



Dear reader,

Many of the resources on sustainable mobility planning are targeted at larger cities. However, half of European citizens live in smaller cities and towns, facing their own specific challenges. In this e-update we will take a closer look at those challenges as well as at the great opportunities for adopting sustainable mobility on this smaller small scale. The SUMP methodology is very suitable for these smaller cities and towns.

Small scale communities in Europe



Prevailing population settlement type, click to enlarge

Europe is a highly urbanised continent, but the balance between high-density and low-density communities varies among countries (see the [ESPON Fact sheet](#) and the adjacent map). The definitions of a small city or a small or medium-sized town vary substantially from country to country. [OECD](#) and [ESPON](#) have attempted to develop a common definition. In this e-update, we will focus on settlements with less than 100,000 residents and their rural hinterlands. According to ESPON there are 8,500 municipalities with between 10,000 to 100,000 residents, home to about 52% of European citizens. Around and between cities there are important peri-urban areas where urban and rural elements co-exist.

Owing to the density and proximity of the population and businesses, cities are more resource-efficient than low-density areas ([EEA Technical report n°23/2015](#)). However, the EU explicitly states that people should be able to live wherever they want, with access to public services, efficient transport, reliable energy networks and broadband internet throughout the territory. Small towns and cities have a critical role to play to connect the rural areas to the bigger cities and to preserve the [territorial cohesion](#) of the EU. In other words, the EU needs a [polycentric territory](#), with small-and-medium sized towns in the countryside, and networks of towns as alternatives to the large metropolises ([Interim Cohesion Report 2004](#)).

Small-scale SUMP



The Poly-SUMP Methodology
How to develop a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for a polycentric region
Guidelines

The [Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning \(SUMP\) methodology](#) entails a very comprehensive, intensive planning cycle that might overwhelm small cities and towns. However, small municipalities need mobility planning too and the SUMP methodology is very useful for them. If there are several towns or cities in a region, the [POLY-SUMP tool](#) can be used to make a joint SUMP. Learn more about it in this [CIVITAS webinar](#).

In France, only cities with over 100,000 residents are required to develop a SUMP, called a PDU ("plan de déplacement urbain"). For smaller cities there are two voluntary options. They can choose to develop a full-blown PDU, or they can develop a general mobility policy that complies with lighter requirements than a PDU and does not have any legal status. About one third of small local authorities have engaged in one of the two voluntary options and the French Ministry is looking to increase this number. Read more about PDUs and voluntary planning [here](#).

In Portugal, a SUMP called [PMT](#) is mandatory for all municipalities with over 50,000 residents and for all district capitals. It is also recommended for certain groups of municipalities. Smaller municipalities can choose to engage in a PMT process.

Limited resources

Smaller cities and towns obviously have smaller budgets and a smaller and less specialised staff. Many small cities have just one person who is responsible for city and traffic planning. SUMP processes are often driven by this one person's motivation, enthusiasm and skills. EU



Judenburg, Austria

projects and networks as [Cittaslow](#), [Eurotowns](#), [METREX](#) and [PURPLE](#) offer a lot of online learning materials (mostly in English), such as the new [CIVITAS e-courses](#).

But training opportunities in the local language and taking into account the national context should exist as well. With [ENDURANCE](#), we have been offering tailor-made advice and local-language networking and knowledge exchange to cities both large and small. Especially in small cities, this can make a big difference. For instance in [Judenburg](#), Austria (9,000 inhabitants), the external support offered by the projects [ADVANCE](#) and [ENDURANCE](#) was the main driver for initiating a SUMP process. It helped Judenburg to deal with a rather complex process and embedded the idea of sustainable urban mobility planning more strongly within the city department. Another example is the Polish city of [Tomaszów Mazowiecki](#) (population 65,000), where our national focal point CIFAL Płock helped the city to set its first steps towards a SUMP with an intensive public consultation process that led to a common vision for the city towards 2020. Read more [here](#).

