



# White Paper on Transport midterm review

## Polis Position Paper

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April 2015

### Introduction

Polis is a network of European cities and regions supporting innovation on the local and regional level to achieve sustainable urban mobility. Our member cities and regions are convinced that the **reduction of dependency on the private car, a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking, as well as the development of clean and energy efficient transport should be the main objectives of policies influencing urban and regional mobility**. The European Commission's ambition to phase out 'conventionally fuelled' cars in urban transport in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO<sub>2</sub>-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030; and have multimodal transport information, management and payment systems by 2020, are compatible with Polis members' main policy objectives.

At the occasion of the current review of the White Paper on Transport undertaken both by the European Commission and through an initiative process by the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament, Polis would like to reiterate its position regarding the EU urban transport agenda and the steps ahead.

Overall, Polis would like to thank the European Commission for the development of the actions laid down within the White Paper over the last four years, **as significant progress was made in a short period of time**. By recognising the importance of local, regional and urban transport and supporting the progressive definition of a European policy for urban and regional transport, this White Paper led to the **TEN-T revision and the creation of the CEF Programme** where cities are part of the overall transportation system in the European Union. The importance attached to urban transport issues was also further reflected in **the Urban Mobility Package** presented in 2013, as well as in the current strategy toward **Smart Cities** and the promotion of **alternative fuels and infrastructures**. The 2011 Transport White Paper has also provided the strategic framework for the implementation of the 2010 ITS Directive.

However, Polis members stress that although mobility is an important element in creating functioning competitive cities, consideration should be given to the balance between the accessibility, mobility, liveability and competitiveness of cities and the importance of dealing with these objectives as part of an integrated process that also includes urban planning. In this context, the notion that **"Curbing Mobility is not an option" should be reviewed<sup>1</sup>**.

Polis also believes that the European Commission still has large room for further legislative implementation and financial support in terms of **innovation, health and environment and investments**, if the White Paper goals are to be achieved. Our views in this respect are outlined in more detail below.

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<sup>1</sup> On this note, Polis support the current EESC' rapporteur view in its proposal at point 2.8



## Innovation in Transport

**Innovative policies and approaches are required to trigger the deployment of new solutions to achieve a more sustainable mobility culture.** Polis therefore welcomes the fact that the White Paper refers to innovation, but not that this refers almost exclusively to technological innovation. This overlooks essential aspects of sustainable mobility policies, which may be innovative and yet not of a technological nature (e.g. innovative integrated planning approaches, new governance models, coordination and stakeholder involvement strategies, innovative awareness raising initiatives). A wider definition of innovation is therefore required. Any innovative approach must be assessed with regard to its ability to help reach local transport policy objectives and thus should be application/solution focussed rather than simply concentrated on developing technology.

Moreover, in 2012 the European Commission presented a global strategy toward the implementation of Strategic Transport Technology Plans<sup>2</sup> which was supposed to be the backbone of the research and innovation pillar of the White Paper, and as such was warmly welcomed by Polis. Since then, these plans seem to have been dormant. Polis calls for a **clear technological sub-strategy of the White Paper**, given the important challenges ahead in terms of vehicle technology and Intelligent Transport Systems (automation, cooperative ITS, open data...). This would result in concrete EU actions in terms of level playing field on all these aspects, and EU harmonisation regarding open data, digital infrastructures and vehicle applications. Polis welcomes the 2015 Commission proposal, as part of the Energy Union Package, to develop a strategic transport R&I agenda, with a limited number of essential priorities and clear objectives, in 2015-2016, and hopes stakeholders concerned will be consulted.

The White Paper also foresaw the set-up of pilot projects within the CIVITAS Initiative to identify good practices and key recommendations for further EU action in the field of road user charging and access restrictions. Polis members would like to stress the fact that this point was insufficiently addressed over the last four years and should therefore be clearly identified in the midterm review as a key action for future EU projects development in the transport sector. Access restrictions are a key instrument for cities to improve quality of life in all its aspects (air quality, energy efficiency, economic development etc.). Pilot projects can help to build a common and coordinated European practice in this area.

Finally, the concept of smart cities is also of growing importance, both for cities and the European Commission. It is considered to be an effective integrated approach that can lead to the successful coordination and combination of ICT, energy and transport tools to create a new paradigm for cities' development and urban planning. Polis believes that **the concept of smart cities should be explicitly addressed in the White Paper review** with the aim to design a comprehensive EU strategy that combines all these different themes, and calls for further clarifications regarding the interaction of different funding instruments. In this regard, it is recommended that the Smart City concept would also more explicitly address urban transport issues and challenges, next to energy efficiency goals, such as air quality, road safety, relation to the TEN-t network etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission "Research and Innovation for Europe's future mobility : Developing a European transport-technology strategy" (SWD(2012) 260 final), 13.9.2012



