



# EIT Urban Mobility Youth Ambassador Programme Report

December 2023



## **The Youth Ambassador Programme**

As part of the Activity Plan for 2023, the EIT Urban Mobility RIS Hub Malta conducted a Youth Mobility Ambassadors Program throughout the months of May, August & September 2023, coordinated by the team at the Valletta Design Cluster.

This programme provided a space for young people between 16-25 years of age who live or are citizens of Malta to discuss what Sustainable Urban Mobility means to them.

The primary objectives of the Youth Mobility Ambassadors Program were to:

- Gather insights from young people on sustainable urban mobility in Malta
- Develop recommendations for policy makers and other urban mobility stakeholders
- Promote the involvement of young people in shaping the future of urban mobility in Malta

Ultimately, the Youth Mobility Ambassadors' Programme was to create an Action Plan featuring recommendations to policy makers and other urban mobility stakeholders to take into consideration and possibly implement based on what the youth have suggested.

The Youth Ambassadors were identified through an open call for participants launched via social media in April 2023. Six youths, primarily students in various disciplines and young entrepreneurs, responded to the call and finished the programme. These are:

- Jacob Cachia
- Daniela Pisani
- Quinn Salter
- Keith Azzopardi
- Daniel Cauchi
- Martina Oliva

## **Sessions and Discussions**

Throughout the EIT Urban Mobility Youth Ambassador Programme, the six youth ambassadors engaged in a series of sessions and discussions with various stakeholders, including representatives from the Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development (UOM), Adi Associates, the Chamber of Planning (VO), the Environment and Resource Authority (ERA), Transport Malta, Malta Enterprise, and the Planning Authority. These sessions provided a platform for the youth ambassadors to share their perspectives on sustainable urban mobility in Malta and to gain insights into the current initiatives and policies being implemented to address this complex issue.

### **Themes Discussed**

The discussions covered a wide range of topics related to sustainable urban mobility, including:

- **Cultural Assumptions and Mobility:** The youth ambassadors highlighted the influence of Maltese cultural assumptions on mobility behavior, such as the preference for personal vehicles and the perception of public transport as inconvenient.
- **Car-Dominant Street Design:** The predominance of cars in both street design and urban planning was identified as a major barrier to sustainable mobility, leading to congestion, air pollution, and a decline in public health.
- **Perceptions of Public Transport:** Negative preconceptions about public transport, such as its perceived unreliability and lack of comfort, were discussed as factors hindering its adoption among young people.
- **Reality of Alternative Transport:** The challenges of using alternative modes of transport, such as cycling and micromobility, on car-clogged roads were raised, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure and safety measures.

## Stakeholder Engagement

These interactions with stakeholders provided valuable insights into the current landscape of sustainable urban mobility initiatives and policies in Malta.

- **National Projects:** The stakeholders informed the Youth Ambassadors about national projects such as the Valletta Region Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) and the electrification of the Tal-Linja bus fleet. These projects aligned with the youth ambassadors' vision for a more sustainable and efficient urban mobility system.
- **Support for Entrepreneurs:** The group discussed the support available for individuals with business ideas related to sustainable mobility. The role of organizations like JAYE in providing guidance and mentorship to young entrepreneurs was particularly emphasized.
- **Policy Environment:** The Youth Ambassadors expressed concerns about the current policy environment, which they perceived as favoring car usage and hindering the development of alternative mobility options. They advocated for a more balanced approach that promotes sustainable mobility.

## Summary of Recommendations

The discussions and insights gained from the sessions and interactions with stakeholders led to the formulation of several recommendations for improving sustainable urban mobility in Malta:

## Transitioning to a Low Emission Mobility



While the focus has primarily been on transitioning from conventional petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs), a holistic approach that addresses the broader mobility landscape is essential.

Pervasive cultural assumptions, deeply ingrained in the Maltese psyche, have fueled the preference for personal vehicles, often overshadowing the environmental and societal consequences of this reliance. These assumptions, often perpetuated by societal norms and infrastructural design, perceive public transport as inconvenient and inferior, while private vehicles are seen as symbols of status and independence. The reality, however, is far more nuanced. While EVs offer a cleaner alternative to conventional vehicles in terms of tailpipe emissions, they inadvertently introduce new challenges. The weight of EVs, while contributing to improved fuel efficiency, places additional strain on road infrastructure and increases the wear and tear on tires and brakes, leading to the release of particulate matter (PM). PM, a microscopic pollutant, poses significant health risks, exacerbating respiratory ailments and cardiovascular diseases.

