

“BIO-TRANSPORT” – AWARENESS FOR CLEAN URBAN TRANSPORT IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA



“Bio-transport” – Awareness for clean urban transport in Vilnius

Problem description

There is a large number of cars on the streets in Vilnius (now the level of motorization in city is 450 cars/per 1000 inhabitants, while it was 325 cars/per 1000 inhabitants in 2001 and 244 cars/per 1000 inhabitants in 1997) and this number is increasing day by day, which is why the following problems are becoming more and more serious:

- The concentration of pollutants (especially CO₂) is drastically increasing.
- All areas that were measured exceed the allowable level of noise, which is 55dB (A).

While the level of motorization and number of accidents have been increasing over the last 30 years, the amount of non-motorised travel was decreasing (the number of trips made on foot decreased from 41.8 % (1979) to 29 % (2004), and by bike from 4,8 % (1979) till 0,8 % (2004).

Description of the campaign / measure

A decision was made to mount the campaigns described below in an attempt to influence travel behaviour in Vilnius. These activities, to promote the use of non-motorised transport, were also selected because they were broadly related to national policy objectives, including:

- Reduced energy consumption;
- Reductions in pollution,
- Promotion of health;
- Increased road safety;
- Reduction in transport related noise levels;
- Encouraging space-saving behaviour when driving and parking;
- Improving accessibility for target groups in society.

These objectives have been addressed through the specifics of the campaign, seeking to increase the use of bicycles in Vilnius city. Thus, it is important to develop a correct balance between cyclists and drivers.

Municipal actions to achieve these objectives are based on the following principles:

- The improvement of conditions for bicycle use;
- The reduction of car speed;
- The fostering of positive attitudes in society to mixing cars and bicycles;

The improvement of conditions for bicycle use is achieved by:

- Bicycle tracks that can be used by cyclists and the disabled;
- Special signals at junctions and other critical points in the network that ensure additional priority for cyclists;
- Safe bicycle parking places.

Campaign 1: By means of a questionnaire, to estimate the popularity of clean urban transport (bicycles) in the Lazdynai district of Vilnius

During the first stage of this project a comprehensive questionnaire - "To school by bike" was developed, and distributed to schoolchildren and their parents.

The issues investigated included:

- bicycle parking;
- building bicycle routes;
- community safety.

The main objective of this campaign was to change the attitudes of the target group (10 – 20 year old schoolchildren from 5 secondary schools), to encourage them to use bicycles. The residential district of Lazdynai was selected because new cycle routes and cycle parking sites are planned to be built near schools in this district.

750 questionnaires were distributed at 5 secondary schools (150 questionnaires in each school), and 647 pupils (53 % girls and 47 % boys) responded.

The questionnaire was targeted at 13-14 year-olds. This was done because younger people may be open to new thinking about the use of different modes of transport since they are at a point of change in their lives

Campaign 2: To propagate and popularize biotransport, energy – efficient, healthy and mobile life style

Bicycle-related events were organized both before and after the survey.

The action My Family, My Bike and Me was a public event in Vilnius. It was designed to promote non-motorised transport, and to encourage a more healthy way of life. The broad target groups for the campaign were cyclists, school pupils and various city clubs. The specific target groups were school pupils from Lazdynai, Minties, Sausio 13-osios, Ažuolynas schools and any other community members that wished to take part in the event. The target audience for 2003 was approximately 2,500. The event took place in Pasaku park in the Lazdynai district, which had been properly prepared with bicycle tracks marked out, prior to the event.

The aim was to change the attitude of the city inhabitants towards bicycles. The organizer, Vilnius Healthy City Bureau, looked for partners in central and local government, and amongst decision makers. The event was organized in co-operation with city local government departments, and campaign participants; it also included the preparation and production of various posters and fliers.

Volunteer organizers of the event were mainly students from Vilnius Pedagogical University and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University; in addition, representatives of many different non-governmental organizations took part.

Observation near Lazdynai secondary school sport grounds

The catchment areas of five different schools in the Lazdynai District were observed, to find out how many students go to school on their bikes. Observations were made in September 2003 and September 2004. The results showed that a small number of schoolchildren use their bikes to go to school, but a rather greater number used their bikes to go to extracurricular activities.

After the research was conducted, meetings were organized at schools where the schoolchildren were invited to discuss non-motorised transport. The schoolchildren expressed a wish to create cycle parking areas in the school catchment areas, and to create as many bike tracks as possible to guarantee safety on the way to school.

Art competition “My way to school”

Vilnius Healthy City Bureau organized a painting contest among schools called “My way to school”. Out of 300 paintings, 70 were selected. These were exhibited in Lazdynai school. Later we organized meetings for the children with psychologists, and the paintings were analyzed from the psychological point of view, to better understand the importance of non motorized transport to the schoolchildren.



Action “Let’s live in healthy city”, aimed at schoolchildren of Vilnius City (bicycle and sports festival in the town park)

In promoting non motorized transport, a very important role was played by an action called “Let’s live in healthy city”. The event was promoted beforehand through local media and by means of posters on billboards in the city, as well as informational posters distributed in schools and local districts. The action organized in 2004 consisted of two parts; a bicycle ride in the streets of Vilnius (370 cyclists

took part), ending up at a festival in “Independence Square”, where different competitions and a concert took place. This attracted a great number of residents (about 2700 people).