## Health and environment

Achieving a 60% reduction of pollutant emissions by 2020 was one of the most ambitious goals within the White Paper. Cities can play a vital role in this regard, without reinventing the wheel but by simply ensuring sound implementation of the existing legislation and related good practice. In that perspective, **Polis would encourage the European Commission first and foremost to finalise the negotiations on the new regulation on Euro 6 standards<sup>3</sup> and the 2008 Ambient Air Quality Directive, rather than setting increasingly higher goals regarding pollutant emissions<sup>4</sup> and clean vehicles<sup>5</sup>.**

Emissions standards are key in developing policy options on access restrictions, urban logistics and accessibility. Studies have been commissioned by the European Commission recently on these topics. If this is translated as soon as possible into actual policy documents, the EU could achieve its EU 2020 objectives regarding emissions reduction. Additionally, while we appreciate the recognition of demand management measures such as access restrictions or road pricing or the 'user pays' and polluter pays' principles, Polis would like to stress the **importance for cities to remain free to design and implement their own schemes to best fit local conditions and policies.**

Eventually, the European Union should not just promote negative or restrictive patterns in transport but **also encourage new urban policies in favour of active travel.** Although soft modes such as walking and cycling were recognised in 2011, their promotion still lacks visibility and coherence. Cities are purposefully investing in walking and cycling infrastructure through ERDF programmes. On its end however, the European Union currently does not have a global strategy or the administrative and management capacities to address this area in a comprehensive, cross-sectoral and integrated manner. Polis would like to refer to its position paper regarding the important potential health benefits of active travel in Europe, where small actions were purposefully suggested to unleash the potential of cycling and walking in terms of health benefits and accessibility for EU citizens<sup>6</sup>.

## Financing and investing in the future

Investments for transport play a key role in the White Paper, which notably led to the revision of the TEN-T guidelines and the creation of the Connecting Europe Facility. While Polis members welcome the inclusion of cities in the overall transport network and the funding of urban nodes within the CEF programme, we believe that a **common vision on urban nodes is still missing to clarify the goals and achievements expected from these investments.** This could lead to inadequate or under-spending of EU funds.

Furthermore, the current discussion regarding the possible transfer of money from the CEF and Horizon 2020 to the EFSI is a matter of great concern to Polis. While fully acknowledging the challenging opportunities that such Fund would represent in terms of boosting investments in public infrastructure with the support of private funds and the EIB, Polis would like to emphasise that most of the **projects identified within the CEF and Horizon 2020 programmes are not economically sustainable by themselves, and almost none in a three-years timeframe, and therefore unlikely to be supported through the EFSI.** If current discussions lead to such financial transfer, trans-border and urban bottlenecks, which are at the heart of the EU2020 emission strategy, would risk to lack sufficient investment to achieve the EU objectives by 2020. Polis strongly believes that the **EFSI should retrieve financial support from unexploited instruments rather than by severing the root of innovation and applied research.**

<sup>3</sup> Regulation 459/2012 modifying the regulation 715/2007

<sup>4</sup> As foreseen within the current modification of the 2003/35 National Emission Ceiling Directive, the European Commission suggests a modification of the 2008 Ambient Air Quality Directive after the former is approved.

<sup>5</sup> The clean vehicle procurement directive 2009/33/EC on the promotion of clean and energy efficient road transport vehicles

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.polisnetwork.eu/uploads/Modules/PublicDocuments/polis-paper-health-and-transport\\_final-3-dec.pdf](http://www.polisnetwork.eu/uploads/Modules/PublicDocuments/polis-paper-health-and-transport_final-3-dec.pdf)



## Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans

Polis has worked on supporting the exchange of practices and methodologies on sustainable urban mobility plans and on the definition of tools to support cities developing and implementing these plans, and will continue to do so. We therefore welcome the recognition of SUMP's key role for a more sustainable mobility across Europe.

However, **Polis disagrees with a mandatory approach for SUMPs at the European level** which would be extremely difficult to define properly, to implement and to monitor. We rather encourage a European framework which supports cities in developing, implementing and evaluating SUMPs, proposing a voluntary approach encouraged by significant European incentives, including incentives related to the allocation of European funds<sup>7</sup>.

In order to disseminate planning methodologies and approaches for sustainable urban mobility plans, and to support the rapid and wider adoption of these plans, European funding for sustainable urban mobility planning processes can play a key role. Therefore, Polis strongly encourages a European support framework for a progressive implementation of Urban Mobility Plans in European cities & metropolitan areas. The same objective could be achieved by **earmarking part of EU funds dedicated to urban mobility at a regional/local level to (further) develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.**

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<sup>7</sup> In this context, we consider that the proposal in 2010 from MEP Grosch in his draft report from the European Parliament that "support for projects is made conditional upon the submission of urban mobility plans" goes in the right direction.