

EVENT REPORT



EIT Urban Mobility: Transforming Urban Mobility Through Innovation *3 December 2024*

On 5 December 2024, EIT Urban Mobility hosted a policy event at the European Parliament in Brussels, focusing on sustainable urban mobility's role in shaping Europe's environmental and economic future. Titled "*Transforming Urban Mobility Through Innovation*", the event was hosted by **MEP Lena Schilling** (Greens/EFA, Austria), a strong advocate for sustainable transport and inclusivity in mobility innovation.

The well-attended event brought together key policymakers from the European Parliament and European Commission, alongside industry innovators and academic thought leaders, to discuss pressing challenges and opportunities in urban mobility. The discussions focused on urban mobility's role in advancing the EU's climate goals, enhancing competitiveness, and ensuring equitable access to sustainable transport systems across Europe.

Opening Remarks

In her welcome address, **MEP Lena Schilling** underscored the urgency of transforming urban mobility to achieve the EU's 2050 climate neutrality goals. Highlighting urban areas as hubs of innovation and opportunity, she expressed concern over the transport sector's continued greenhouse gas emissions and the inequities in access to sustainable transport systems between rural and urban areas.

MEP Schilling commended EIT Urban Mobility's leadership in fostering innovation and inclusivity, particularly its focus on supporting female-led startups and advancing equitable solutions. She affirmed that urban mobility is not just about emissions reduction but also about enhancing quality of life, driving economic growth and building social resilience.

Keynote speech: Dr. Maria Tsavachidis, CEO of EIT Urban Mobility



Dr. Maria Tsavachidis set the tone for the discussions during the event's keynote presentation. The EIT Urban Mobility CEO highlighted the importance of collaboration between public and private sectors in creating impactful, scalable mobility solutions. She introduced EIT Urban Mobility's newly published [Manifesto on Sustainable Urban Mobility](#), which outlines **six policy priorities**, including fostering innovation ecosystems, bridging skills gaps and empowering urban-rural cohesion. Dr. Tsavachidis called for bold, coordinated action to overcome barriers in funding, regulation and multi-stakeholder

collaboration, stressing, *"We have no time to wait for innovation to happen by itself. The time to act is now."*

In a pre-recorded video message, **MEP Jan-Christoph Oetjen** (Renew, Germany), Renew Europe's coordinator in the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN), welcomed the publication of the EIT Urban Mobility Manifesto and praised its timely focus on innovation and collaboration in sustainable transport.



He highlighted the importance of fostering multimodality, a key component in achieving a sustainable urban mobility future. MEP Oetjen also emphasised the need for innovation that bridges traditional transport modes and supports seamless, efficient mobility options for all citizens. He concluded by wishing the participants fruitful discussions, affirming that the insights generated during the event would contribute to advancing the EU's transport and sustainability agenda.

Panel Discussions

The panel discussion provided a multi-faceted view of the challenges and opportunities in sustainable urban mobility. It featured policymakers, city and startup representatives, as well as academics. **Isabelle Vandoorne**, Deputy Head of Unit at the **European Commission (DG MOVE)**, highlighted the dual role of EU regulation as

both an enabler and a challenge for innovation. She stressed the importance of implementing the [Urban Mobility Framework](#) effectively and ensuring that urban mobility benefits from the upcoming [Social Climate Fund](#). Vandoorne also expressed the need for city-level capacity building, pointing out that many municipalities require guidance and resources to adopt innovative solutions.



Nora Van Cauwenbergh, CEO of startup **Bitagreen**, presented an industry perspective, illustrating how geospatial data can transform urban planning and climate resilience. She stressed that assuring liveable and climate proof cities, requires innovation across health, environment and mobility and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including citizens, urban planners, and private enterprises.

Håkan G. Lutz, CEO of startup **Luvly AB**, provided an impassioned critique of traditional car design, calling for a shift toward lightweight, energy-efficient vehicles. He advocated for innovation that reduces urban congestion and emissions while meeting mobility needs and called for cars to become more efficient.

Delia Mitcan, EU Representative at the **Technical University of Eindhoven**, spoke about the integral role of education and research in advancing urban mobility. She highlighted the need for regulatory sandboxes to allow startups to test and refine innovative solutions. She also stressed the importance of aligning educational programs with industry needs, ensuring that the next generation of engineers and urban planners are equipped to tackle pressing challenges.

