



CASE STUDY: AUSTRIA

Walking and cycling to improve health levels

A Mobility–Health–Land Use Programme has been devised to make physical activity part of everyday life. The main goal of this programme is to reduce the number of short car trips by encouraging people to instead walk and cycle, without adding to journey times. Increased fitness proved to be the best way to convince people to participate.



Background & Objectives

Lack of physical activity is one of the most important factors in health problems such as heart/circulatory diseases, depression, being overweight and obesity, diabetes type 2 and hypertension. Surveys in France, Switzerland and Austria have shown that the number of fatalities caused by a lack of physical activity is eight times higher than for traffic accidents and double the number related to PM10 impacts. This lack of activity is largely due to personal lifestyle, not least of which is the reliance on motorised transport.

The idea is to motivate people to change their behaviour by showing them the resultant benefits. The core of the programme is the “introduction of physical activity into everyday life”. The “Activity Programme” took 12 weeks and had the following objectives and targets:

- The participants become aware of their mobility habits, understand their effects and identify opportunities for change.
- The participants (re)discover their city on foot and by bike.
- The participants are motivated to insert more physical activities into everyday life.
- The participants should learn about, experience and understand the physical and psychological advantages and benefits of regular activity.
- The participants should act as multipliers for their families, friends and the local community.

Implementation

Several doctors from Weiz and a local fitness manager cooperated on this module. Patients of these doctors were invited to take part in the mobility/health programme.

The 12-week programme provides three evening sessions, a group meeting including presentations on mobility/movement and two fitness checks (before and after). During the kick-off meeting, the participants were given a Mobility/Health Diary specifically developed for this purpose, in which they noted their daily activity levels.

This facilitated the qualitative and quantitative evaluation. Thirty minutes of physical activity each day was considered to be optimal. The initial walking test was made as early as the first project week (methodology of the UKK walking test). After 12 weeks, this walking test was repeated in order to measure the changes.

The case study is part of the overall INTERREG Alpine Space project VIANOVA.

- One third of all kilometres were shifted from car transport to cycling and walking; two thirds were additional mobility.
- The participants improved their fitness levels on average about by 13 percent during the 12 weeks.

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Conclusions

Project results in key figures:

- Each participant covered approximately 170 km on foot and 100 km by bike.
- Each participant shifted about 92 car-km to walking and cycling on average.



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