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On December 9th 2020 the European Commission presented its "Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy", which is central to achieving the climate targets of the European Green Deal (EC, 2020a). Together with an Action Plan of 82 initiatives, the strategy sets the policy agenda for Europe's transition to a green, smart and affordable transport system that aims to change the way people and goods move across the continent and deliver a 90% reduction in the transport sector's emissions by 2050. The strategy also lays the foundation for the digital transformation of the EU transport system and stresses the importance of making transport more resilient in order to secure a well-functioning single market in future crises. More generally, the objective is to make all transport modes more sustainable, make sustainable alternatives widely available in a multimodal transport system and put in place the right incentives to drive the transition. To make this vision a reality, ten key areas for action ("flagships") are laid out, ranging from boosting the uptake of zero-emission vehicles and related infrastructure to achieving seamless, safe and efficient connectivity and enhancing transport safety and security.

One of the strategy's priority action areas is that of "making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy" (EC, 2020a: 6). With urban areas being accountable for 40% of Europe's total road transport CO_2 emissions (EC, 2020b), cities and the regions they form part of have a central role to play in Europe's mobility transition. This chapter assesses the urban dimension of the new mobility strategy by drawing on discussions held at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in the process of drafting an opinion on the strategy.[1]

I. Towards a holistic urban mobility transition

In cities, mobility is the link between where people live, work and go to school and where businesses provide their products and services. A successful urban mobility transition requires a holistic approach that moves beyond reductions in CO_2 emissions, particulate matter and noise to also address issues around connectivity, accessibility, affordability and traffic

1. The author worked on the CoR opinion as an expert supporting its rapporteur Robert van Asten, CoR member and Deputy Mayor of The Hague. At the time of writing, the opinion is under consideration by the CoR. Adoption is foreseen for June 30th/July 1st 2021. This chapter therefore does not reflect the positions adopted in the final CoR opinion.

safety. Ultimately it is about making cities more liveable, healthy and inclusive.

> *"The mobility transition is not just a question of making transport more sustainable (towards zero-emission vehicles), but also of reducing distances and the amount of travel – where possible – and changing and sharing modes of mobility"* (Robert van Asten, Deputy Mayor of The Hague and rapporteur for the CoR's opinion on the EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy).

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Mobility policy is often embedded in spatial policy. Today, European cities and regions leading the mobility transition aim for service proximity in order to avoid unnecessary travel. The 15-minute city model, which aims for residents to live within a short walk or bike ride of their daily needs, exemplifies this approach. Schools, workplaces and shops should ideally be close to where people live, not just in (inner) cities but also in surrounding areas. Greater workplace proximity improves the access of vulnerable populations to the labour market. Ensuring services are within easy reach reduces rural flight among the young and makes it possible for the elderly to live independently for longer.

An effective urban mobility transition also depends on support for more and new forms of active modes of transport, including shared and micromobility (e.g. scooters or speed pedelecs), as well as the provision of dedicated infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport. People need affordable and safe public transport connections and reliable and available mobility as a service (MaaS). Crucially, these alternative modes of transport can only be successful if they are accompanied by behavioural changes. Cities and regions are well positioned to provide incentives for citizens and businesses to change their mobility habits and preferences. The COVID-19 crisis, which has brought a sharp increase in teleworking and more flexible working hours, provides an opportunity in this regard.

Finally, an urban mobility transition also requires functional urban areas to be interlinked with the wider networks of connections in which they are embedded. Cities and regions are multimodal mobility hubs within national and international networks, where passengers and freight come together. Both their internal and external connectivity are vital for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU and the integrity of the internal market. Resilient interurban networks are a prerequisite for a well-functioning internal market in future crises.

II. Cities in the EU's new mobility strategy

Where and how do cities and regions feature in the new EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy?

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs)

A cornerstone of EU urban mobility policy, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) are also central to the local and regional contributions to the new mobility strategy. First introduced in 2013, this voluntary

instrument was designed to improve the accessibility of urban areas by providing sustainable mobility and transport "to, through and within" cities and their surrounding (peri-urban) areas (EC, 2013). To be effective, SUMPs have to be flexible and meet the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. In some member states they are used together with regional mobility plans that cover regional "daily urban systems", that is, the urban region and the surrounding areas from which individuals commute. Currently, around 1000 European cities have adopted SUMPs. Building on the original SUMP guidelines, in recent years the EU has published additional guidance covering a wide range of issues from low-emission zones to cycling and shared mobility (Eltis, 2021).

