

TRACY

Transport Needs for an Ageing Society **Action Plan**

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1. Introduction

This document presents the action plan and research gaps identified during the TRACY project. TRACY was a two-year EU FP7 funded project with three main aims:

- To provide a systematic review of policies and programmes that address the mobility related needs of older people in the 27 EU states, associated countries, and in Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.
- To analyse the extent to which this 'state of the art' is fit for purpose in addressing transport needs in an ageing society.
- To identify research and policy gaps and contribute towards a strategy capable of tackling these needs.

The project comprised 3 main stages:

Stage 1- Data collection
(Demographic information, literature review, 174 policy summaries)

Stage 2 - Data Evaluation
(Definition of qualities of the transport system, analysis)

Stage 3 - Action Plan and research gaps

Full details of the findings of each stage can be found in the accompanying reports available from the TRACY website¹.

In this document, we first provide some background to the ageing society, before setting out the transport system qualities we define as necessary to meet the transport needs of older people. These qualities are regarded as essential for the creation and securing of an age-friendly transport and mobility system.

Finally we describe the strategic findings and their relation to the identification of research gaps and actions. A conclusion brings the document to a close.

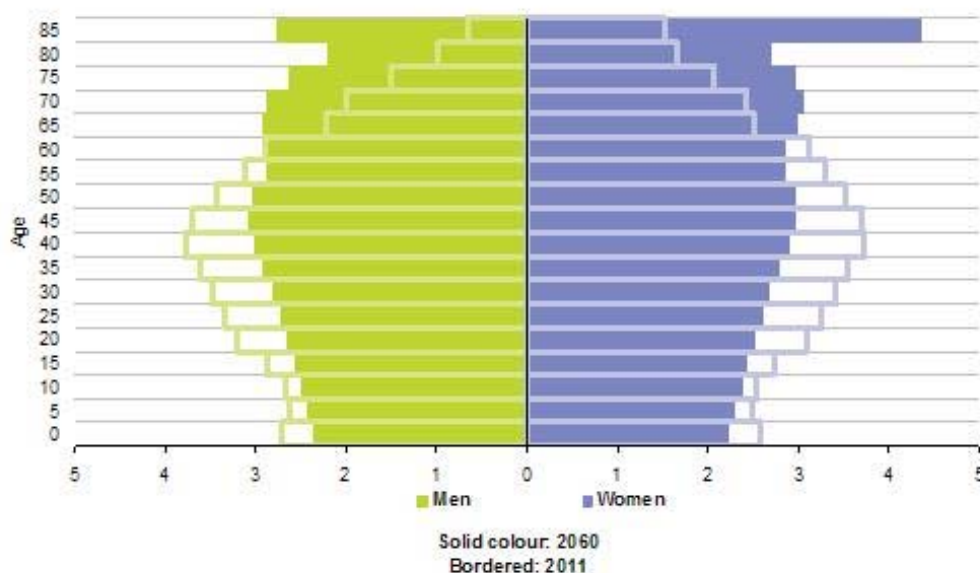
¹ www.tracy-project.eu, references also at the end of this report: TRACY – Transport needs for an ageing society (2012a, b and 2013a, b). Where relevant these reports are referred to in the text.

2. Background

The ageing society

European society is ageing. This means that the average age of the population in many EU countries is rising due to a combination of increased life expectancy and declining birth rates. The projected change in age distribution between 2011 and 2060 is shown in the diagram below.

