

Implementation



Why is knowledge about implementation of road user charging important?

In a wider perspective the implementation process of urban road user charging can be seen to cover the process elements from initial thought to implemented scheme. In a more narrow sense, the implementation process refers to the phase after the political decision or sometimes only to the physical implementation. Here however, the wider interpretation of the concept is applied, but with focus on the process driver mechanisms and interactions between selected implementation elements such as political decision making; policy packages and revenue use; legal and institutional framework; and time span and implementation sequence.

Implementation of any policy measure is a gradual process with interlinked elements or phases. Recent trends in society and public administration, including globalisation and technological advancements, have increased the challenges for implementation processes.

Moreover, the scope of urban transport planning has widened over the years as has the policy tool box. In many countries urban road user charging (URUC) is new and divisive, which puts high demands on learning processes and the relationship between actors, and also requires efficient legislative and regulatory processes at several jurisdictional levels. Moreover, the policy mea-

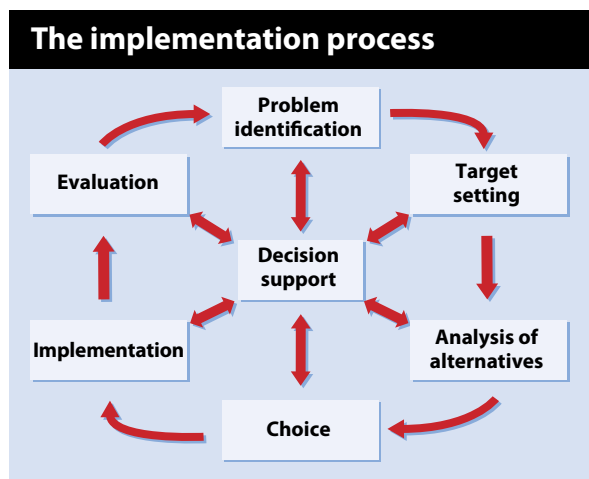
sure of road user charging is often linked to global sustainability concerns. All this implies increasing numbers of stakeholders being involved in the implementation process of urban road user charging.

To ensure efficient policymaking targeted to the challenges in the transport sector, an understanding of the mechanisms of implementation processes is of critical importance, both for decision making and for the outcome of urban road user charging.

What is currently known about implementation processes?

Looking at different implementation models can help us understand the different elements constituting and affecting the process of implementing URUC and the structural inter-dependencies between these different elements. One way to describe decision support in different phases of a policy cycle is presented in the diagram on the next page.

As shown in the CURACAO Case Studies, the implementation processes of URUC are site and country specific. However, the political commitment is fundamental in all cases. In practice, regional and local interest often seem to collide which complicates a long term policy introduction. Implementation opportunity is also heavily influenced by the election cycle. Furthermore, the tradi-



tion of road user charging in a country as well as the existence of “forerunners” (such as London) appears to be very influential on political courage and the public level of knowledge. Misperceptions are often spread among the public and media before the introduction of a urban road user charging scheme. Thus, well informed decision making processes and effective communication strategies contribute to successful implementations. Having a referendum for a specific policy instrument is a somewhat extreme form of decision support, for which timing is crucial in order for the learning processes to have reached a certain stage.

Most charging schemes are part of policy packages with complementary measures, with the revenue assigned to finance transport improvements. The choice of complementary policy instruments can have a significant effect on overall performance and effectiveness of the road user charging scheme. Moreover, revenue use is often regarded as critical for distributional effects, acceptability and the socio-economic benefit of the scheme.

Other implementation aspects such as legal and institutional framework, time span and implementation sequence also differ immensely between countries. A general lesson is not to underestimate the time and cost required to implement a charging scheme. The implementation process needs to reflect the responsibilities given to different jurisdictional levels, and the multiplicity of actors and agencies involved. Paving the way for urban road user charging by establishing national legislation and clarifying the division of roles and responsibilities is important especially given the often short implementation schedule linked to political election cycles.

What further research is needed?

Further research is needed on the effects of earmarking revenue for specific parts of the transport sector (e.g. investment vs. operation, public transport vs. road) as well as the advantages and disadvantages of various legal provisions for “ownership” of revenues at a local, regional and national level.

Further research into the full implementation process, both from a practical and theoretical perspective, will contribute to preparing potential user cities for the wide spectrum of implementation dimensions they will need to face. An increasing number of urban road user charging schemes in practice will provide a platform for comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of different implementation strategies, resulting in more conclusive policy recommendations.

What can we conclude at present?

We can conclude that without full understanding of an implementation process, especially for rather controversial measures such as urban road user charging, the chances of successful implementation are slight. The following DOs and DON'Ts should help to increase the likelihood of a successful road user charging implementation:

DOs

Establish national legislation and clarify the division of roles and responsibilities between actors/agencies at an early stage

Aim to achieve a consensus on the need for urban road user charging at a regional level

Secure a well informed decision making process and effective communication strategies

Acknowledge the nature of the learning process and changes in acceptability over time

Complementary measures ideally go before road user charging is introduced

DON'Ts

Do not underestimate the time and costs required to implement a charging scheme

Do not regard the introduction of an urban road user charging scheme merely as a technical project, (but also as a multi dimensional business and socio-economic project)