

## WP.T4 - ACT. A.T4.4

### Common transnational training path with a peer-to-peer approach

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D.T.4.4.1 - Training path with a peer-to-  
peer approach for mobility planners and  
operators in FUA

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## 1. Introduction: working with different actors

Cities across Europe are increasingly engaging with the need for a more sustainable future. The goal of reducing emissions by at least 20% by 2020 is proving nonetheless to be quite challenging. This is especially the case for smaller communities that too often lack the necessary guidance and support to enact strategic action plans (such as the SUMP) that they are anyway committed to putting in place.

This challenge not only concerns start-up cities. Advanced cities are also always looking for good examples, exemplary initiatives and good solutions for their sustainable urban mobility policies.

Knowledge sharing between ‘advanced’ and ‘learning’ cities allows the mutual exchange of useful information and guidance. This often gathers the best solutions for a specific situation regarding local mobility planning and implementation issues, while considering any special conditions related to its implementation, provide clear input for effective replication.

SOLEZ consortium includes cities with long term experience in sustainable mobility policies and less experienced ones, who have anyway a unique own "case" in low-carbon mobility and LEZ policies that can be valorised enhanced and shared among partners and stakeholders.

The capacity building activities designed and implemented during the project life have been organized with a twofold aim:

- **increase knowledge of SOLEZ partners** staff teams, their peer colleagues and key stakeholders on good practises of sustainable mobility policies;
- **create a supportive ground to elaborate SOLEZ Action Plans** and guarantee a smooth Pilot actions implementation in the last project phase.

This has meant to work with a range of different actors throughout the various stages of the project implementation that has included:

- Local authority staff (with high sustainable mobility expertise)
- Local authority staff (with no previous sustainable mobility experience)
- Local administration representatives (political level)
- Mobility experts



- Trade associations and citizens associations representatives of the key stakeholders for LEZ and LTZ
- other groups, in accordance with local specific needs.

Considering the wide variety of profiles with different background and level of expertise in sustainable urban mobility issues, a peer-to peer training path has resulted to be the most effective and flexible method suitable for any city of any size and different situations among different approaches available to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

## 2. Why a peer to peer approach

“Peers” or “equals”, in this context are considered people that work on similar issues in their cities’ administrations or people that have similar working backgrounds.

The P2P training approach eliminates the authority figure of the trainer and therefore fosters trust among participants and idea sharing. In this way, it is an effective way to share experience and expertise among different cities and local authorities.

It can create and strengthen partnerships and facilitate the sharing of learning experiences and focus on the tools and mechanisms that can be used to foster capacity building among local authority staff and stakeholders

Through this approach and way of learning, partners think more strategically about options for tackling their challenges in sustainable urban mobility policies, to find mutual solutions and gain political buy-in.

This approach can encourage more ambitious initiatives, allow reciprocal exchange of competences between more experienced and less experienced partners or exchange support from different skill sets among partners and stakeholders.

For this reason, it has proved to be an ideal learning method for professional adults by allowing to work on current, real work challenges exchanging feedback with others in similar situations.

Furthermore, through reflection on specific events, discussion, and feedback, P2P exchanges can generate new explicit knowledge from participant’s unspoken tacit understanding.

Peer-to-peer can build on a traditional lecture presentation, but at the same time must encourage a recurring exchange of ideas and feedback among participants. Through reflection on specific topics, discussion and interaction, participants are forced to identify problems, point out contradictions and discuss about possible solutions. It is a successful way of sharing experiences and comparing methodologies, applications and lessons learnt.

The peers are not external experts offering ‘tailor-made’ technical solutions.



Working in a field like that of their counterparts, it is not only their scientific expertise, but also **their experience in addressing the challenges and delivering solutions** that make their contribution so important.

They are aware of the difficulties involved in implementing sustainable mobility policies, the complexity of the decision-making process, the financial restrictions and the scepticism of citizens. This is one of the main reasons why the peer approach in this field can have an extra value compared to academic and lecture-based training approach.

Building a well-matched team is about involving the right people ensuring good communication and mutual understanding. A good team should be composed of all categories of actors involved in the development and implementation of sustainable mobility policies: decision makers, mobility experts, local stakeholders.

