

MOBILE - Innovative Communication Strategies and Experience learnt in the EU Life Project in the City of Linz, Austria

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Abstract - For 3 years (1997 – 2000) the City of Linz (in co-operation with Austrian Mobility Research) had worked on a sustainable urban mobility programme designing and implementing various “communication packages”. This project was called ‘MOBILE’ (Innovative Mobility Concept for a Medium-sized European City to Improve the Quality of Living and of the Environment) and was co-financed by the European Union (DG XI, Life Environment project). To achieve a lasting improvement of the inhabitants’ travel patterns MOBILE attempted to show that mobility and quality of living are no mutually excluding phenomena but can be experienced as one common phenomenon. MOBILE included 6 modules which offered a wide range of alternatives to motorised traffic and which aimed at promoting environmentally sound patterns of mobility for various target groups.

1. Introduction: Awareness-raising measures in urban traffic - a new approach

Some general figures about Linz: Linz is the capital of the Austrian province of Upper Austria. It covers an area of 96 square kilometres and is the third largest city in Austria with 213.000 inhabitants. Its location at the river Danube and the fact that it is an important hub connecting major international traffic routes favoured the city’s development as a commercial centre. Based on primary industries (iron and steel) Linz developed a sound economic structure with high-tech products and modern trade and industry. Mobility is a major topic in Linz. Unfortunately public transport is often neglected because the comforts of using one’s private car are given priority. The number of cars has steadily risen by 3% annually during the last few years and this trend still continues. During rush hour it is difficult to find a parking space in Linz. About 80.000 commuters travel to the city every day, most of them with the private cars, although Linz is connected to an important railway route (the so-called “Westbahn” connecting Vienna with Salzburg). To lower car usage the so-called “Speeding Up Programme of Linz” was set up. It was designed to make public transport more flexible and attractive. In Linz, the classical public means of transport is the tramway which provides a good north-south connection. During rush hour, however, general traffic congestion remains a problem even for tram traffic. Next to several bus-lines there are also light rail connections to the suburbs and the surrounding villages. Park & Ride systems were also set up as an additional measure to increase the share of public transport.

The last traffic survey showed the following modal split:

Walking: 31,6%

Cycling: 4,2%

Public Transport: 22,6%

Car: 41,6%

There are 419 cars per 1000 inhabitants.

Because of the low share of cycle traffic the City of Linz devised a cycle traffic concept in 1997; MOBILE was based on this concept. For the first time, bicycles were awarded more importance as everyday means of transport.

A survey carried out by Socialdata in Linz also revealed that traffic and environment clearly were the leading municipal problems. 93% of the inhabitants of Linz considered the consequences of car traffic hardly bearable or not bearable at all. In order to counter the continuous increase in motorised traffic the general trend needed to be reserved in favour of a more environmentally sound traffic concept. So far, solutions for traffic and environmental problems mainly concentrated on the planning and infrastructure level.

These were the framework conditions which spurred the development and implementation of the MOBILE project which aimed at setting new standards by combining traffic planning and organisational measures with awareness-raising and motivating measures. The inhabitants of Linz were involved in the planning process as well as in demonstrations and special campaigns which offered them the opportunity to try out new forms of travel behaviour and which provided information on different forms of mobility in Linz. Always keeping in mind MOBILE's basic assumption, namely that mobility is a matter of attitude, MOBILE organised campaigns and communication packages for a wide range of different target groups (cyclists, children, teachers, students and PT-users). One of the major concerns for the MOBILE team during these 3 years was to design special "communication packages" for politicians and people working in the city administration. Special emphasis, however, was also put on improving the attractiveness of existing bicycle networks and facilities.

2. The method: Action research

The motto: "Try and test it!"

For 3 years MOBILE tried to show how awareness raising could work. People were informed about environmentally sound forms of mobility at various events and happenings. What was special about these events was the active participation of the people of Linz in the awareness-raising process. From psychology of learning we know that bits of information which are heard or spoken are only remembered up to 30%, whereas tasks which can be carried out personally are remembered up to 90%. MOBILE tried to make use of this effect: Only through active participation and personal commitment can "fixed" patterns of mobility be reconsidered and restructured.