Road safety studies and Cyclist Proficiency Test in a special road safety school for cyclists at Lazdynai secondary school

In 2003 only 7 schoolchildren passed their cycling proficiency test, compared with 12 in 2004. This shows that children are becoming more receptive to road safety messages.

Campaign 3: To estimate influence of mobility campaigns to schoolchildren

For the second stage questionnaires for repeated sociological surveys were prepared, and there was an additional question there (answers to this question should help to estimate how effective are these actions). After systematizing data and comparing its results with 2003 results information about following things was received:

- Changes in structure of schoolchildren trips to school;
- Changes in number of pupils who have their own bicycle;
- Changes in respondents opinion about development of bicycle tracks in Vilnius and Lazdynai;
- Mobility companies influence on schoolchildren.

Who is the driving force behind it? Who is the beneficiary?

The campaigns were run by Vilnius Gediminas Technical University and Vilnius Healthy City Bureau. In this project Vilnius Gediminas Technical University was represented by the Department of Urban Engineering, which has experience in the preparation of similar projects, connected with assessment of public transport and development, and the popularization and promotion of bicycle tourism.

Vilnius Healthy City Bureau follows the Strategic Plan of Vilnius City Municipality. The key aim of its activities is to promote the idea of a healthy city. This is achieved by promoting the attitudes of society towards health as one of its greatest values; encouraging society to create a healthy environment; concentrating on public efforts to improve health; and educating and teaching the community healthy habits and experience. The Healthy City Bureau cooperates with organizations in Vilnius City with the aim of promoting a healthy lifestyle. Vilnius city inhabitants are encouraged to take part in various actions, programs, projects, and seminars.

As Vilnius Healthy City Bureau is a subdivision of Vilnius City Municipality it has a direct influence on politicians and decisions makers. For this purpose Vilnius Healthy City Bureau prepared two motions to the Municipality, which made possible two new projects: The International bicycle track for tourism ‘Bicycle route Eurovelo-11’ and “linking the existing bicycle tracks by designing and implementing safe traffic infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycles in Vilnius city”. These projects were discussed and confirmed by various committees such as the Urban Development Committee, Health Care and Environment Protection Committee and the Commission of the Community Development. Then, with the approval of politicians, the scheme of bicycle roads was confirmed by the council. (Annex ‘The bicycle path scheme of Lazdynai’ and ‘The bicycle track of Eurovelo-11’)

Main slogan / statement

“For a safe and healthy city”.

Results

After systematizing data and comparing its results with the 2003 results, the following differences were noted:

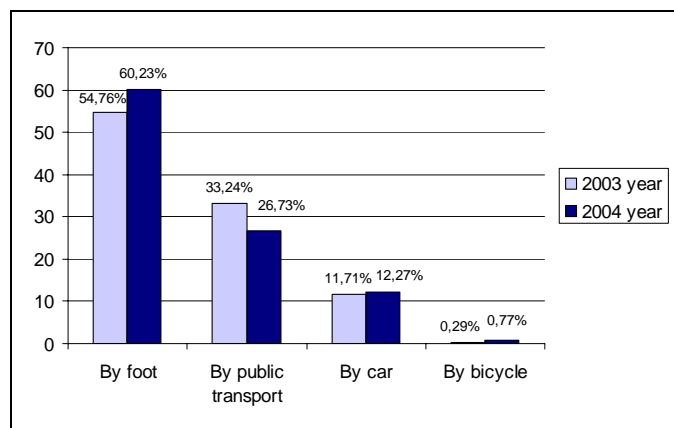


Figure 1: Changes in schoolchildren's trips to school

We can see that after various mobility campaigns and events, children's travel to school have been changed for the better. According to the data of the 2004 sociological survey:

The proportion of home – school – home trips made on foot increased from 54.8 % to 60.2 %;

The proportion of trips home – school – home trips made by bicycle increased from 0.3 % to 0.8 %;

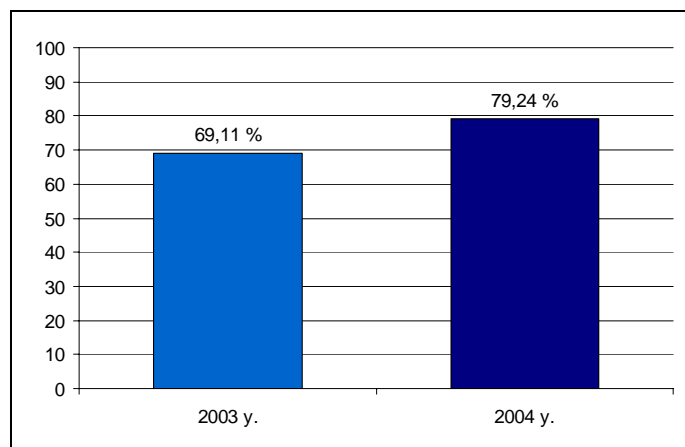


Figure 2: Changes in number of respondents who own a bicycle

More families now own a bicycle: in 40,5 % of respondents' households there was at least one bike in 2003, but by 2004 this increased to 42,7 %.