It is important to bring together people who have similar roles in the city administration but at the same time, a wide variety of experience and background must be ensured. Diversity brings greater creativity within the team.

In an international P2P training, the language barriers parameter should also be taken into account: it is important to involve people with the appropriate language skills. Otherwise it will be necessary to engage an interpreter.

Through the P2P methods, both "experienced" and "learning" partners benefit from gaining expertise and support.

### 3. Overview of the methods applied in SOLEZ

The informal training model experimented in SOLEZ and based on a peer-to-peer approach, has foreseen **3 different steps/level** in accordance with the different project phases with and increasing level of commitment required to the participants.

Study visits has been the first mean used initially to **stimulate interest** in low-carbon mobility solutions for the successful implementation of LEZ in urban areas. Key stakeholders together with project staff teams have put the basis for the creation of a cross-cutting working group to be involved in most project activities (technical and communication)

Follow-up training workshops, organized locally soon after the study visits experience, have been chances to **share and spread the good practises** learned improving the impact of project activities on different territories. The informal workshops have been opportunities to reinforce the bond among key stakeholders and project teams, contributing to a general awareness rising on project topics.

With the last step, represented by the twinning trips among partner cities, relationships have grown closer and stronger creating a bond among project partners



that will last beyond project life. Furthermore, the visits have had a parallel bonding- effect on those key stakeholders who could take part in them.



### 3.1 Study visits

Study visits are excellent opportunities to improve and support transnational cooperation.

A study visit provides an opportunity for key stakeholders to learn relevant, good development practice from their peers.

Study visits support the European sense of community that exists beside national and regional solidarity and creates the basis for more active international cooperation.

They give the real sense of cooperation among different EU countries that cannot be perceived by doing only desk research studies: learning on field by peer colleagues is the best way to put transnational cooperation into practise.

It allows a high level of interaction among participants and exposure to the topic of study.

It is particularly suited for decision makers and technicians, who normally need to see first-hand what can be possibly done. They can see how others have tackled problems related to urban mobility issues having the opportunity at the same time, to discuss, debate and question the approaches undertaken.

Working together and reflecting on various job-related issues, sharing different points of view, discovering and accepting other ways of seeing things and many other positive aspects make both organisers and participants feel more like members of a common European space.



Study visits are great opportunities if well conducted and coordinated, so that everyone receives maximum benefits from them. Furthermore, they give the opportunity to establish contacts and create networks that can be useful for follow-up or future cooperation.

The study visits organized in the first project year in Graz and Turin have created the opportunity to learn relevant and good development practices of SUM developed in the more experienced cities of Graz and Turin directly from peers.

Allowing a high level of interaction among participants and exposure to the topic of study, SOLEZ study visits had the function to **raise awareness** to the topic to partners and their key stakeholders. Having set a budget for each FUA for inviting 5 key stakeholders in the visits, the project wanted to involve and catch the attention of those people (decision makers) that never had the chance to see how others have promoted and developed good practises of SUM in their territories.

**The first study visit took place in Graz on the 23-24 February 2017** with the aim to valorise enhance and share the city competences on sustainable urban mobility with the less experience partners and smaller municipalities.

The learning approach was a combination of presentations, discussions and site visits through a peer-to-peer approach. On the first day, the participants learned in a theoretical way about the overall vision of Graz in regards to sustainable mobility, the regional development of the metropolitan area, about sustainable urban freight transport, Smart City and public participation. Experts in the fields covered by the study visit presented their work in the morning of the first day. The visitors were encouraged to ask questions, which led to open discussions beneficial both for visitors and hosts. This allowed the good, active and direct exchange of experiences between visitors and hosts. Through the questions, the information was steered in the direction that suited the visitors best.

This theoretical part was followed by a walking tour in two groups to visit on site some of the case studies introduced in the morning where innovative measures, in regard to sustainable urban mobility, had been implemented.

At the end of the visit, a more general discussion was held, which gave the opportunity to participants to further share their knowledge and experience.

## The Graz study visit



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On October 19th, 2017 the City of Torino organised the second study visit, following the same methodology applied few months before in Graz. The visit allowed to present the opportunities that the City of Torino has to offer in terms of value-added services for a low emissions mobility. The specific focus was on the realisation of a Mobility as a Service model, which is nowadays recognised at European level as a potential solution for reducing the utilisation of private vehicles.