The evaluation of the results, that is how the people of Linz judged the campaigns, was examined in accompanying surveys. Surveys on the cycle traffic concept of the city of Linz were carried out to integrate the people of Linz in the planning process. Special attention was paid to testing new forms of mobility. To do the shopping in a completely different way, to rediscover one's way to work by using a free ticket for public transport or to take part in car-sharing projects – people's experience of mobility was to be expanded and new ways were to

be explored. Structural elements were used to win back space for environmentally sound means of transport. In a competition of the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz a bicycle stand was developed which was installed in an area formerly reserved for car parking.



Thus, a strong signal was sent to cyclists proving that they were accepted as environmentally sound road-users. Comprehensive PR-campaigns were another important aspect of MOBILE: At trade fairs for families and senior citizens the project was presented to the people of Linz, the different aspects of the project were presented on information boards. At all events major emphasis was put on the interactive aspect, i.e. there was always room for discussions on mobility and on the quality of life in Linz. Thus, one of the main aims of the project was to integrate the people of Linz in the preparation and implementation.

**Module 1, Part 1: Shopping by bicycle -
Motto: "The bike can carry more than you think!"**



MOBILE offered costumers the chance to rent a bicycle or a cycle trailer and try it out within a certain period of time. At 3 supermarkets in Linz, clients were invited to rent bicycles and trailers free of charge for a period of 14 days to test the bicycle as a means of transport for everyday use. People realised that their shopping didn't necessarily need to be done by car but could be done by bike as well. Due to the great demand for the cycle trailers the local traffic department

decided to provide bicycle trailers for children as well.

**Module 1, Part 2: Functional art of work –
Motto: “Setting a signal for bicycles!”**



MOBILE created space for cyclists. At the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz a competition was organised in which students of the master class of metalworking designed special cycle stands. In preliminary studies project groups had analysed the functionality of cycle stands and optimum locations. A jury consisting of representatives of the City of Linz, the University and Austrian Mobility Research agreed on the best design. Especially in the city centre the bicycle is an ideal means of transport which isn't paid enough attention by shop owners. By restructuring

parking facilities in front of the shops in the city centre of Linz it was signalled to cyclists that they were taken serious as environmentally friendly costumers.

**Module 2: Space for cyclists –
Motto: “Your opinion counts!”**



To create space for cyclists a traffic concept was developed which was presented to the people of Linz on various occasions. At a special cycle day MOBILE provided the opportunity to obtain information on cycle traffic in Linz and to discuss general topics such as “cycling against the one-way street” or “cycling in pedestrian precincts” to the people of Linz. Important campaigns in Module 2 were infrastructure measures such as the installation of traffic lights for cyclists, the improvement of consisting bicycle routes and a

new signing system which focused on popular bicycle routes and destinations. And once again MOBILE's claim to fame: Participation of the citizens, integration of cycling groups and co-operation with the respective authorities to achieve the highest possible acceptance and user-friendliness.

**Module 3: Children Mobility in Linz –
Motto: “Kids are better traffic planners!”**



In a school project, which lasted a whole year, children were invited to function as traffic experts and analyse the traffic safety in their schools' surroundings. This campaign, which was developed in co-operation with the teachers, provided new opportunities in traffic education and allowed the children to become actively involved in the planning of traffic areas and to deal with mobility from the perspective of children. In the project week entitled “From traffic-oriented



children to child-oriented traffic” things really got going: The children presented suggestions for the re-organisation of bus stops in their schools’ surroundings, built models and tried to be traffic planners. They carried out a survey on modal choice and concluded that children were society’s most environmentally friendly group. Traffic accidents were analysed from the children’s point of view, danger spots were examined and suggestions for improvement of the general traffic situation were discussed. The aim of Module 3 was to initiate an awareness-raising process involving also teachers and parents. MOBILE attempted to prompt intense discussions on

mobility where traffic was not to be seen as a necessary evil but as a process which could be influenced by our actions. In a symposium the results were presented to the people of Linz. The musical “Magic Traffic” was performed for the first time.