The emphasis on EV adoption without addressing the underlying cultural assumptions and the hidden costs of increased vehicle weight is akin to treating a symptom while ignoring the underlying cause. To truly foster a sustainable and equitable urban mobility system, a comprehensive approach is required.

### Practical recommendations:

- Change road licensing fees to reflect the realistic contribution to pollution by different vehicle types.
- Develop dedicated educational campaigns that highlight a car's actual pollution contributions and health impacts, including PM10 and other non-exhaust emissions and not just CO2 emissions after purchasing.

## Considering micro mobility as a solution.

Micro mobility, particularly electric scooters and other subscription-based mobility options, offers a promising solution to these pressing issues. Micro mobility can enhance connectivity between public transport stops and provide alternatives to private car use, alleviating congestion and reducing the environmental impact of transportation.

This concept has resonated with the Youth Ambassadors, many of whom are pursuing higher education in European and Nordic cities that have successfully integrated micro mobility into their urban transport systems. These experiences have highlighted the potential of micro mobility to address Malta's transportation challenges.

Prague, with its implementation of red zones for e-scooters, serves as a valuable case study. This initiative has effectively curbed the irresponsible parking of e-scooters on sidewalks and other historical or touristic areas, ensuring a more organized and aesthetically pleasing urban environment.



To effectively harness the benefits of micro mobility, Malta should carefully consider the implementation of regulations and guidelines that promote responsible usage, ensuring the safety of pedestrians and the preservation of public spaces. By carefully integrating micro mobility into its urban transport framework, Malta can pave the way for a more sustainable, efficient, and enjoyable transportation experience for its citizens.

- Reconsider micro mobility as an exciting field of business investment in achieving a sustainable urban mobility plan in Malta.
- Work towards creating coherent micro mobility regulations on a national level that the government can help to standardise but not suppress innovation by the service providers. In doing so, supporting the adoption of new and innovative business models and technologies that respond to the demand.
- Enforcing speed limits withing the appropriate infrastructure to make micro mobility more competitive with cars
- Nurture the entrepreneurial spirit and support initiatives that encourage the development of sustainable mobility solutions.

## Making public transport more attractive!

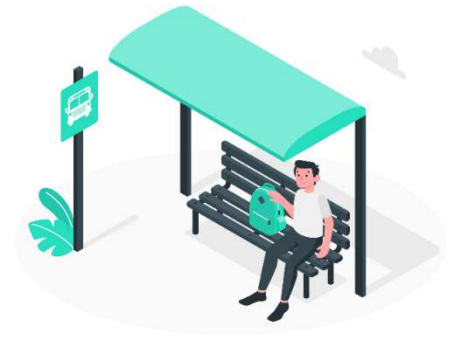
Despite the recent incentives of free public transport services, the Youth Ambassador Programme highlighted the persistent preference among young adults for owning a personal vehicle. This preference stems from a complex interplay of factors.

The Youth Ambassadors discussed the recurring theme of public transport unreliability, citing instances of missed connections, overcrowded vehicles, and unpredictable schedules. These experiences reinforce the perception that public transport is inconvenient and unreliable, making it less appealing as a regular mode of transportation.

Moreover, car ownership is often viewed as a symbol of freedom and autonomy, particularly among young adults who may have limited personal space and privacy. A personal vehicle provides a sense of independence and mobility, allowing individuals to travel at their convenience and without the constraints of public transport schedules or routes.

This preference is further compounded by the financial limitations young adults often face, which make the car a medium for additional personal space and autonomy.

To effectively address the persistence of car ownership mindset among young adults, a multifaceted approach is required. This approach should encompass measures that enhance the reliability and appeal of public transport, address the symbolic value of car ownership, and provide alternative solutions for personal mobility.



