

# Public Authorities and the High School Student's Community: Case Study for Sustainable Mobility with Bicycle

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**Abstract:** Nowadays we need to see urban development through a sustainable perspective. This perspective requires environmentally friendly transport options as well as human-centered and sustainable cities. A sustainable city needs more pedestrians, more bicycles, more green areas and fewer cars. Students, with the support of public administration authorities, can be great advocates of bicycling as a principle mode of transport. For this reason, the writers of this study have taken the initiative to create a website and an online forum in order to promote sustainable mobility in Greek cities. Through this electronic platform students have started joining the "Students Community for Sustainable Mobility". In collaboration with local authorities and societies, the Students' Community will present its initiatives, exchange views, network, and share advice. This study aims to connect student communities with public administration authorities in order to promote sustainable mobility and student use of bicycles in Greek cities. This aim will be achieved if students who are interested in sustainable mobility join the online platform and network through Facebook. It is expected that this project will be the greatest goal ever achieved by the Students' Community for Sustainable Mobility. Students who become members will participate in the European community "Do the right mix", connect with other European members through Facebook, and alongside Greek municipalities, organize the promotion of environmentally friendly mobility around Greece. Members will also be in touch with local authorities and societies as well as other students in order to organize events, teleconferences and webinars that will promote the idea of sustainable mobility to every Greek school.

**Key words:** Facebook, sustainable transportation, Twitter, Vimeo

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays we need to see urban development and its social facets through a holistic approach and a sustainable perspective. This perspective requires human-centered cities with environmentally friendly and sustainable transport options.

The European Mobility Week (EMW) which has been taking place every September for the last 15 years, is an initiative that has been increasingly popular in Greece. Since 2000, when the initiative was introduced by the European Committee, and since 2002 when the

22nd September was set as "Car-free Day", this initiative has been an opportunity for European cities to prove their progress towards the major cause for sustainability [1]. During this week, all citizens, including students, have the chance to use and develop their awareness of environmentally friendly transportation.

## 2. Online Promotion of Sustainable Mobility

Through the European online platform [www.mobilityweek.eu](http://www.mobilityweek.eu) cities cooperate, exchange ideas and best practices, network, familiarise themselves with online collaborative work and take part in a healthy competition regarding the environment.

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In small and medium-sized towns, which constitute a major part of Greece, a paradigm shift on environmentally friendly means of transport can potentially create local development opportunities and also help in preserving their identity [2]: Cleaner and Better Transport in Cities, <http://www.civitas.eu>).

Therefore, the relevant activities in these towns should aim at promoting, enhancing and raising awareness of the underlying purpose of sustainable cities. To this effect, the student community as a whole can contribute to the promotion of sustainable cities. At the initiative of the author of this paper, the mayor of the island of Kos, the Kos student community and the mobile mobility were brought together and started cooperating in the summer of 2015. In this way, the first activity was organized by a group of students in collaboration with the municipality of Kos, a municipality that is particularly bicycle-friendly. This was a bicycle tour of the historic sights of the town on a bicycle lane launched by the student community.

The author's online initiative started at the end of 2015 after the first website <http://www.viosimikinitikitita.devweb.gr> was created.

This website can link users to relevant European and Greek websites such as the following:

[http://courses.arch.ntua.gr/fsr/127417/Poleis\\_gia\\_podilato.pdf](http://courses.arch.ntua.gr/fsr/127417/Poleis_gia_podilato.pdf);

<http://www.mobilityweek.eu/>;

[http://www.mobilityweek.eu/mobility-actions/registered-actions/?country=GR&action\\_uid=xC3LZAPY](http://www.mobilityweek.eu/mobility-actions/registered-actions/?country=GR&action_uid=xC3LZAPY);

[http://www.mobilityweek.eu/mobility-actions/registered-actions/?country=GR&action\\_uid=gSZY9vFy](http://www.mobilityweek.eu/mobility-actions/registered-actions/?country=GR&action_uid=gSZY9vFy);

<http://www.mobilityweek.eu/cities/?year=2015&country=GR>;

<http://www.mobilityweek.eu/cities/>;

[https://www.facebook.com/DoTheRightMix/photos\\_stream?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/DoTheRightMix/photos_stream?ref=page_internal).

