



# Poly-SUMP High Level Policy Conference at EUSEW 2013

Event report

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

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[www.poly-sump.eu](http://www.poly-sump.eu)



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## Introduction

The Poly-SUMP project was invited to host a high level policy conference during the Sustainable Energy Week in Brussels. The event took place on 26 June afternoon in the Committee of the Regions.

### 1. Promotion and participation

The event was promoted through the EUSEW 2013 website and print programme. ICLEI also coordinated the promotion through the Poly-SUMP website, and through the partners channels. Each partner received a promotion text for distribution through their channels, while ICLEI promoted it to its Brussels contacts and to the Poly-SUMP mailing list.

Participants could register on the EUSEW website (<http://eusew.eu>) via an online registration tool. They had the possibility to register two months before the event, while online registration closed on 19 June. On-site registration was also ensured by the EUSEW Secretariat.

The capacity of the room was of 55 people. 38 people registered online (see the participant list in Annex 1), but only 28 people (including the speakers) were present.

### 2. Conference content

#### 2.1. EU policy context

##### Christof Marx, EACI



After a welcome message from the chair, Mr Carlo Sessa, ISIS, Mr Marx presents the European Union's priorities in the field of urban mobility and the plans for the near future. He introduces the EU 2020 strategy, and stresses that while trends on reduction of greenhouse gas levels and increase of renewable energy are on track, the reduction of energy consumption is still far behind the desired level. As transport accounts for 33 percent of the share of the total emissions, it is also a priority concern for the EC, and the Action Plan for Urban Mobility stresses the need to adopt integrated approaches for urban transport systems, by accelerating the take up of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs).

He then presents some tools and initiatives which can help cities and regions to develop SUMPs. Final guidelines on 'Developing and implementing a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan' will be ready in August 2013 and available for download from [www.mobilityplans.eu](http://www.mobilityplans.eu), while Eltis ([www.eltis.org](http://www.eltis.org))





provides a good platform for the exchange of information, experiences and good practices. Poly-SUMP, together with other initiatives, also supports the EC to implement and develop SUMP, which is the priority also for future initiatives, as shown in the IEE Call 2013.

Among the most relevant EU policy documents, Marx quotes the Transport White Paper (2011), which establishes goals until 2050, and the Urban Mobility Package, which is expected in autumn 2013 and has a package focusing entirely on urban mobility with actions 31, 32 and 33 focusing on SUMP, zero emissions logistic in urban areas, and access restrictions.

Marx stresses that the EC respects that every city is different and has different needs, so the EC does not see a prescriptive top-down blueprint approach as appropriate.

## 2.2. SUMP Initiatives

### Frank Wefering, Rupprecht Consult

Mr Wefering introduces the cycle and the characteristics of sustainable urban mobility planning, which consist of a participatory approach; economic, social and environmental sustainability; an integrated approach, which also includes the involvement of neighboring authorities; a clear vision, objectives and measurable targets; and a review of costs and benefits.

A comparison of traditional transport planning versus sustainable urban mobility planning is then made. The latter presents a series of advantages and benefits which include: focus on people, and not on traffic; attention to accessibility and quality of life; involvement of stakeholders; interdisciplinary planning; focus not only on infrastructure but on a combination of market, services, promotion and information too. All the above in turn make planning more cost efficient and more effective.

Many cities in Europe adopted the sustainable mobility planning approach, thus becoming greener and healthier cities for their citizens. Copenhagen developed a transport vision which was linked to green growth and quality of life, thus becoming a perfect example of eco-metropolis. Gent transformed highly congested streets in pedestrian areas, while Lille and Jette (Brussels) are good examples of stakeholders involvement (including children) in the planning processes. In York and Freiburg, sustainable mobility planning achieved very good results in terms of modal shifts to sustainable modes. The West of England developed a very successful partnership which includes the four councils as well as public and private actors.

More information are available at [www.mobilityplans.eu](http://www.mobilityplans.eu).





## 2.3. Audit schemes: the EcoMobility Shift

### Sunny Kodokula, ICLEI World Secretariat

Mr Kodokula introduces the EcoMobility Shift scheme, which is a tool for cities and regions for assessing the performance of their transportation system and for identifying improvement measures. Following 20 indicators, cities can first of all implement an internal self assessment, thanks to a guidance manual developed within the scheme. Furthermore, the project created an organisation that receives requests for assessments, audits and award labels, as well as trained auditors for performing audits in cities implementing the SHIFT methodology.

