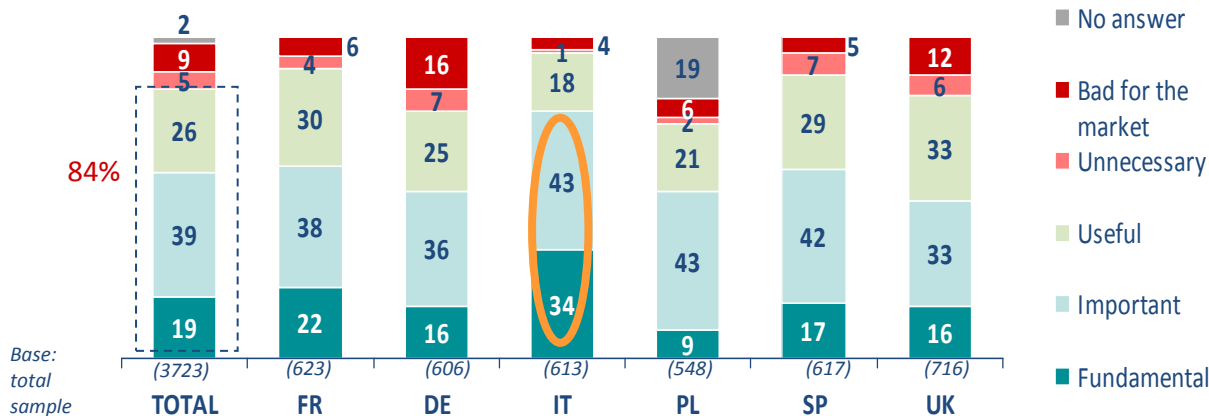
Furthermore, in those Member States who do not provide adequate tax incentives for buying the most fuel efficient vehicles, it would be important for an overhaul to such systems in order to **promote cars with a low environmental impact, both CO<sub>2</sub> and exhaust emissions** and impressive fuel economy performances. In a similar vein, we are also very supportive of linking national company car taxation systems to the environmental performance of the car. The favourable tax treatment of company cars in several member states such as Germany has led to a higher demand of more powerful, but also more polluting vehicles onto the market.

Also important, we support **research and development programmes** and **demonstration projects** on ultra-low carbon vehicles in order to improve some of the performance characteristics of those vehicles (e.g. range, costs of batteries) and increase public awareness of those cars.

We also support **privileges for ultra-low carbon vehicles** as long as they do not interfere with the development of public transportation systems and are for a limited period of time. As those vehicles will be necessary to achieve further emissions targets in the future, we believe that targeted and predictable incentives are necessary in order to make these vehicles able to compete in the market.

### Joint Research Centre study on importance of public incentives for electric vehicles

*Do you think government incentives to buy electric car are ... (Single answer)*



# A consumer action plan for sustainable mobility

## Informing consumers with reliable and clear information

When purchasing a new car, it is of vital importance that consumers are fully informed with reliable information about the different models on offer. Without such information, for those consumers who consider the fuel consumption or the environmental performance as important criteria when buying a car, they will be unable to make an informed purchasing decision.

**Existing European regulations concerning the monitoring and testing of a car's fuel consumption are open to abuse.** This is because there are flexibilities that car manufacturers can exploit and provide claims about a vehicle's fuel consumption and carbon footprint that do not reflect what consumers observe under real life conditions.

Not being able to know the real carbon emission reductions from the automobile sector also makes it difficult to understand the performance of the car industry in cutting its carbon footprint, and for that matter Member States' own performance.





In addition, consumers need information that is easy-to-understand. In this, we support a **revision of the EU car labelling Directive** in order to provide consumers with better information on the fuel consumption and environmental performance of cars.

In several EU Member States, this instrument for better consumer information has not reached a high level of recognition and the scheme has not been implemented in all countries in a way that maximises its impact. The revision of the car labelling Directive will also be fundamentally important in order to help **enabling consumers to better factor in efficiency and running costs** when choosing a car, and influence the demand for more efficient vehicles.

If the emission levels on a car's CO<sub>2</sub> label were expressed in relative terms, a large car (or even a panzer tank!) which uses a lot of fuel and thereby emits a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>, could still receive a good rating compared to other more fuel efficient vehicles.



# A consumer action plan for sustainable mobility

## Further development of sustainable biofuels

Finally, we support Europe's endeavours to tackle **energy security** and become independent on fossil fuels in the future. However, this transition will take several decades and in the mid-term perspective transport fuels will still be needed in areas such as aviation or heavy-duty transport and shipping. Therefore there is **the potential for biofuels to play a limited role** once attention is given to the drawbacks like competition with food production.

Certain biofuel should not be publically supported (see text highlight). We are also supportive of the **further development of advanced biofuels** (i.e. biofuels that do not directly compete with food, e.g. algae, biomass fraction of mixed municipal or industrial waste). In addition, we also want to stress that because of their high carbon footprint, fuels such as tar sands should not be allowed to enter the European market.

One of the key concerns here relates to the inability to provide motorists with assurances about how their motor fuels have been produced. As a result of this situation, motorists might be purchasing motor fuels produced with products sourced from crops that have **replaced tropical rainforest or areas of land in countries previously intended for food crops.**

### Biofuels should only be supported if they:

- Achieve a significant greenhouse gas emission saving
- Reduce the impact on biodiversity
- Do not directly compete with food
  - Have a truly sustainable benefit taking indirect land use changes into account.