The methodology relied on frontal presentations and subsequent short Q&A sessions meant to introduce the study visit on the field, that foresaw a full immersion experience of the public transport system in Torino, guided tours of its main facilities and test drives of some of its main mobility services.

The on-site visit was performed in two session, the first one in the afternoon of October 19th 2017, the second one the morning after. During session one the creation of two groups was necessary. The groups then switched to complete their respective visits.

## The Turin study visit



*On October 19th, 2017 the City of Torino organised the second study visit, with the aim to present the opportunities that the City has to offer in terms of Value-Added services for a low emissions mobility. After a frontal presentation, the visit became a full immersion experience, for project partners and their invited stakeholders, of the public transport system in Torino, through guided tours of its main facilities and test drives of some of its main mobility services.*





## Evaluation of the visits

The study visits and their impact on the participants' knowledge have been evaluated through questionnaires distributed to the visitors. The survey highlighted that the participants' expectations on the study visit were highly met.

Participants were asked to self-evaluate their knowledge before and after the site visit to show the contribution of the project on the development of their expertise.

Broadly speaking, the visitors have considered that the quality of the visits' activities and organisation were of high level, the process qualitatively and quantitatively good, thanks to a large amount of new and beneficial information gained that gave new inspirations for own solutions. They also had the possibility to speak directly to the local experts.

The questions investigated whether the topics discussed met the participants' expectation; whether the contents have been addressed in sufficient detail and clearly; the speakers' capacity to motivate and exchange opinions; the actions possible implementation; timetable, duration and management of the session.

All in all, the answers prevail in the 3-5 scale out of 1-5.

Concerning the methodology used, it has proven to be fruitful, especially for the visitors.

They gained new knowledge that might be replicated at their own context.

Least but not last, the study visits arose the capacity-building of partner cities.

58 people in total were involved in the visits

### 3.2 Follow-up training workshops

On a second step and in order to guarantee a wider impact on local territory, the project has foreseen several informal follow-up training workshops to be organized with a peer-to-peer approach.

The follow-up training activities are meant to be important occasions at local level to transfer good practices and lesson learnt from those who participated in the two Study Visits foreseen in SOLEZ project to other peer colleagues or relevant project key stakeholders.

Any partner could customize the methodology to conduct the meeting as better suited to their own needs or capacity, considering that these learning workshops can be a good opportunity to increase the invited participants' knowledge on project aims and activities and LEZ/ZTL effective scheme implementations.

The general approach has to be a peer-to-peer exchange of experiences on what was seen first-hand during the study visits by employing techniques that encourage a wide involvement and discussion. The lecture-driven approach should be avoided. Reporting the experience of the study visit should be just a starting point leading to an open



discussion on LEZ/ZTL related topics creating a good balance between lecture and attendee participation.

At the end of this activity it is desirable that the participants' attitude towards LEZ implementation policies has slightly improved as a result of the training and the peer comparison.

This will further result in a more supportive attitude during SOLEZ Action Plan drafting and Pilot Actions implementation.

## Who needs to be involved in this activity?

The identification of the key stakeholders to involve in the follow-up training workshops, has been a useful first step to build relationships needed for a successful participatory process at the base of either the Action Plan drafting and Pilot Actions implementation.

This activity has given all partners the opportunity to select among different stakeholders, whose support could have more relevance on the success of the project.

Increasing their knowledge on project topics by showing and commenting the good practices experimented in the more experienced cities that hosted the study visits, and testing their attitude on the same topics, has been of great help to better shape the Action Plan content taking into account their views from this early stage, avoiding contrast or minimizing conflicts of interest during the participatory process of the Action Plan drafting.

At least 10 key stakeholders for each partner organization have participated in the training as beneficiaries of the information provided.

Their institutional role has varied from mobility managers in hinterland municipalities, mobility service providers or representatives of business associations, commuters, citizens, etc.

Members of the project teams, and if available a facilitator, have conducted the workshops activities, while the 5 stakeholders that participated to the study visit have acted as witnesses of good practices experimented first hand and animate the discussion encouraging wide involvement of the other selected peer - participants.