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There are now more pupils who have their own bicycle. In less than one year this proportion increased from 69.1 % to 79.2 % of the population.

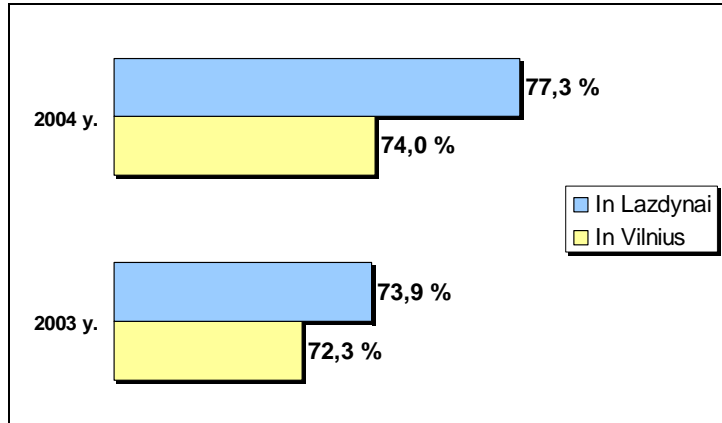


Figure 3: Changes in respondents' attitudes to the development of bicycle tracks in Vilnius and Lazdynai (% agreeing that more cycle tracks should be built)

Figure 4 shows that the majority of children who responded to the survey felt that the campaigns and events organized as part of STEP by STEP had influenced their mode choice towards non-motorised transport.

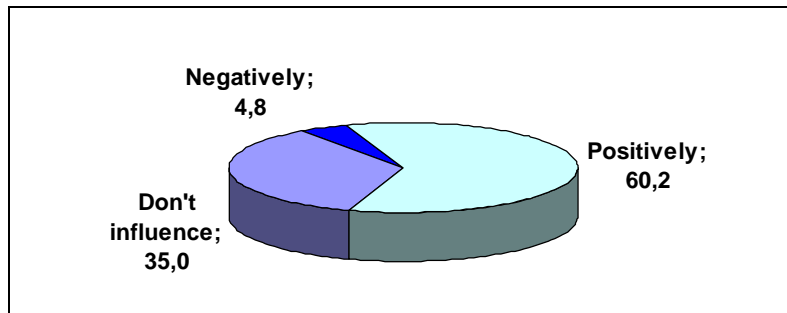


Figure 4: Influence on mobility campaigns on schoolchildren

Steps for implementation

Setting up the program (designing the contents)

The STEP by STEP programme in Vilnius was designed by the Vilnius Healthy City Bureau and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

Deciding who is responsible for different tasks

The paintings' contest "My way to school" was the responsibility of Vilnius Healthy City Bureau (VHCB);

The action "My family, my bike and me" was the responsibility of VHCB;

The action "Let's live in healthy city" Was the responsibility of VHCB;

Road safety studies and the Cycling Proficiency in a special safe traffic school for bicyclists in



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Lazdynai secondary school was the responsibility of the special safe traffic school for bicycles;
The estimation of mobility campaigns influence to schoolchildren was the responsibility of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU);
The action “To school on bike” was the responsibility of VGTU;
Working with the Mass Media was the responsibility of VHCB;
The work with the politicians and committees in Vilnius municipality was the responsibility of VHCB;
The weekend bicycle trips was the responsibility of Bicycle Riders Union and VHCB;
Directing the events was the responsibility of VHCB;
The conclusion of Advantages and disadvantages of bicycle transport was the responsibility of VHCB;
The Observation near Lazdynai secondary schools sport grounds was the responsibility of VGTU and VHCB.

Find partners / participants / support

VSMB sent out letters to different businessmen for the organization of the events. The partners, who joined us were as follows: Tele radio station Hanza, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Environment, UAB Žemaitijos pienas, UAB Biok, Tourism center, Bicycle Riders Union ect.

Dissemination / publication of results

Organizing events there were held press conference in Municipality of Vilnius by Vilnius Healthy City Bureau. A week before the event youth were invited to participate through radio advertisements, articles in newspapers “Respublika”, “Lietuvos Rytas” add “Sostinė“ and an article in Environment Book. For this occasion posters, information leaflets were published and distributed in the schools, and NGO’s and local districts.

Information

You can get more information:

- in Lithuanian, Russian and English from Marija Burinskiene, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Urban Engineering Department, Sauletekio ave.11, LT 10233, Vilnius – 40, Lithuania, Phone: +370 5 2744719; Fax: + 370 5 2744730; e-mail: marbur@ap.vtu.lt
- in Lithuanian, Russian, German and English from Danguole Vaitkiene, Vilnius Healthy City Bureau, Vilnius Municipality, Konstitucijos pr. 3, LT-09601 Vilnius, Lithuania, Phone+ 370 5 2112589; e-mail: danguolev@post.omnitel.net

Link and or article for more information

More information can be obtained from the final report of the STEP BY STEP project which can be downloaded from the projects website: www.eu-stepbystep.org