Although the pilot project finished on 31 May 2013, with tests made on six pilot cities, Shift continues as a regular service from June 2013, and is open to all the cities interested in implementing the Shift assessment and audit.

More information are available at <http://www.ecomobility-shift.org>.

## 2.4. The Poly-SUMP project and its methodology

### Carlo Sessa, ISIS

Mr Sessa introduces the characteristics of polycentric city regions, which are at the core of the Poly-SUMP project. A simple way to feature these regions is to include in this category regions where the capital city is relatively small (e.g. below 200,000 inhabitants) and the population and urban functions are distributed in several intermediate centres of medium to small size. They are often a neglected reality as they are neither urban nor rural areas, although they are rather common in Europe. Poly-SUMP addresses these areas and seeks criteria to determine how a region can be defined poly-centric. For this purpose, the project has identified ten indicators, tested by the six pilot regions, which can help regions to assess their level of poly-centrism. This tool will be made available online at [www.poly-sump.eu](http://www.poly-sump.eu) soon.



The project aims to support the preparation of SUMP for 'diffuse cities' in polycentric regions, thanks to a methodology based on the Future Search Workshop system, which has been tested at the European level in March 2013 in Ancona, Italy. The methodology consists of 'getting the whole system (all relevant stakeholders) in the room' and its main benefit is that it encourages self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during and after the future search. The workshop methodology consists of three phases: during the first one, participants look and





reflect on the past and present situation of mobility; on the second they develop a vision of the 'desired/ utopian' future and define a common ground and shared values and goals to reach the desired future; and finally they build an action plan and formulate concrete projects and actions based on the visions previously developed, and share a roadmap for implementation. As a follow up, local future search workshops will be organised in the autumn months in the six regions, and aim to develop regional action plans.

In a further and final step, the project will transfer its knowledge by engaging local and regional authorities in Europe to apply the Poly-SUMP methodology.

Mr Sessa finally encourages participants to register to the Poly-SUMP mailing list to receive all the latest news and development about the project ([www.poly-sump.eu/subscribe](http://www.poly-sump.eu/subscribe)).

## 2.5. Poly-SUMP in practice: the experience of Parkstad Limburg, the Netherlands

### **Ricardo Poppeliers, Panteia, and Paul Alzer, Region of Parkstad Limburg**

Mr Alzer introduces the Parkstad Limburg region – one of the six poly-SUMP participating regions - which is characterised by eight municipalities and a population of 255,000 inhabitants dispersed in an area of 211 km<sup>2</sup>. The main focus for the future of the region is represented by economic restructuring and environmental requalification.

Mr Poppeliers then presents the poly-centric aspect of the region, which is defined by the presence of three poles and movement of people within and between each pole, as services are scattered in all areas. The application of the Poly-SUMP indicators is then presented in a spider tool, which shows the poly-centrism of the region.

He then defines the drivers represented by Poly-SUMP, which include communication and participation; stakeholders' involvement and citizens' awareness.

Several chances are also identified: for example, the short average distance between recreation and work represents an opportunity for the introduction of electric bikes; ageing society also calls for a change in life style and more sustainable transport modes, while the decentralisation of transport for disabled requires a new integrated vision on planning, focusing on dedicated public transport.

The region is already ahead in finding sustainable planning solutions. The Internationale BauAusstellung (IBA) represents a good tool for exchanging ideas, developing projects, and bringing together people and resources in order to reinvent and rebuild cities. Furthermore,





Parkstad Limburg has an already established process to ensure (cross-border) mobility meetings and stakeholder consultation about new tendering process for public transport. It is also testing a zero emission bus and developing plans for completing the cycle network.

Within Poly-SUMP, the regions aims to develop a regional action plan for transport, by possibly creating synergies with the IBA. To reach this goal, a Poly-SUMP local future search workshop will be held on 10-11 September 2013 in Heerlen, the Netherlands.

## 2.6. Poly-SUMP in practice: the experience of Rhine Alp, Austria

### **Oliver Roider, Boku**

Mr Roider presents the Rhine Alp region, which comprises 29 municipalities in an areas of 466 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 250,000. In the region, a structure uniting all municipalities is already in place since 2003 (Vision Rheintal), and it follows the principles of polycentric development. It represents a platform for all relevant institutions involved in planning processes, including decision makers, experts and the civil society.

