

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy implications and transferable lessons from the WalkUrban project are drawn upon key findings from the four methods described above and recurring discussions with stakeholders and at conferences such as our final conference, with 40 attendants including experts and practitioners from all over Europe.

### **Use a mixed methods approach to get the full story of walking experience**

- It is worthwhile to investigate the walking experience of people, especially those from vulnerable groups. Walk-along interviews and citizen science walking route assessment inform what and how people feel or why they notice particular things while walking at certain specific points. Such a degree of detail and spatial reference is not captured through household surveys alone.
- A walkability index based on default value for the general public provides a good overview for a city or a neighbourhood. Target group-oriented walkability indices can be developed to address specific needs.

### **Make stakeholder involvement as a part of the entire research work**

- The selection of target neighbourhoods and groups for case studies should be discussed and decided in collaboration with respective public authorities and other stakeholders at an early state of the project.
- Key steps and findings should be thoroughly communicated with stakeholders involved in the research process in order to facilitate knowledge exchange and public outreach.

### **Raise awareness of walking through effective communication**

- Behavioural change and raising awareness can be triggered from education in partnership with school and street experiments as demo.
- To increase people's motivation for walking, effective communication and pleasant experience in walking is needed with the general public and vulnerable groups. Collaboration between different user groups would raise the awareness of walking in a holistic way (e.g. knowledge exchange between children and older people and key stakeholders, cooperation with schools). Walking can be promoted as a new safe alternative to go to school e.g. with the use of a Pedi-bus or walking-bus, where children are accompanied by parents, schoolteachers, or senior citizens.
- Walking is the basis of human activities and people value walking due to its contribution to improving people's health and fitness as well as brain activity. The positive impact of walking in improving the quality of life should be advocated (with support from health professionals).

### **Ensure local political support**

- Political will is the key to local actions and to create suitable organisational structures for successful implementation of activities supporting walking. Approaches to changes to street plans and designs vary and a holistic strategy is needed to champion many existing plans for individual transport modes (where they exist) and infrastructure planning. SUMP is a good strategic planning method for bringing all the modes together and prioritise them in a sustainable way.
- Valid and more frequently updated data on walking is useful as concrete evidence in political discussions.
- Political support for walking should be strengthened to ensure its recognition and funding since walking is the most commonly used mode, but it is often given least priority and taken for granted (we all walk but often don't even think about or pay attention to it). This in turn is often reflected in the current amount of funds allocated to walking. Often only a small portion of (remaining) budget tends to be allocated specifically for pedestrian infrastructure while also budgets allocated to other transport modes should include funding for the improvements for walkability. For example, design of parking spaces or building parking enforcement, separated cycling lanes could be used to improve walking. Also, walking should be promoted in combination with cycling and public transport to reduce the dominance of cars on streets.

### **Implement small changes to streets to remove barriers to walking**

- *Green spaces:* When parks are not found in urban neighbourhoods, tree-lined streets and small green spaces give comfort to people, especially in high-density areas.

- *Green priority:* To give more priority to pedestrians by, for example, making a traffic light green phase a bit longer.
- *Road space reallocation:* Allocating more space to pedestrians is conducive to create a pleasant, safe, and overall, more inviting and high-quality environment for walking.
- *Day-to-day maintenance of public spaces:* Obstacles on pavements can be removed at a lower cost than building new pedestrian infrastructure (e.g. repairing and day-to-day maintenance, removing obstacles such as trash bins, bollards, and advertising stands). The needs of vulnerable user groups should be considered first (e.g. in areas around schools or nursing homes).
- *Investment in pedestrian infrastructure:* It is important to establish funding sources for future changes. Regular investment supported by effective and comprehensive implementation is needed for permanent changes.

Below are notes for WalkUrban team and not to be included in booklet:

### **Challenges in WalkUrban and future research areas**

- It is not easy to take into account cultural differences in subjective perceptions in relation to walking because values may vary among countries with regards to such factors as children's autonomy and people's appreciation for green spaces .
- Data collection in citizen science was not easy. Technical and mental burden towards taking part in such an approach should be reduced in order to make the new toolbox developed for WalkUrban more user friendly for citizens who want to get involved.
- To prepare a review on how these methods and tools are developed with different focuses and backgrounds and how these can be used for further research.