Module 4: Train the trainers –

Motto: “Real life versus artificial training areas!”



In a seminar a special kind of bicycle training which has now been used by Austrian Mobility Research in Graz for 8 years was presented to teachers in Linz. This bicycle training program prepares 10-year old pupils for their cycle tests. Main element of the program is the practical training in real traffic instead of theoretical instructions in safe training areas. Unlike conventional training programs this program regards it as its duty to train children in cycling in the surroundings of their schools and homes and to teach them only such rules and measures which can be understood by children at this developmental stage. Practising cycling in real life is the only reasonable way to prepare children for real traffic situations. 50 traffic educators as well as representatives of the school authorities of Linz and the police took part in this seminar and

participated in the practical exercises. The result of the seminar speaks for itself: the Linz police forces now offer bicycle training in real traffic situations.

**Module 5: Environmentally sound mobility through car-sharing –
Motto: “Using jointly instead of owning solitarily!”**



Car-sharing is the most up-to-date form of using a car. Many people share a car without having to restrict their mobility. This system is simple and reliable: Book a car, get in and off you go. Car-sharing is part of an environment-oriented traffic concept and can create new space for public transport in the city. This was the motto of Module 5 where car-sharing could be tested for free. The system was promoted by direct mail advertising in 6000 households. Anyone interested could attend information evenings on car-sharing; in addition, an information stand was presented at the Austrian Automobile Club where information on the campaign was available; the organisers were also responsible for membership registrations and bookings. 69 new testers enlisted for the test period.

**Module 6: Being mobile in public transport by Individualised Marketing–
Motto: “Coming and going – We are there for you!”**



The use of public transport cannot only be increased through infrastructure measures but also through personal advice and information. “Individualised Marketing”, a marketing concept promoting the use of public transport through direct contact, personal attention and customer-tailored information, was the new concept for the public transport company (Linz Linien) in Linz. They pinned their hopes on this concept developed by Socialdata and informed 8000 households of Linz about time schedules, traffic services and traffic lines. In personal talks people were informed about individual mobility patterns and given free public transport tickets. As a consequence, 17 additional PT trips were made by the people contacted, an increase of 10%.

3. Conclusion – MOBILE got things going!



As a lasting effect of MOBILE cycle initiatives and the traffic department of Linz started to work together. They prepared the priority program for cyclists in close co-operation; right from the start of the concept phase they had a strong voice and were able to achieve major impacts on traffic planning.



The bicycle training in general traffic education, one of the teaching principles in Austrian schools, was reorganised and became more practice-oriented. All children of the city of Linz were trained in real traffic since the start of the MOBILE project which allowed them to learn a safe and self-confident traffic behaviour. City traffic maps for children help them to find their way in their own districts. The share of cyclists has increased from 3 to 6%. Because of the great demand the traffic department also rents out cycle trailers for children. The shopping bikes can still be rented from the bicycle coordinator as one of the services of the City of Linz.



69 car-sharing users could be won by the campaign. At the same time, 480 m² of green areas, which had been used as car parking spaces before, could be re-adapted. As a consequence of Module 6, use of public transport by informed users increased by 10%.

But the most important impact was the awareness-raising process about environmentally sound mobility behaviour which started with MOBILE. Communication packages for different target groups also make it necessary to maintain good contacts with the city authorities and politicians. Efficient communication and co-operation in the beginning of MOBILE was the first step to bring them all together and to involved them in a comprehensive awareness-raising process.



MOBILE was the first city-based awareness raising campaign of its kind in Europe which included a wide range of mobility management activities for various target groups and it set an example for the next generation of sustainable urban transport campaigns.