Poly-centrism in the region offers many opportunities, such as the cooperation of municipalities at an equal level; sharing of administrative and spatial functions; an homogeneous distribution of transport demand; the creation of axes for supporting the rail based PT system; the possibility of keeping shorter distances between origin and destination of trips; keeping smaller villages attractive; and finding sustainable solutions for the whole region.

The analysis of the trips in the region shows a similar pattern than in Parkstad Limburg, with trips made within and between each pole in an almost equal share, due to the presence of services and facilities scattered in all area and not only in mono-centric areas. The poly-centric spider tool, based on the ten poly-centric indicators (see Carlo Sessa's presentation), is also shown.

Finally, drivers and barriers towards sustainable mobility plans are presented. Among the former, Mr Roider highlights the importance of political support, as well as the cooperation between municipalities and a good planning culture and communication. The main barriers are represented by the economic pressure; the current dominance of a car-oriented culture and infrastructures; and the difficulty of changing travel behaviors.

Within poly-SUMP, also Rhine Alp region aims to develop a regional action plan, and will therefore organise a future search workshop in September 2013 in Hohenems, Austria.

## 2.7. Questions and answers

At the end of the conference all speakers are invited back on stage for a question and answer session.





Barry Ubbels, Panteia, asks whether there is any evidence that can convince cities that adopting a SUMP approach is better than traditional transport planning. He also enquires whether the EC is foreseeing in the future a system of standardised SUMP certification.

Frank Wefering reports that there is indeed little evidence, although the benefits in terms of accessibility to services, safety and security are clear. The main driver to convince cities should be represented by the fact that involving stakeholders legitimates the measures implemented by a city.

Christof Marx also states that finding evidence is a big challenge, but that many examples in Europe prove that SUMPs lead to a better and more efficient transport system. A recent publication from the 'Centre d'Études sur les Réseaux, les Transports, l'Urbanisme et les Constructions Publiques' (CERTU) documented some evidence. More information can be found at [www.certu.fr](http://www.certu.fr). He also adds that the EC in its White Paper gives some indications on strategies for developing SUMPs. However, further guidelines and financing mechanisms for their adoption will be included in the Urban Mobility Package ready in autumn.

A representative from DG REGIO reports that often combining SUMPs with spatial planning can be challenging, and many regions/cities have a proper planning process in place which does not involve developing SUMPs.

Oliver Roider explains that this is the situation of Rhine Alp, where although PT is very efficient, there is no SUMP. The local future search workshop will serve as an opportunity to establish whether the development of a SUMP is necessary in the region.

Christof Marx agrees that combining the two aspects is challenging, but transport needs should be included in the spatial planning.





Frank Wefering states that cities some times are faced with the development of many plans on different aspects (mobility plans, climate and energy plans, among others), although often there is no exchange of information between the various departments of a public administration. Creating synergies is essential in order to develop comprehensive plans and approaches.

Dirk Lauwers from the University of Gent explains that in Belgium the development of a SUMP is a pre-requisite in order to get Ministerial funding since 1997. In poly-centric regions, local authorities should come together to develop a regional mobility plan. However there seem to be various approaches towards the adoption of a SUMP as emerged from the presentations: while the SUMP approach presented by Frank Wefering is top-down, the Poly-SUMP one is bottom-up. Which is the best approach? Do the two approaches fit?

Carlo Sessa replies that poly-centric regions are a very complex and varied reality. For this reason, although the methodology is strict, Poly-SUMP chose a very informal process of consultation through the future search workshops. This guarantees that people are together out of their hierarchies, in order to trigger interactions with people in different roles. However, the SUMP cycle is vital and it is the foundation of the future search workshops too, although its methodology is different and innovative. In Europe, regions are very different and SUMP approaches should recognise this complexity and not be too strict.

Ricardo Poppeliers adds that Parkstad-Limburg followed the SUMP cycle, while the added value of Poly-SUMP is that it brings various municipalities together.

To the question which are the main drivers for different municipalities to come together to develop a common plan, Oliver Roider replies that economic factors are certainly relevant. Good arguments are needed to get the support of the politicians and economy is one the main factors.

Paul Alzer adds that demographic changes are also important drivers.

Frank Wefering agrees and states that the transport system needs to adjust to changes in the population. In addition, the SUMP cycle is only on the suggested methodologies to achieve a SUMP. What is most relevant is that the key characteristics are met, while the methodology can change based on the needs.

Sunny Kodokula says that the EcoMobility Shift is an evaluation tool which does not label the kind of plan but the actions and their effects.

