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Sustainable mobility on foot, by bike, bus, and rail

European Mobility Week from 16 - 22 September 2009

The motto of this year's European Mobility Week is 'Improving City Climates'. This is the first year that the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) is participating in the *Mit dem Rad zur Arbeit (Going to work by bike)* campaign co-sponsored by the Allgemeine Deutsche Fahrradclub (ADFC) and the Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse (AOK) with 140 active cyclists. In mathematical terms, participants cycled the equivalent distance of once around the earth in the course of the three-month campaign, in a climate-friendly way from the Berlin and Dessau-Roßlau starting points. One staff member at UBA's Schauinsland measuring station climbed a total of 19,000 metres over a 20-day period—more than twice the distance to the summit of Mount Everest.

Urban traffic accounts for one quarter of the CO₂ emissions in the entire transport sector. It is in urban areas in particular that environmental quality is vital to the health and quality of life of residents. In addition to cities and municipalities, businesses and public institutions must also react to increasing traffic and the resulting strains, perhaps by enacting intelligent municipal and operational mobility and transport management, perhaps such as is in place with the mobility management action programme which is part of the German Federal Ministry for Environment's climate protection initiative. Changes in mobility behaviour can be effected with information, consulting and real offers extended to businesses and public institutions like schools or housing associations. Municipalities play a key role in this effort as they can bring together the various local stakeholders, e.g. public transport short-range public transportation and other mobility providers, chambers, associations and citizens' groups. The success of mobility management depends on its fixed place among the staff and throughout the organisation of public and private offices as well as a supply of the necessary resources. The city of Munich, for example, has appointed a mobility desk officer solely for this purpose. For more information see <http://www.effizient-mobil.de/>.

For this year's European Mobility Week many cities plan to present new projects that show a switch to bus, rail, or bicycle, to travelling on foot, and which promote the conscious rediscovery of urban areas.

Sustainable mobility is unfortunately still the exception rather than the rule in Germany today. The German population took 58 percent of all trips by car in 2008. The Federal Environment Agency sees the reasons for the heavy use of the automobile to commute to work as rooted in the fact that most employers still provide free parking and make virtually no effort to promote

any other means of transport. Furthermore, business trips are swiftly booked by air or company car.

Things are different at UBA: there is a 70-percent rate of use of bus and rail among employees for domestic business trips; one fifth of international trips are accomplished by rail. The Agency has guaranteed mobility on site through addition in September 2009 of a high-quality folding bicycle used for official business. The bicycle can be taken on board ICE trains as luggage during business trips. Office bicycles for errands that must be run locally are also available.

Cycling and walking, of course, are easy habits to adopt in everyday life. It is precisely in the saying "regularly, but in moderation" that medical professionals see the key to effective prevention against lack of exercise and its consequences. It is really quite simple, actually: the positive effects on one's health can already be felt after taking 20-30 minutes' exercise daily – the amount of time in many cases that it takes to get to and from work. What is more, a commuter who cycles five kilometres to and from work rather than by car saves about 400 kilogrammes of harmful carbon dioxide emissions per year. A campaign known as *Kopf an: Motor aus. Für null CO₂ auf Kurzstrecken* [Turn on your brain and not your engine = zero CO₂ over short distances], sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Environment, pursues the same objective and is spotlighted in the cities of Bamberg, Dortmund, Halle an der Saale, and Karlsruhe in 2009.

Federal Environment Agency staff are already doing their bit every day: a current mobility survey revealed that 70 percent of daily commutes in the Berlin and Dessau-Roßlau locations are ecological: done by bus, rail, bicycle, or on foot.

Nevertheless, success does not come along all on its own, for it requires active operational mobility management. This is why a working group on mobility management was established at UBA years ago. The working group develops and implements measures to promote environmentally friendly mobility behaviour. As a result, the Agency has long encouraged cycling through various measures, for example by setting up sheltered, safe, and easily accessible bike stands at its offices, by installing showers and changing rooms, and acquiring a fleet of bicycles.

More information on ecological mobility and on the European Mobility Week is available here: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/verkehr/index>, www.kopf-an.de, <http://klimabuendnis.org/mobility-week.html> and www.mobilityweek-europe.org.

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