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Photo courtesy of Harry Schiffer, FGM AMOR – Walking audit in Budapest



D4.1 WALKING AUDITS SUMMARY REPORT

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1. PURPOSE OF WALKING AUDIT ACTION

1.1 Objectives

- Across Europe there is wide variation in the infrastructure for walking and cycling whilst politicians and the public have widely varying views about using active modes.
- Walking audits are a simple, impressive and cost effective way of getting stakeholders involved in Active Access activities in implementation cities.

1.2 What are walking audits?

- A tool used worldwide by practitioners to raise awareness about the importance of walking and to help solve specific problems in the pedestrian environment.
- On an audit, a group of key personnel is led around a route on which issues effecting pedestrians and cyclists are highlighted by the group leader and participants. The audit is also an opportunity to discuss the problems and possible solutions on the route.
- Following the walk, a debrief session allows further discussion on the key issues identified and possible solutions. For Active Access walking audits, this session was also used to discuss the role of participants in the project and the activities planned.

1.3 Why/how are walking audits effective

- They allow stakeholders to view issues first hand and from the perspective of the user.
- They allow stakeholders and users to meet, mix, interact and share views.
- The emphasis is on open discussion, encouraging participants themselves to point out the problems they perceive, rather than being instructed on how to view the situation.
- It can act as an introduction to awareness raising activities and to build acceptance of walking and cycling as a transport mode.
- For cities/areas with a more advanced active travel 'culture', the audit helps to maintain awareness of the importance of walking and cycling and to identify additional improvements that can be made.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF WALKING AUDITS

2.1 Training partners to conduct walking audits

- A presentation about and active demonstration of a walking audit was given by international walking experts Walk21 at the kick-off meeting.
- All partners received a walking audit guidance document prepared by Walk21 which is available as an appendix to the main report. This covered:
 - How to prepare and deliver a walking audit in 6 easy steps - all the issues and questions that need to be considered
 - Notes on some of the walking audit tools that are available
 - Information about the different principles of the International Charter for Walking and what that means 'on street'
 - Some examples of how people have translated walking audits into action.

2.2 Conducting walking audits

- During 2009-2010 all 11 application partners completed at least one walking audit in their local area.
- Local stakeholders and target groups attended the walking audits. Examples include; local politicians, or urban planning technical staff, students and teachers, sociologists, journalists, citizens, civil engineers and police officers.
- Partners then reported on their walking audits, including information on how well the walking audit was received by the attendees, observations on both positive and negative findings in relation to mobility and any potential improvements identified.

3. CONCLUSION OF ACTIVE ACCESS WALKING AUDITS

The walking audit reports of all application partners can be found in D4.1 full report. Overall conclusions of the walking audit exercise are presented here.

- On the whole, the walking audits were well attended but there was some variability in attendance by decision makers and local influencers.
- Reaction of those that attended the audits was overwhelmingly positive. Whilst there were a couple of individuals who were less supportive (a police officer in Alba Iulia and a councillor in Graz) most attendees contributed to the audit, were pleased to have been asked their opinion and were keen to be involved in any follow-up activity.
- Audit attendees were prompted to reflect on their own active travel behaviour and how they could increase walking and cycling in their and their families daily lives.
- In cities where cycling or walking is not yet supported, the walking audit was a useful starter: It showed decision makers and technical civil servants the needs on the ground and the possibilities that can be offered to local people.
- In addition to improving awareness of mobility issues, the walking audits achieved some immediate improvements e.g. in Egkomi, as a result of the audit the municipality agreed to change the pedestrian crossing times, remove obstructing trees and fix broken pavements; in Budapest they agreed to establish new bike racks and do some painting to improve the walking environment whilst in Annecy better signposting for cycling routes was agreed. This shows that audits can encourage authorities to make simple cheap improvements very quickly. These improvements may act as an impetus to introduce similar changes in other areas of the cities.
- Audits provided the opportunity for partners to give local authority representatives information about successful sustainable urban transport projects.
- Key players and target groups were introduced to the objectives of the Active Access project and in many cases agreed their future participation in the project.
- The audits gave partners insight into what campaigns would be effective in what areas.

Overall, the walking audit process of the Active Access project was an excellent way to engage important stakeholders in the subject of active travel and the objectives of the project and can be considered to have been a success.

4. APPENDIX – SAMPLE IMAGES OF WALKING AUDITS



Figure 4.1. Example of walking audit route map – walking audit conducted in Budapest, Hungary by HCC



Figure 4.2 Participants of 1 of 5 walking audits conducted by AER. This audit centred around the Sant Andreu school in l'Alcudia, Spain



Figure 4.3 Image taken from the walking audit in Aveiro, Portugal demonstrating the narrow pavements – one of the areas highlighted for action to improve the pedestrian environment



Figure 4.4 Walking audit in progress in Miercurea Ciuc, Romania (conducted by HEMPS)



Figure 4.5 Round table discussion with stakeholders following the walking audit in Miercurea Ciuc, Romania.