Christof Marx concludes saying that the SUMP guidance document available at [www.mobilityplans.eu](http://www.mobilityplans.eu) defines the key characteristics of a SUMP. The interesting novelty of Poly-SUMP is that it picks up one of the aspects of the SUMP cycle: the building up of a joint vision and the interaction of players within local authorities and neighbouring authorities. Poly-SUMP shows an innovative approach of getting stakeholders together, taking them out from their administrative boundaries and roles, and giving them an opportunity to think out of the box. The project will then make the experiences collected in the six participating regions available not only for other poly-centric regions, but also in standard regions across Europe.





## Annex 1 – Participant list

Ehrle Elveling	Filip	filip.elveling@nordicenergy.org	Nordic Energy Research
Pasca	Ancuta	ancuta.pasca@euromontana.org	Euromontana
Loiseau	Hélène	hloiseau@rhonealpes.fr	Delegation of the Rhône-Alpes
Aas	Kyrre	kyrre.aas@uis.no	Regionin Brussels
GHECEA	Monica	office@bromotion.eu	University of Stavanger
Patete	Danilo	ricerca.ue@regione.puglia.it	bromotion consultancy
Benard	Valerie	valerie.benard@ec.europa.eu	Regione Puglia
Langwost	Andre	langwost@aol.com	EACI
Wedekind	Oliver	oliver.wedekind@messe.de	Langwost
Ishiwa	Aki	aishiwa@regione.emilia-romagna.it	Deutsche Messe AG
Alzer	Paul	p.alzer@parkstad-limburg.nl	Region Emilia-Romagna
Pelizzaro	Piero	p.pelizzaro@kyotoclub.org	Region Parkstad Limburg
Spezzano	Gloria	gloria.spezzano@iclei.org	Kyoto Club
Richardson	Kenty	krichardson@rec.org	ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
Millins	Jonathan	jonathan.millins@east-of-england.eu	Regional Environmental Center
Friis	Gustav	gfriis@polisnetwork.eu	East of England Brussels Office
Diehl	Oliver	frank@vdi.de	Polis
Tucek	Jan	j.tucek@accesseu.eu	Fona Office Brussels / VDI GmbH
Ubbels	Barry	b.ubbels@panteia.nl	Access EU!
Baldi	Lisa	Lisa.baldi@gmail.com	Panteia
Hain	Caroline	hain@vdi.de	X&Y
Pazos-Vidal	Serafin	serafin@cosla.gov.uk	FONA Office Brussels
Wefering	Frank	f.wefering@rupprecht-consult.eu	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
Stoycheva	Daniela	dstoycheva@polisnetwork.eu	Rupprecht Consult
Lauwers	Dirk	dirk.lauwers@ugent.be	Polis
Le Lay	Mikako	mikakolelay@gmail.com	Ghent University - AMRP
Zlokower	Robert	robert@vision-network.eu	CSR Europe
Schmitt	John	john@commentvisions.com	The Vision Network
Kooiman	Maarten	maarten@tapazz.com	The Vision Network
Kuester	Fabian	f.kuester@ecf.com	Tapazz
Poppeliers	Ricardo	r.poppeliers@panteia.nl	European Cyclists' Federation
Sussarello	Marianna	marianna.sussarello@outlook.com	Panteia
Sussarello	Roberto	sussarello@gmail.com	Paragon Europe
Sessa	Carlo	mc7920@mclink.it	VELTHA IWZV
			ISIS





Roider	Oliver	<a href="mailto:oliver.roider@boku.ac.at">oliver.roider@boku.ac.at</a>
Alionescu	Ciprian	<a href="mailto:Ciprian.ALIONESCU@ec.europa.eu">Ciprian.ALIONESCU@ec.europa.eu</a>
Kiousi	Akrivi Vivian	<a href="mailto:akrivi.kiousi@intrasoft-intl.com">akrivi.kiousi@intrasoft-intl.com</a>
Gammon	Rupert	<a href="mailto:rgammon@dmu.ac.uk">rgammon@dmu.ac.uk</a>
Christof	Marx	<a href="mailto:christof.marx@ec.europa.eu">christof.marx@ec.europa.eu</a>
Sunny	Kodokula	<a href="mailto:sunny.kodokula@iclei.org">sunny.kodokula@iclei.org</a>

Institute for Transport Studies,  
BOKU University  
EC  
INTRASOFT INTERNATIONAL SA  
De Montfort University  
EACI  
ICLEI - Local Governments for  
Sustainability

