



## Walking and cycling for health and leisure



**Walking and cycling are easy ways to be active for people of all ages. Being active reduces the risk of many chronic diseases, improves mental well being, increases life expectancy and makes us happier.**

### Key Findings

- Campaigns and initiatives need to excite and engage people, attracting a crowd and building momentum over time. Using umbrella campaigns such as Car-free day or European Mobility Week brings a framework and focus to local campaigns.
- The local media is critical for promoting a positive image of people walking and cycling and for reaching a wide range of people from the target audience. Media involvement also provides opportunities for local politicians to be seen and to be supportive of the campaigns.
- Putting signs for walking and cycling routes on streets and paths is good marketing and support for people to choose more active ways to travel.

### Our Activities

In the Active Access project, a range of schemes encouraged people to walk and cycle for health and leisure.

- Health paths, recreational cycling routes and campaigns in Koprivnica, Croatia
- Car Free Days, events and activities in Tartu, Estonia
- Earth Day events and activities in Miercurea Ciuc, Romania
- First steps campaign, unconventional awareness raising events and activities, MD Prescriptions and exercising with Weight Watchers in Graz, Austria



## Campaigns

Many campaigns started small at the beginning of the project but attracted more attention and involvement, media support and political interest each year. Fun or unusual activities such as closing streets to vehicles, providing free bicycles, photographic competitions, going for a walk with politicians or 'sitting in the road' prompted people to rethink how active travel can be part of their lives. Some campaigns are being written into local transport plans and strategies as ongoing events and activities.

## Individual initiatives

Some initiatives were more personal and direct, such as a Medical Doctor prescribing activity for a patient, providing new residents with information about active travel in their area or asking people to share images of their child's first steps. People responded well to these ideas, they can be an effective component of a broad range of social campaigns.

## Steps to Success

### Utilise umbrella campaigns such as European Mobility Week

Holding local activities in the framework of campaigns that are occurring internationally or regionally, such as Earth Day and Car Free Day, provides a high profile context for your event, a regular date in the diary to focus on the issues and an opportunity to share resources and gather support from other communities.

### Build momentum over time

New ideas can take time to establish, so plan to run a campaign more than once and don't be deterred if initial rates of participation are lower than hoped for.

### Group activities foster participation

Inviting people to participate in group activities for their health, such as going for a walk together, or using existing group support networks, such as Weight Watchers, provides a social context for exercise that has been proven to sustain higher levels of motivation amongst participants.

### Tap into emotions, surprise and delight people

Emotional responses can be stronger and more effective than just giving people a lot of information. Reminding people about how important a child's first steps are, promoting active transport through art, surprising people with unconventional activities and making them feel happy can all build a more positive attitude towards changing their habits.

### Provide opportunities to try something new

People are uncertain of the unknown, so opportunities to enjoy a new public space or to ride a bicycle need to feel safe and friendly. Be proactive and invite people to participate. Engage with the media beforehand to be supportive and invite politicians to be brave and demonstrate the new idea.

### Invite a range of stakeholders to be involved

Provide local politicians with the opportunity for positive media coverage, engagement with the constituency and to have some fun. Work with the local media, police, business community and citizen groups to broaden support and interest in the campaign in the lead up to events and activities. Point out the benefits to these different groups when approaching them for support.

### Sustain the message through infrastructure and support

People need additional triggers to continue walking and cycling after the initial period of participation or prompting to get started. Follow up meetings, group activities, regular walks and diaries can help individuals to maintain their newly adopted, more active lifestyles and exercise habits.

Signage on walking and cycling paths, gives them an identity as well as providing opportunities for sponsorship to enable funding of promotional campaigns and activities.



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