- An increase in the availability and accessibility of on-demand bus services.
- Tal-Linja App to include the ability to provide appropriate leaving times with accurate real-time updates
- The development of a platform for efficiently informing all relevant stakeholders of any disruptions in road services across Malta and Gozo on a day-to-day basis to avoid unnecessary delays
- Celebrate non-car-centric lifestyles that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport usage through information campaigns
- Create more car-free zones and pedestrian-friendly spaces
- Embrace innovative public transport technologies

## Prioritising the safety and protecting the most vulnerable road users

The Youth Ambassador Programme highlighted the concerns of cyclists regarding debris and litter within bicycle lanes, posing safety hazards and potentially deterring less confident riders from adopting cycling as an alternative mode of transportation.

Funding schemes helping citizens to purchase e-bikes and e-scooters were also a topic of discussion and something that the youth hoped would continue in the future. As the infrastructure for safer commuting with e-bikes and e-scooters is improved, this could see a bigger uptake in youth opting to purchase smaller transport vehicles rather than a conventional car.

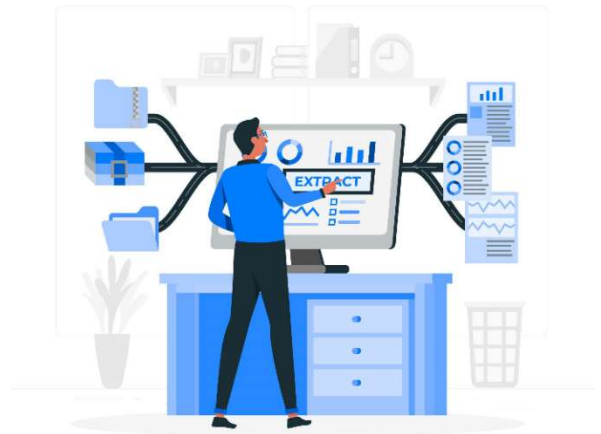


- Establish safe cycling infrastructure that is well connected across Malta and Gozo.
- Better maintenance and upkeep of existing bike lanes
- Better enforcement of speed limits within more pedestrian-heavy spaces to to reduce the risk of death or serious to vulnerable road users
- Invest in micro-mobility infrastructure such as secure parking spots, charging stations and dedicated lanes to encourage wider adoption.

## Standardising and Improving Data Availability

The Youth Ambassador Programme identified the critical role of open data in driving innovation and investment in the mobility sector. Abundant data from sensors and cameras across Malta's major roads presents a wealth of untapped potential. Standardized and accessible data can fuel a wave of urban mobility start-ups and catalyze groundbreaking solutions.

Open data empowers data scientists and entrepreneurs to extract insights, inform policy, optimize traffic, and enhance urban mobility. By providing real-time data, Malta can foster innovation and cutting-edge solutions for sustainable urban mobility.



Malta should prioritize data standardization and accessibility, ensuring data consistency and open-access platforms. Empowering data access enables innovation and solution development.

In addition to standardization and access, collaboration between data providers, researchers, and innovators is crucial. Open data governance frameworks and knowledge-sharing foster an environment where data transforms into actionable insights and innovative solutions.

By embracing open data and collaboration, Malta can unlock the potential of the mobility sector and establish itself as a leader in sustainable urban mobility innovation. This transformation will enhance urban efficiency, livability, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

- Democratising the availability of traffic and road data to incentivise innovations to flourish within the urban mobility sectors over the coming years
- Standardising traffic and road data to make it more accessible and easier to analyse and manipulate, further levelling the playing field when it comes to new operators in Malta's urban mobility economy



## Final Remarks

Transport minister himself Dr Aaron Farrugia recently put forward his views on how traffic in is impacting citizens' quality of life, connectivity, and trade. He also recognised how the monitoring of traffic and its impact on the mental health of society especially in densely populated areas, is something we must address collectively.

The EIT Urban Mobility Youth Ambassador Programme has presented a comprehensive set of recommendations for improving sustainable urban mobility in Malta. These recommendations, informed by the perspectives of young people actively engaged in the mobility discussion, provide valuable guidance for shaping Malta's future mobility landscape.

Malta possesses the potential to become a leader in sustainable urban mobility. Its compact size, dense population, and commitment to environmental sustainability make it an ideal setting to test and implement innovative solutions. By taking decisive action and embracing the insights of the younger generation, relevant stakeholders can create a more sustainable, equitable, and livable city for all.



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