Attracting the creative workforce



Many European towns and regions are facing a shrinking population (see this [CIRES project report](#) or this [VOX article](#)). This is often combined with a decline in human resources, job opportunities, public amenities and commercial functions - a decline that accelerates the population drop even further. This vicious circle is described in [shrinking small towns in Hungary](#). Other towns near larger cities have completely changed their character and turned into faceless commuter towns as there is an influx of city-oriented commuters looking for cheaper housing. See for example this interesting analysis on [Built Environment Forum Scotland](#).

According to American downtown revitalisation specialist [N. David Milder](#), the strategy of attracting outside firms that bring a lot of jobs very often fails. The trick is to attract new residents who either do not need jobs, will bring their jobs with them or can create their own good jobs. Evidence suggests that jobs and growth follow creative people such as computer experts, architects, teachers, writers, artists and handicraft workers (the 'creative workforce') as much as creative people follow jobs and growth, and attractive places. Read more about it in [ESPON Territorial Observation No. 5](#); look at page 19 for a list of creative professions. Guidelines for local authorities are available in the brochure [Creative-based Strategies in Small and Medium-sized Cities: Guidelines for Local Authorities](#).

The creative workforce is not just attracted by larger cities. Small town or rural life is still appealing to a substantial number of people. Especially now that new technologies, greater mobility opportunities and more flexible working patterns have made an 'urban' existence possible everywhere. On top of that, small towns and rural areas have additional features such as beautiful nature, cultural heritage and affordable housing. In fact, each town should look for its own unique selling point and identity, and market it in the wider region. Read the example of the city of [Roanoke](#) (population 98,465) in Virginia, USA, or the [Soho Solo](#) project that has attracted 500 families to small villages in the Region of Gers in France.

Bikeable and walkable towns with interesting places



Bike-friendly, walkable and attractive public spaces have become major selling points to attract and retain residents. See for instance this video on the [Destination Portsmouth](#) project (population 95,000, Virginia, USA), where a new land use policy encourages sustainable mobility in the city centre rather than promoting urban sprawl.

Smaller cities have the advantage of short distances, but are often very car-oriented. Even in the cycling Walhalla of Denmark, [research](#) shows this is the major barrier to the take up of cycling. In smaller municipalities, wide bicycle lanes are unrealistic with the distances and the number of anticipated cyclists. The focus can be on creative solutions e.g. so-called 2-1 roads, where motorists' areas are reduced to one lane, whilst "soft" traffic gets a wide, clearly marked lane on either side. When two cars meet, they move out into the side lanes in order to pass each other. Shared space solutions often function well, as car traffic volumes are low.



Portsmouth before and after

More and more cities are starting to realise the importance of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. For instance, the town of [Torrelodones](#) (population 23,000) in Spain was a typical example of highly motorised suburban sprawl until they introduced a SUMP and started to develop a pedestrian and cycling network. They focused on key locations such as schools, sport centres, cultural buildings, etc. The municipality was assisted by our National Focal Point [gea21](#). [Read more about their strategy here](#). The town of [Veenendaal](#) (population 63,000) is one of the Netherlands' top 10 cycling towns. This excellent [publication](#) shows how bicycle facilities were an integral part of new residential neighbourhood developments in Veenendaal (and other cities).

Awareness raising

Mobility management measures such as campaigns, information giving and training are very suitable for small cities, as they usually have low costs and a high benefit:cost ratio. The



Car Free Day in Ramnicu Valea

MMOVE project developed a [toolbox](#) with many mobility management measures that have been tried and tested by small cities.

The Romanian municipalities of Ramnicu Valcea (population 99,000) and Odorheiu Secuiesc (population 34,000) invested a lot of effort in awareness raising activities, such as the Traffic Snake Game campaign for school children, the Car Free Day and Mobility Week. Read more about the experiences of [Ramnicu Valcea](#) and [Odorheiu Secuiesc](#).

Small-scale public transport solutions



Due to its smaller population, a small town can never provide high capacity public transport solutions as a large metropolis can. So it must find creative solutions as well as assure good public transport connections to larger cities. It is also possible to bring important services to people, e.g. through e-government, online shopping, or health consultations that are held in a different town or village every day.