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In the new mobility strategy, the Commission announced that the use of SUMPs will be extended and made mandatory for cities that are nodes on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). In light of these changes and as part of the revision of the EU Urban Mobility Package in the autumn of 2021, the SUMP guidelines will be further adjusted. Clearer guidance is still needed on local and regional mobility management to tackle congestion, on improving connectivity with suburban and rural areas, and on interlinkages between mobility and deteriorating local ecosystems. The new policy package will provide the main mechanisms for supporting cities in the improvement and adoption of SUMPs.

EU financial support for cities

The Commission's new mobility strategy emphasises that the importance of urban mobility must be reflected in EU policies and more financial support for cities. For the overall functioning of the TEN-T, this would mean that provisions are made for first and last mile solutions in cities, including multimodal mobility hubs, park-and-ride facilities and safe infrastructure for walking and cycling. A first step in this direction could be the proposal by the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission of the Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme to support 100 cities in their systemic transformation towards carbon-neutrality by 2030 (EC, 2020c). Mobility measures will no doubt play a large part in these efforts. Another option would be to link the formulation and implementation of SUMPs with the option of accessing certain EU funding programmes focused on urban and mobility solutions.

> *"The European Union has to encourage the shift of mobility behaviour with dedicated funding and legislation"* (Andreas Wolter, Deputy Mayor of Cologne and Spokesperson for Mobility at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions [CEMR]).

Yet, while this and other EU funding programmes are very welcome, they are not enough to get the majority of European cities on track for meeting the EU's 2030 and 2050 climate targets in the transport sector. Substantial investments need to be made from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the key instrument at the heart of Next Generation EU.

The Commission also needs to make it easier for cities and regions to access EU funding. The fragmentation of budgets, strict eligibility requirements, low success rates in qualifying for funds and burdensome

accountability obligations are all barriers that cities and regions face when trying to apply for EU funds. Simpler procedures, better information and the creation of one-stop shops that provide technical assistance and share expertise tailored to the regional and local scale could improve the chances of subnational administrations and their partners.

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That said, not all financial support has to come from EU funding and subsidies. Supporting cities in qualifying for and attracting other public and private investments is equally if not more important. A good example of how this could be done is the InvestEU programme, which offers financial instruments to combine public and private investments in its "sustainable infrastructure" policy window.

Enabling cities to shape the mobility transition

EU legislation in the field of harmonisation, standardisation and interoperability is necessary for a level playing field. Proper exchange and protection of data and high standards for emissions and road safety can only be regulated at EU level. The new mobility strategy provides many useful policy measures to help cities and regions shape the mobility transition, including on standards for zero-emission vehicles and new MaaS concepts. However, if these policies are to be effective, cities and regions' needs and interests need to be central to their design and implementation.

The policy proposals for zero-emission vehicles (CO_2 standards and post-Euro 6/VI standards) must be implemented in a way that enables cities and regions to keep pace with the necessary expansion of renewable energy production, regional and local distribution networks, and fuelling and charging infrastructure. In this regard the new proposals the Commission will make to promote charging infrastructure and hydrogen points are very welcome.[2] However, it is important that the new standards leave sufficient room for regional and local innovation and are technology-neutral.

Sustainable and smart mobility are two sides of the same coin. Many cities and regions want to implement MaaS concepts to promote door-to-door transport. To that end, it is important that the EU's forthcoming revision of the Directive on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)[3] includes the introduction of multimodal tickets and integrated information about all possible types or combinations of transport. This directive should also take into account future autonomous vehicles that will fundamentally change the way we travel and make it possible to set up "public transport on demand" in small municipalities in sparsely populated areas.

On a number of points the planned legislation outlined in the new mobility strategy could be more ambitious. For example, cities and regions are trying to limit car and freight traffic through low-emission and zero-emission zones, but lack access to vehicle restriction data[4] to ensure proper enforcement. To enhance road safety the EU should also adopt legislation on the use of Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) systems in all vehicles and a clear regulatory framework for light electric vehicles such as electric scooters, speed pedelecs and other forms of micromobility.

2. These changes will be made by revising the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (AFID) expected in July 2021 and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) expected in December 2021, specifically provisions related to charging infrastructure in the built environment.
3. The ITS directive will be revised in the third quarter of 2021.
4. EUCARIS is an intergovernmental application for a network of national vehicle registration databases. It is currently used for Directive 2015/413 on the exchange of information on road traffic offences.

III. In need of a more joined-up approach

The Commission's new mobility strategy is a valuable and comprehensive initiative for regions and cities. However, to make European mobility more sustainable and smarter by 2030, the implementation of the strategy should take into account cities and regions' needs and their knowledge and experience. Mobility policy and governance cut across all scales of government, from the EU to the national, regional and local. A joined-up approach involving all levels of government is vital to the transition to sustainable mobility. Cities and regions are keen and ready to work with all partners involved to make the mobility transition a success.

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