
PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainable urban development improves residents' wellbeing

Over the past 70 years, cars have had a major impact on urban development and the way our cities are designed. But by expanding initiatives to promote pedestrian and bike traffic, we not only reduce environmental impact but also improve the wellbeing of road users.

The car has changed the way we live, offering freedom of movement to many people. But as urbanisation increases – with 75 per cent of EU residents now living in cities – there is greater focus on the air and noise pollution caused by car traffic.

A previously published Urban Insight report, [Wholesome Air, Serene Cities – Reduced Noise and Air Pollution in Urban Areas](#), observed that traffic noise causes 10,000 premature deaths in the EU each year. An additional 500,000 or so EU residents die early each year due to air pollution.

One way of addressing these problems is to improve pedestrian, bicycle and public transport options. Studies show that pedestrian and bicycle road users not only help reduce environmental impact, they also report greater wellbeing than motorists. Even so, 50 per cent of Europeans travel by car every day, while only 12 per cent use a bicycle as mode of transport.

According to Rik Houthaeve, urban development expert at Sweco, a major responsibility of urban planners is to develop attractive public environments where people can meet, socialise and move around.

”To develop sustainable places, you need to focus on people. This requires more citizen dialogue and greater focus on how people move around and socialise in urban environments, how we create social meeting places and not least how we make it easier to choose sustainable transport modes.”

Sweco's new Urban Insights report presents several successful examples of sustainable urban planning, including Stenpiren Travel Centre in Gothenburg, Israels Plads in Copenhagen, Groenplatz in Antwerp, Potsdamer Platz in Berlin and Kings Cross in London. Read more about these and other examples of sustainable urban planning [here](#).

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