Renske Martijnse-Hartikka, Senior Project Manager from **Forum Virium Helsinki**, provided insights into the city's strategy for building resilient urban mobility systems. She shared how Helsinki leverages EU-funded projects to pilot solutions like drones for critical goods transport such as defibrillators and medical supplies. Martijnse-Hartikka concluded her intervention by listing three critical needs for cities: enhancing skills and capacity, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and creating real-life testing opportunities for innovative solutions.



Open Floor Discussion

The open floor discussion, moderated by **Jean-Paul Judson**, highlighted the diversity of perspectives and expertise in the room, focusing on how urban mobility innovation can address pressing challenges while fostering equity and sustainability.

Skills and education emerged as foundational themes, with **Luca Perego**, Head of Unit at **DG EAC, European Commission**, emphasising the importance of equipping the workforce with the skills needed to drive innovation. He detailed the success of the European Skills Academy, which has created a replicable model for upskilling workers across industries. Building on this, **Prof. Dr. Giovanni Circella**, from the **University of Ghent** and Head of the Master School in Urban Mobility, highlighted education's critical role in training the next generation of innovators. He praised EIT Urban Mobility's focus on sustainability education and outlined how universities are addressing high-carbon spaces dominated by cars through research and design.



The role of innovative solutions and city-level leadership was discussed by several participants. **Ian Catlow**, Head of Office at **London's European Office (Transport for London)**, shared several promising initiatives happening in London such as contactless payment systems, capped travel costs and open data platforms, which have improved operational efficiency and public engagement. He likewise reaffirmed London's alignment with European urban mobility goals despite Brexit, highlighting the city's goal of

achieving 80% of trips by bike or public transport by 2030. Similarly, **Renske Martijnse-Hartikka** from **Forum Virium Helsinki** highlighted the importance of pre-commercial procurement as a tool for cities and businesses to co-develop innovative solutions.

Collaboration across sectors was a recurring theme. **André Sobczak**, Secretary General of **Eurocities**, stressed the need for cooperation between the EU Commission, businesses and municipalities to enhance road safety and reduce the dominance of oversized vehicles in urban areas. Logistics also emerged as a key focus, with **Fernando Liesa**, Secretary General of the **Alliance for Logistics Innovation through Collaboration in Europe (ALICE)**, urging stakeholders not to overlook the critical role of goods transport in urban mobility. He emphasised the need for sustained investment and innovation in logistics to support urban efficiency and

sustainability. **Françoise Guaspere** from **Île-de-France Europe** discussed the challenges faced by suburban areas, calling for more cohesive regional strategies to bridge the urban-suburban mobility divide. She highlighted the importance of public transport and multi-modal solutions beyond traditional automotive-focused systems.

The discussion also touched on global opportunities, with **Anja De Cunto** of **C40 Cities** highlighting the potential for Europe to strengthen ties with external markets, such as Latin America, to boost competitiveness. She argued that climate action does not harm job creation but rather creates opportunities for economic growth. **Jacques Lovell** of **Cycling Industries Europe** emphasised the value of cycling infrastructure and data as a scalable and sustainable urban mobility solution.



The session concluded with a lively discussion on Europe’s capacity to scale up innovation in urban mobility. Participants largely agreed that Europe’s unique density and diversity create an ideal environment for addressing complex mobility challenges. However, they acknowledged significant barriers, such as fragmented funding and regulatory misalignments.



Isabelle Vandoorne from the **European Commission** noted the importance of aligning local and EU-level regulations to facilitate scaling. **Dr. Maria Tsavachidis**, CEO of **EIT Urban Mobility**, stressed the need to streamline and pool funding across EU programs, as scattered resources currently hinder progress. **Prof. Dr. Giovanni Circella** pointed out

that Europe has a responsibility to lead on sustainability, contrasting its approach with the US, where innovation often lacks a focus on public good.

Closing Statement

MEP Lena Schilling concluded the event by reaffirming her commitment to advancing sustainable urban mobility as a key priority in the European Parliament. She praised EIT Urban Mobility for driving innovation and empowering startups to deliver scalable, impactful solutions, calling these efforts essential to building a

cohesive and resilient mobility ecosystem. She also re-highlighted the importance of the newly launched EIT Urban Mobility Manifesto, encouraging all stakeholders to engage with its policy priorities to accelerate transformative change.

Schilling reflected on the rich discussions, stating, *“The insights shared today lay the groundwork for transformative action in urban mobility, fostering a greener, more inclusive Europe.”* She assured participants that their recommendations would inform her work in Parliament and encourage continued collaboration among stakeholders to drive meaningful change.

Expressing gratitude to EIT Urban Mobility, and all attendees, she concluded that Europe has the tools and vision to shape cities that work for everyone, where sustainability, equity, and innovation thrive.