'Who would knowingly want to buy a product that is aiding deforestation?'

Photo: Rhett A. Butler / mongabay.com

# Recommendations

## **Prioritise public transport as the backbone of an attractive mobility system.**

A legal framework for a European multimodal transport information, management and payment system should be established.

## **Public transportation must become more attractive by creating special lanes for public transport vehicles and giving priority to buses at traffic lights.**

Passenger rights for all modes of transport (and their implementation) must be strengthened and enlarged to encompass multimodal forms of transport.

## **Passenger transport services should be encouraged to provide non-discriminatory access to integrated ticketing systems.**

European legislation should require that travel planning data must be made accessible in a standardised way.

## **Particular attention must be given to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.**

Public bicycle parking space must be enhanced and made safer.

## **Car parking at major train or metro stations outside city centres (park&ride) should be enhanced and made safer.**

New mobility solutions (car and bike sharing, carpooling) must be further developed and expanded, better combined with public transportation systems, and should receive particular attention from public policy.

## **Accessibility without a car must be guaranteed by offering flexible components of public transport (e.g. shared taxis, dial-a-bus services, etc.).**

# Recommendations

**Ambitious mandatory CO<sub>2</sub> emissions targets for cars should be set as this is the smart route towards cutting fuel costs and achieving overall CO<sub>2</sub> targets.**

Future targets for noise and air pollution for cars should be set in order to reduce the negative impact due to noise and air pollution.

**The outdated test to measure fuel consumption and air pollution of cars (NEDC) must be replaced by the newly developed Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP).**

The car labelling Directive must be revised in order to provide consumers with better information at the point of sale and in advertisements.

**At a national level, those Member States who do not correlate tax base to emissions should further explore and implement car taxation schemes that effectively reward consumers for investing in low emissions vehicles.**

For those countries that already correlate the tax base to emissions, the tax levels need to be adapted as soon as the new testing standard (WLTP) is applied.

**A common standard for charging electrified vehicles across the EU should be developed as a priority.**

Research and development programmes and demonstration projects on ultra-low carbon vehicles should be publically supported.

**Requirements to integrate ultra-low carbon vehicles into green public procurement strategies must be included to ensure more rapid take up of new technologies.**

Privileges (tax, bus-lane use, parking) should be given to all ultra-low carbon vehicles in order to help them penetrate the market, but only for a limit period of time.

**Financial incentives should not be financed from the overall public budget but preferably by earmarking higher taxes on cars with high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for this purpose.**

Non-financial incentives (e.g. priority lane or reserved parking space) should only be given for ultra-low carbon vehicles that do not negatively impact users of public transportation and cyclists.

**Charging stations that are set up at publically accessible locations should be supported through public co-funding.**

Consumer education and training on mobility issues to be strengthened.

**Traffic restriction policies should be analysed on a case-by-case basis making use of the right tools and assuring that vulnerable consumers are not left behind.**

Revenues from such polices should primarily be spent to improve public transport so that negative effects on low-income households can be limited.

**Only biofuels that achieve a significant greenhouse gas emission saving, reduce the impact on biodiversity, do not directly compete with food, and have a truly sustainable benefit taking indirect land use changes into account, should be publically supported.**

<sup>i</sup>For more information see EU Statistical Pocketbook on Transport 2013:

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/statistics/doc/2013/pocketbook2013.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup>EEA (2013) Transport emissions of greenhouse gases:

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases-3>

<sup>iii</sup>See RAC report on motoring (2012)

<sup>iv</sup>LowCVP Car Buyer Survey (2010): Improved environmental information for consumers, Research conducted by Ecolane & Sustain on behalf of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership – June 2010.

<http://www.lowcvp.org/assets/reports/LowCVP-Car-Buyer-Survey-2010-Final-Report-03-06-10-vFINAL.pdf>

<sup>v</sup>Flash Eurobarometer 312 (2011): Future of transport – analytical report:

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_312\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_312_en.pdf)

For the full list of cited articles and papers used for the purpose of producing this brochure, please see the document: ‘BEUC Vision Paper on Sustainable Mobility’: [http://www.beuc.org/publications/beuc-x-2014-056\\_cca\\_beuc\\_vision\\_on\\_mobility\\_long\\_version.pdf](http://www.beuc.org/publications/beuc-x-2014-056_cca_beuc_vision_on_mobility_long_version.pdf)

Our UK member Which? shares the objective of decarbonising emissions from the transport sector. However it does not share this vision because their assessment in the UK context shows that several aspects of short-term costs (such as potential financial burdens placed on consumers) versus long-term benefits for consumers does not achieve the appropriate balance.

**AT** - Verein für Konsumenteninformation - VKI  
**AT** - Arbeiterkammer - AK  
**BE** - Test-Achats/Test-Aankoop  
**BG** - Bulgarian National Association Active Consumers - BNAAC  
**CH** - Fédération Romande des Consommateurs - FRC  
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**SI** - Slovene Consumers' Association - ZPS  
**SK** - Association of Slovak Consumers - ZSS  
**UK** - Which?

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The Consumer Voice in Europe



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