Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Co-funded by the European Union

SMART GREEN MOBILITY
SUMPs for BSR

Independent exercise 2 – Understanding Why Cycling Is Low in Your City

Purpose of the exercise

This exercise focuses on **diagnosing mobility challenges using indicators**. While indicators are often used to **monitor progress**, they are equally important for **understanding why a problem exists in the first place**. In Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP), selecting the right indicators helps cities move beyond assumptions and base decisions on evidence. In this exercise, participants will explore **which indicators can help explain low cycling levels** in a city.

Example case (for inspiration)

To illustrate the type of situation where indicators can support decision-making, consider the following example developed by the authors.

A small town with around 35,000 inhabitants is located outside the TEN-T network. The town has a compact spatial structure, meaning most daily destinations are within short distances. The city centre hosts most public services, schools, and cultural facilities. A former industrial factory site has recently been transformed into a vibrant business district.

Despite the favorable spatial conditions, city staff involved in preparing the city's first Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan believe that **cycling levels are lower than expected**. However, the city has never conducted bicycle traffic measurements or motor traffic counts. At the moment, the assumption that cycling is underused is based mostly on perception rather than evidence.

Before deciding on new cycling policies or infrastructure investments, the city needs to understand whether cycling levels are indeed low, what factors may influence cycling uptake, and what evidence is needed to guide future decisions.

Your task within your own city

In this exercise, you will explore **which indicators could help explain cycling conditions in your own city**. Rather than simply listing indicators, the group will work together to identify **what types of information are needed to understand cycling behaviour**.

Step 1 – Identify a mobility challenge

Formulate one or two simple hypotheses relevant to your city, for example:

- *Cycling levels are low despite short travel distances*

- *Residents perceive cycling as unsafe*
- *Cycling infrastructure is insufficient*
- *Car use is too convenient compared to cycling*

Step 2 – Identify what we need to know

What information would help confirm or reject this assumption?

Examples may include:

- *cycling modal share*
- *number of cyclists on key corridors*
- *cycling infrastructure coverage*
- *traffic speeds on urban streets*
- *availability of bicycle parking*
- *residents' perception of safety*

Step 3 – Translate information needs to indicators

Using the BSR SUMP Indicator Selector: https://bsr-sump.eu/tool/, search for indicators that could provide the information identified in Step 2.

Step 4 – Reflection

Identify which indicators:

- *Provide the most useful evidence for understanding cycling conditions*
- *Are realistic to collect in your city*
- *Help identify the root causes of low cycling levels*

Consider which indicators you **already collect,** and which would require **new data collection**. Reflect on how these indicators could **inform future mobility measures**. **Outcome:** Select **3–5 key indicators** that best support a diagnosis of cycling conditions in your city.

Outcome of the exercise

This type of analysis is an important step in the **SUMP monitoring and evaluation framework**, helping cities base policy decisions on evidence rather than assumptions.

We encourage you to explore additional resources developed within the **SUMPs for BSR project**, available through the SUMP Competence Centre:https://bsr-sump.eu/