Such workshops have been conducted with the material used during the study visits.



## Follow-up training workshops organized during the project in the 8 target FUAs





### 3.3 Twinning trips

Among the capacity building activities carried on during SOLEZ project, the city twinning was meant to create preferential relations between couples of partners city in order to facilitate knowledge exchange and experience sharing on those sustainable urban mobility topics considered as a priority by both partners. In the project timeline, it is positioned in the last project phase, to consolidate the relationships already established during the project and support each other during the crucial phase of the pilot action implementation.

This technique allows transfers of knowledge and expertise; provides an opportunity to see first-hand how things are done elsewhere and identifies new ideas and ways of working.

SOLEZ involves large cities such as Turin, Gdansk and Graz and smaller realities such as Sarvar, Zilina and Vicenza. Their initial level of knowledge on mobility issues was variable, but they were all very committed on working on the same objectives. The same peer-to peer approach was used for all municipalities with no specific differences. The scale of the issues is smaller but has the same importance in large cities as in smaller ones. Therefore, this approach is particularly relevant when smaller municipalities are involved.

For local authorities who have little or no experience in sustainable mobility issues, the city twinning can be extremely helpful. In the role of "Mentees", they are able to ask for advice, receive guidance and gain technical assistance from the "mentor partner" they are paired with.



However, the most productive city twinning is often achieved between localities which have similar geographical, structural context. Local Authorities with similar characteristics can better understand each other's needs, because they have to face similar challenges and difficulties, they can actually speak together in the same policy or technically oriented “language” in smaller and focused groups fostering at the same time, the creation of long-term connections and networks among EU cities that aim to continue beyond the end of the project.

Following this approach, in the beginning of the project partner cities have been matched according to similarities and affinities of the pilot actions they chose to implement.

However, a certain margin of flexibility has been contemplated to make this activity as fruitful as possible and suitable to variable necessities and opportunities that might have risen during project implementation.

In fact, it emerged that in some cases, 3 cities instead of 2 cities, could better pair.

The “twinning groups” confirmed during Gdansk meeting in Sept 2018 were:

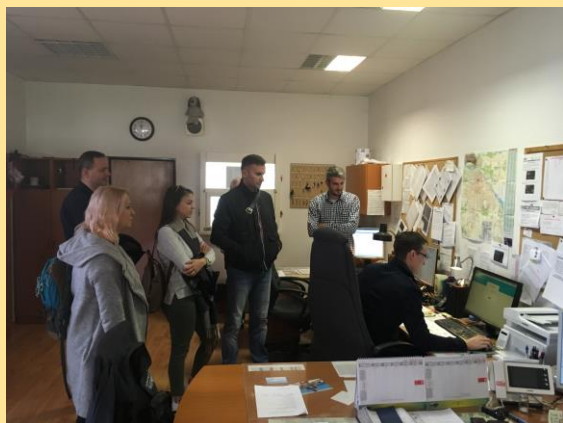
- ❖ **Sarvar + Turin + Graz**, all working on MaaS concepts as Value Added Services
- ❖ **Dubrovnik + Zilina**, on city bus transport electrification;
- ❖ **Brno + Gdansk + Vicenza** with on the customization of the smart parking tool.

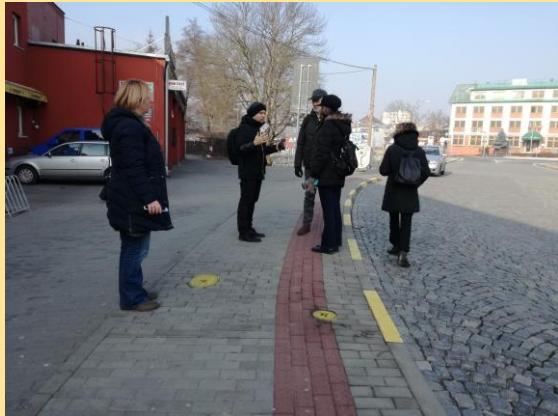
These 3 twinning trips took place from Nov 2018 to April 2019.