At the same time, the first electronic forum was created on the website <http://www.viosimikinitikitita.devweb.gr/forum/> and

students could sign up as members of the student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM).

The organization of the European Mobility week every September remains an important avenue for the promotion of mild ways of transportation, but the aim of this paper focuses on activities that will take place throughout the year via the online coordination of the aforementioned website so that the students' community can have a more active contribution.

Also, the student community will start taking part in the common European platform for the promotion of sustainable transportation in European cities. Through this platform, the organizers of the European mobility week, schools, the local authorities and societies, public means of traffic organizations and relevant private companies, will be able to present their initiatives, exchange opinions, search for relevant ideas and resources, network and share advice and assistance as well as work within the framework of the European Union.

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM) will soon start taking part in the European initiative *Do The Right Mix* which is an important initiative of the European Community for the promotion of sustainable urban mobility.

Through its website [www.dotherightmix.eu](http://www.dotherightmix.eu), the initiative *Do the Right Mix* organizes various activities throughout the year. However, its main focus is on the European Mobility Week [2].

### **3. Social Media for the Promotion of the Online Student Community for Sustainable Mobility**

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM?) will make good use of all social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn. These media will allow members to communicate with others and promote actions plans. For this reason, the author of this paper has created the website <http://www.viosimikinitikitita.devweb.gr>. This website links to websites mentioned in the

previous chapter as well as to the forum where students can sign up and exchange ideas. These links do not only offer information for sustainable mobility throughout Europe, they also help every student to network.

It is almost certain that this website will be the focal point of students in every school which in turn, will motivate and attract more students to join in. Especially the forum will be the point where students will initiate collaborative work inside and outside of their schools in order to promote and disseminate sustainable mobility.

At the same time, in addition to the forum, the following parts will be added:

- Like the Facebook page of “DO THE RIGHT MIX”;
- Follow @RightMixEU and @MobilityWeek on Twitter;
- Share your photos with us on Flickr;
- Promote the European Hashtag #EU4LifeQuality on your social media.

#### 4. Activities for Sustainable Mobility

The author of this paper has already contacted the Panhellenic Union of General Secretaries of all Greek municipalities (KLISTHENIS) and has started collaborating with them so that all the activities regarding sustainable mobility are, whenever possible, in accordance with the student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM)

The student communities will cooperate with the municipalities they wish so that they can organize, via KLISTHENIS, activities relevant to sustainable mobility. The main focus of the student community on sustainable mobility will be cycling and walking. These options will form the basis of most of the activities. In order for an interesting seven-day programme to be organized, the cities and towns will be able to further organize “Car-free days” or focus on any other theme event that will be relevant to local frameworks and needs [3].

#### 5. Cycling, Walking, School and SCOFOSM Proposals

Cycling is associated with every facet that makes a city more habitable. Bicycles save us space and energy and do not cause noise and air pollution. They can also contribute to sustainable mobility as well as wellbeing and prosperity.

In order to deal with cycling infrastructure at schools, as well as promotion of safety and cycling to school, it is essential that we consider a number of points. At first, the SCOFOSM will propose the creation of an information kiosk at a central area that can be easily accessible by students. It is essential that a “parental” scheme is created, according to which a new cyclist will cycle to school along with their parent. Also, a demonstration regarding cycling gear will be organized (waterproof jackets for cycling, helmet etc.). In collaboration with KLISTHENIS, an award or prize will be given to schools that are environmentally friendly. In addition, it will be suggested that an information kiosk should be created for the assistance of students. It will also be suggested that schools should transfer the bicycles parking space nearby the school entrance.

