

Good practices in Promoting Physical Activity in Schools; Guimarães, Portugal

Transport

Guimarães, Portugal

Socio-demographic indicators:

Municipality/City Population: 158 124

Gender ratio: Female 51%; Male 49%

Age distribution: The average age of the resident population is 40.6 years.

0-14 (14%), 15-64 (68%), +66 (18%)

Socio-economic indicators:

GDP per capita: 19,604 euro

Compiled by:

Paula Nogueira, Sport Studies Center, Tempo Livre

Email address: paulanogueira@tempolivre.pt

Phone number: +351 253520300

Health and Physical Activity Issues

- Fighting physical inactivity among the population in general;
- Involving more women in outdoor sports and physical activities;
- Raising-awareness among the population to adopt daily practices that promote physical activity (walking, using the bicycle);
- Contributing to physical and sport activity for the over 45-year-old age group of the population;
- Contributing to decrease the prevalence of diseases associated with physical inactivity (obesity, overweight, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer).

Why did you start a strategy / an activity / a project?

It is increasingly recognized that physical activity has a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals. The importance of qualified urban space is equally relevant as a priority to “win” public space for community enjoyment and socialization to reduce the use of private cars for transport. The basis of this investment in the bike lane was the need to revise urban mobility, avoiding the exaggerated use of private cars over public transport and cycling. The main objective is to contribute to a change in attitude, to change urban

mobility, to opt for more environmentally sustainable transport and, at the same time, to promote citizens' physical activity.

Guimarães was a non-bicycle friendly territory, so the provision of mobility conditions became a necessity for intervention. Other reasons include:

- Ecological footprint reduction
- Reduce the serious problems of urban traffic
- Seize the opportunity to promote new mobility alternatives and foster physical activity, health and well-being.

The health and physical (in-) activity issues tackled include:

- Physical inactivity, lack of exercise as well as pollution-related health problems
- Prevalence of physical inactivity.
- General lack of consideration of cycling as a healthy, economical and non-polluting means of transport
- The need to change habits installed in urban daily life, especially in terms of comfort and safety of travel.
- The increasing dispersion of the territory makes it more difficult to have more direct relations between housing, school and work, with repercussions on the systematization of travel and, thus, the optimization of transport.

What do you do?

The project was implemented along with a municipal strategy for environmental sustainability that involves changing the paradigm of transport, promoting alternative means of mobility and becoming familiar with these new alternatives.

The project focused on all age groups particularly on those in working age (30-50) and students (children and teenagers).

In a generic way, it is intended to reach the entire population. Notwithstanding this, it is recognized that investing in younger generations will have one of the greatest transformative impacts, which makes it a priority.

How do you do it?

The municipal action focuses on:

1. Promoting bicycle use, building cycle paths, promoting bicycles within schools (through specific programs with schools and parents);
2. Promoting pedestrianisation and urban qualification of public space;
3. Improving public transport, both through new buses and bus routes.

Considering the scope and multidisciplinary of this project is very difficult to indicate a number, but it certainly involves technicians from the municipality, schools and the whole community.

Regarding the number of bike lane users:

- The year following its opening, 36 446 people used the bike path between January 1st and September 22nd;
- average daily usage (working days) is 173 users;
- average daily usage (weekend) is 333 users.

The first phase of the cycleway project involved a cost of 1.2 M€, funded from Municipal budget and European funds.

The strategy is based on concerted action at national level. Nevertheless, there are strategies to be jointly developed at regional level involving, for example, neighbouring municipalities. Guimarães Municipality has responsibility for the project. All departments focused on the strategy of planning, development, design, construction and use promotion. Equally, external entities of both designers and advisory. Namely: Departments of Education, Urbanism, Sport and Environment. In addition to the municipality of Guimarães, educational establishments, sports associations and Tempo Livre.

What are the Challenges and Successes?

Accomplishments include increased use of the bicycle (still incipient but already visible both by the number of these vehicles coming daily and by the increasing number of equipment, shops and services that are appearing in the city, associated with these means).

The main challenges are promoting cycling as a habit at the population level, and raising-awareness of the real need for carbon emission reduction.

Challenges will be met with multiple approaches:

- Communication strategies with permanent information to the population;
- Organization of activities and events that promote cycling as a means of transport;
- Awareness among the school community.