During the organization of the trips it emerged, and was subsequently confirmed, that the role that the technical partner, relevant for each concerned pilot action in each twinning trip, could have been crucial in each situation by giving to the cities staff teams, an extra support facilitating the knowledge exchange among city representatives.

Therefore, the external experts supporting the City of Graz, UNIZAG and CDV respectively participated in the visits as well, by giving their added value to the project activities.

## Twinning trips organized during the project in the 8 Target FUAs









## Conclusions: lesson learned and recommendation for transferability

To sum up, the project capacity building activities were meant to:

- ✓ increase knowledge of SOLEZ partners staff teams and key stakeholders;
- ✓ create a supporting ground to elaborate SOLEZ Action Plans

The **peer-to-peer training path** has proved to be the best method to achieve the objectives as it fosters the sharing of experiences, and the comparison of methodologies, application and lessons learnt as well; both “experienced” and “learning partners” have benefited from the sharing of expertise and support.

The 3 activities foreseen and organized in different steps with increasing levels of involvement, have been all relevant opportunities to guide local stakeholders into an awareness rising process that in most cases, has lead to a change of attitude that might have an impact on local mobility strategies too.

The 3 steps explained in detail above in the document, can also be used singularly in a coherent way with the objectives that any administration is willing to tackle. However, it is only when they are put in a constructive synergy that they give best results.

The study visits organized during the project were particularly useful for:

- ✓ establishing contacts and create networks;
- ✓ allow a high level of interaction among participants;
- ✓ gain new knowledge that might be replicated in different context.

**Key success factor:** study visits require a long and careful planification at level of topics to be discuss and best practises to be shown. This goes hand in hand with the key stakeholder identification and involvement. If the visit doesn't meet the participants' expectations and interests, the risk is twofold:

- -difficulties in stakeholders' concrete involvement (participation to the visit - local administrators find it difficult to get 2/3 days off work if this is not supported by a strong and motivation)
- -difficulties in catching stakeholders' attention during the visit if the topics are not in line with the participants expectations.



The Informal Follow-up Training Workshops were particularly useful for:

- ✓ guaranteeing a wider impact on local territory;
- ✓ transfer knowledges from the study visits participants to the workshop's participants;
- ✓ increase the participants knowledge on project aims.

**Key success factor:** it is advisable to organize the workshops in a very informal contest and possibly integrated with an already planned work meeting in order to optimize the available time of technicians and decision makers who take part at them. The videos shot during the Study visits has been perfect *icebreakers* for starting an informal discussion on sustainable mobility *best practises* of other cities. “Do you think that (*a best practise*) could be replicable in (*own FUA*)?”: it is a very simple question that animate participants discussion, warm up the environment and stimulate a constructive debate on sustainable mobility topics among the participants.





The Twinning Trips were particularly useful to:

- ✓ facilitate knowledge exchange and experience;
- ✓ consolidate established relationships;
- ✓ support each other during the crucial phase of the pilot action implementation;
- ✓ seeing first-hand how things are done elsewhere thus identifying new ideas and ways of working.

**Key success factor:** the realization of the “trip” is just the crowning moment of an entire process that has started long before. The real “twinning” experience starts with the preparation of the trip, with the shared decisions to plan the agenda and a coordinated selection of the key stakeholders to be involved in order to have the greater and mutual benefit exchanging experiences and knowledge.

In this process, the **language barriers** don’t have to be under-estimated, as they are a necessary requirement for a successful peer-to peer transnational experience, which is the most relevant added value of the overall training path.

For mobility experts, even without strong skills in foreign languages, communication is normally facilitated by a common international technical jargon. If local administrators are involved in the same twinning opportunity, a language facilitator/interpreter is highly recommended, if not even mandatory for guaranteeing the activity a success and meet participants expectations.

Always keep in mind that, working with local administrations always imply a long and time-consuming process that can be easily interrupted, compromised or delayed by local elections or changes in the political governs of the cities involved.

However, in the best case in which the process can be completed and the 3 steps accomplished, the result is highly rewarding and the long lasting effects will have their positive impact on the territories not only for the improvement of the low-carbon mobility strategies but also for the benefit that might come in the future at different policies level from the added-value of a consolidated transnational cooperation.