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM), in collaboration with local cycling clubs, will organize informative events on cycling, especially for those living 5 km away from their school. It will also invite parents to participate in a daily cycling tour and will ask the participants to stick a poster on their backs demonstrating the kilometres that they cover daily on bike. It will also ask municipalities to motivate citizens to cycle more.

The aforementioned activities can be organized immediately. Their direct aim is to make an impact on students and their parents, and to attract publicity via social media. This may motivate the relevant local authorities to improve school accessibility. It will be suggested that Primary & Secondary school teachers walk to school together and assess their accessibility to pedestrians. The relevant municipalities’ Vice Mayors

will be asked to walk around the town and evaluate potential problems such as physical barriers, broken sidewalks, illegal parking, illegal dumping etc. Trees will also be planted in less attractive areas.

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM) will finally organize a cycling day and ask students as well as Primary & Secondary school teachers to state “I cycle to school” or “I use public means of transport to go to school” [4].

## **6. Health and Environmental Disturbance**

The number of cars in European roads is increasing, something that deteriorates the quality of life of those living in cities (noise and air pollution, road accidents, stress etc).

The consequences of this, have a negative impact on a big part of the population, especially those who belong to the sensitive population groups such as children, students and seniors. The consequences of this on health are broadly known, ranging from stress caused by noise to respiratory and cardiovascular system diseases. Local health care systems, health insurance companies, doctor associations and sports unions can make excellent partners in the organization of activities on mobility and health.

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM) which is created at the author's initiative, will ask the local authorities to act in order to protect their citizens from the negative effects of noise and air pollution. It is also important for educational activities to be organized. For this reason, the assistance of schools and the Ministry of the Environment will be asked.

## **7. Greenways**

The student community for sustainable mobility (SCOFOSM) will ask schools to propose the implementation of greenways wherever this is possible to create. A greenway [5] is a “communication route reserved exclusively for non-motorized journeys, developed in an integrated manner that both enhance

the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area”. These routes should be easily accessible [6] and be both user-friendly and low-risk for students.

## **8. Awareness Raising**

Walking and cycling expeditions will be organized in greenways and students will be accompanied by teachers and municipality representatives.

Various community clubs will also make good use of greenways by having them as meeting points. People with mobility problems will be informed (e.g., senior citizens) and athletes, artists and local celebrities will be asked to take part. Also, volunteer students will organize a greenway cleaning day. Finally, students and teachers will be asked to participate in a questionnaire survey exploring their perceptions of sustainable mobility.

## **9. The Student Community for Sustainable Mobility (SCOFOSM) Will Also Suggest**

Mild circulation and limited accessibility schemes. Speed limits in school zones, creation of Park & Ride stations [7]. Creation of facilities for people with limited mobility. Removal of technical barriers. Building effective kerb heights and broadening sidewalks. Installation of ramps for wheelchairs and traffic light systems with sounds.

Design of routes to work or school. Setting up mobility centres and information services. Development of educational resources. Urban mobility plans in collaboration with local authorities.

## **10. Conclusions**

The importance to promote sustainable mobility is increasingly imperative in urban centers. At the initiative of the author to create and organize the relevant website as well as facilitate students' networking, high school students are invited to have a major role. Information Technology, the Internet and the social media are tools to be used for students' active involvement. Young people, especially students who

commute daily and are in the process of developing a mobility culture, are a target group for action that can have a multiple effect.

The promotion of cycling needs to be coordinated by the local authorities and schools should also be involved according to the standards of international universities which have implemented plans regarding transportation to and from campuses at the initiative of academic communities. In addition, students can be the best ambassadors for active transportation (walking and cycling), for more routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and for the improvement of community and urban environment.

Finally, initiatives such as this one raise students' awareness of urban problems and give them the opportunity for reflection and involvement regarding how they can be dealt with. New technologies and the social media will play a major role in this effort.

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