Especially in rural areas, people without access to a car are at risk of deprivation and isolation. The higher proportion of elderly citizens in rural areas exacerbates the problem (see for instance [2013 Defra Rural Ageing Research](#) in the UK). It is simply too costly to provide regular public transport in many cases. So transport-on-demand and community- or volunteer-driven services are possible solutions.



Here are some interesting examples and resources:

- Fact sheet [Transport-on-Demand in medium-sized towns](#) (France)
- In Arlon (population 29,000), Belgium, citizens can call a local mobility office to find out how they can make their trip. If there is no other alternative, they can book the on-demand [FlexiTEC service](#) (link in French) for the price of a normal bus ticket.
- The Independent Transportation Network of America offers door-to-door rides. People pay for them with credits that they have earned by trading in their car or by volunteering to drive when they still could. The organisers also linked with shopping and health centres to co-fund trips made by older people. Watch their [YouTube video](#).
- [Siilinjärvi area in Finland](#): The Service Line is a minibus used by two day centres for four hours per day, and the rest of the time as a dial-a-ride service for public users.
- The city of Mechelen (population 83,000) in Belgium recently announced that it will start selling taxi vouchers to residents with reduced mobility or low income. Every three months, users can use up to 20 vouchers of €2.50, which they buy for €1.25. A taxi trip costs €2.50 plus €1.70 per kilometre.

Managing motorised transport



In low-density regions, the car is often the only convenient or possible mode to travel a long distance to a town centre. In order for a town's retail to be able to compete with neighbouring towns, shopping centres and bigger cities, the town centre will need to balance a certain degree of car-friendliness with safe and attractive infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport. See the website [100 Ways to Help the High Street](#) and the brochure [medium-sized and smaller towns RAISING THE GAME](#) for tips.

Car sharing is difficult in smaller cities, and mostly run by volunteers (see this [momo fact sheet](#)). It is also possible to share the municipal fleet with residents in the evenings and weekends, like the Swedish city of [Linköping](#) (population 97,000) did with their fleet of biogas-fuelled cars.

Last but not least, freight traffic can place a big burden on small towns and cities. Again, we list some interesting links and examples:

- [ENCLOSE](#) project: city logistics in small and mid-sized European historic towns
- The [CIVITAS Policy Note on urban freight logistics](#) in small and medium-sized cities
- In Sweden, [Borlänge](#) (population 50,000) and three other rural municipalities set up a distribution centre in 1999 to consolidate deliveries of groceries to schools and other municipal organisations, reducing the amount of deliveries up to 75%.

Focus on opportunities



It is clear that small cities and towns are facing significant challenges when it comes to sustainable mobility, but also that they have many opportunities. Also, their interaction with the larger urban areas should not be forgotten. To quote the PURPLE network: "Problems are too often addressed starting from the needs of urban centres and not from existing opportunities within the peri-urban areas".

Learn more at the 3rd European conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans

This is the principal annual event for all those involved in turning the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan concept into practice. Be one of the 300 delegates from across Europe to attend this free event.

Join Commissioner Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport, for an interactive discussion on how the take-up of the SUMP concept can be accelerated across Europe and hear from Nikolaus von Peter, Cabinet of the Commissioner for Transport about the latest European Union policy initiatives. More details and the outline agenda can be found [here](#):

Upcoming events

- **Urban Future global conference**
2-3 March - Graz, Austria
<http://www.urbanfuture.at/en/>
- **Smarter Travel LIVE 2016**
17-18 March - Milton Keynes, UK
<http://www.smartertravellive.com>
- **Smart Cities Exhibition and Conference for South-East Europe**
5-7 April – Sofia, Bulgaria
<http://viaexpo.com>
- **Smart Cities Summit Frankfurt**
6-7 April – Frankfurt, Germany
<http://smartcityseries.net/frankfurt/>
- **3rd European Conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans**
12-13 April - Bremen, Germany
<http://eltis.org/SUMP2016>
- **Design & the city**
19-22 April – Amsterdam, the Netherlands
<http://designandthecity.eu/>
- **20th European Conference on Mobility Management**
1-3 June – Athens, Greece
<http://ecomm2016.com/>

For more events, please visit the [EPOMM Calendar](#).



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