EU27 Population Pyramid: 2011-2060



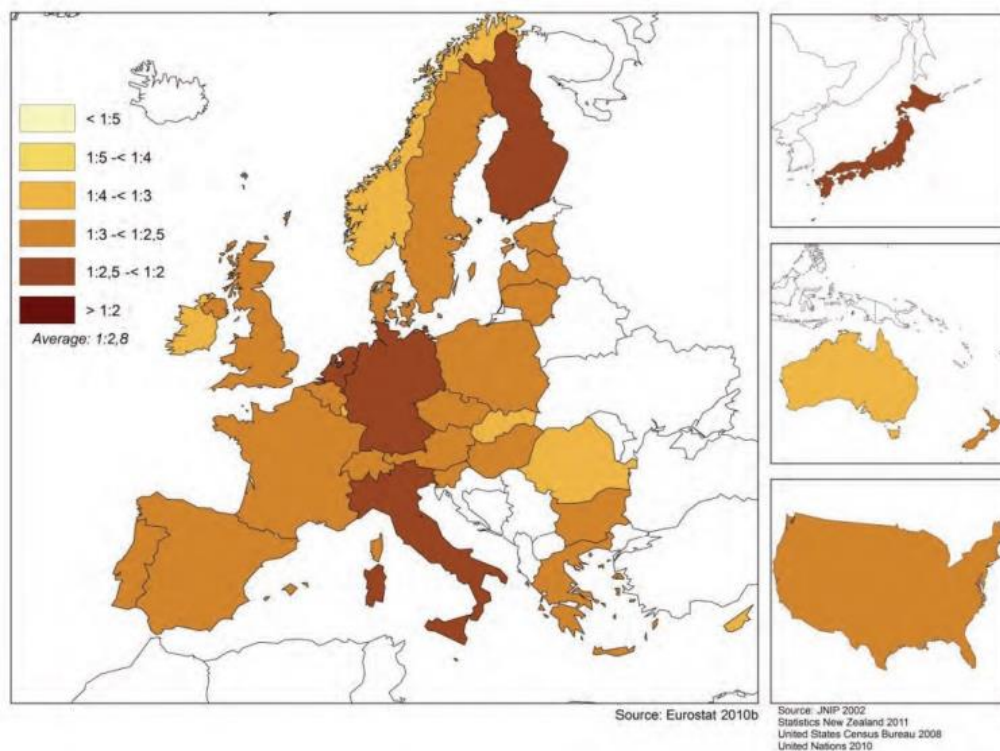
(1) 2011, provisional; 2060 data are projections (EUROPOP2010 convergence scenario).
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: demo_pjangroup and proj_10c2150p)

This ageing process presents a number of economic and social challenges. In particular as the 'old age dependency ratio'² increases, there may be a shortfall in taxation income to pay for essential services, as well as an increased demand for these services, especially healthcare.

² According to EUROSTAT the old age dependency ratio is defined as ratio between the (projected) total number of elderly persons aged 65 and over and the (projected) number of persons of working age from 15 to 64.

As the figure below shows, by 2030 the ratio in some countries will be as low as two economically active people for each economically inactive person.

Old age dependency ratio: 2030 projections



Furthermore social issues such as loneliness may increase if older people increasingly live alone due to the death of a partner or companion. Living alone can be a marker of vulnerability, especially in cases of illness or disability, and it is associated with a greater risk of social isolation and poverty³ (s. also profiles of older people developed by GOAL project).

³ For more details about “Demographics of the ageing society” confer to D2.2, Chapter 2.

The policy context

Policy makers have been aware of the burgeoning issues associated with the ageing society for some time, and have been taking action to deal with them. In the future, however, governments face having to deal with these issues within increased financial constraints (as highlighted in the document “Dealing with the impact of an ageing population in the EU” (2009 Ageing Report)).

In light of these challenges, the EU has been promoting active and healthy ageing through initiatives such as the EuroHealthNets “Healthy Ageing” website, the aim of which is to “optimise the opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take an active part in society without discrimination and to enjoy independence and good quality of life”⁴. 2012 was also the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. The principles agreed as a result of the latter are shown in the diagram⁵ on the next page.

These principles underpin the activities of governments in relation to ageing and as such they underpin our recommendations.

The role of transport in an ageing society

The ageing process can place challenges on the transport systems. As the number of elderly people increases, we can expect a larger number of people with some kind of mobility problem. This is significant because generally speaking transport has a dual role in helping governments to meet the needs of an ageing society:

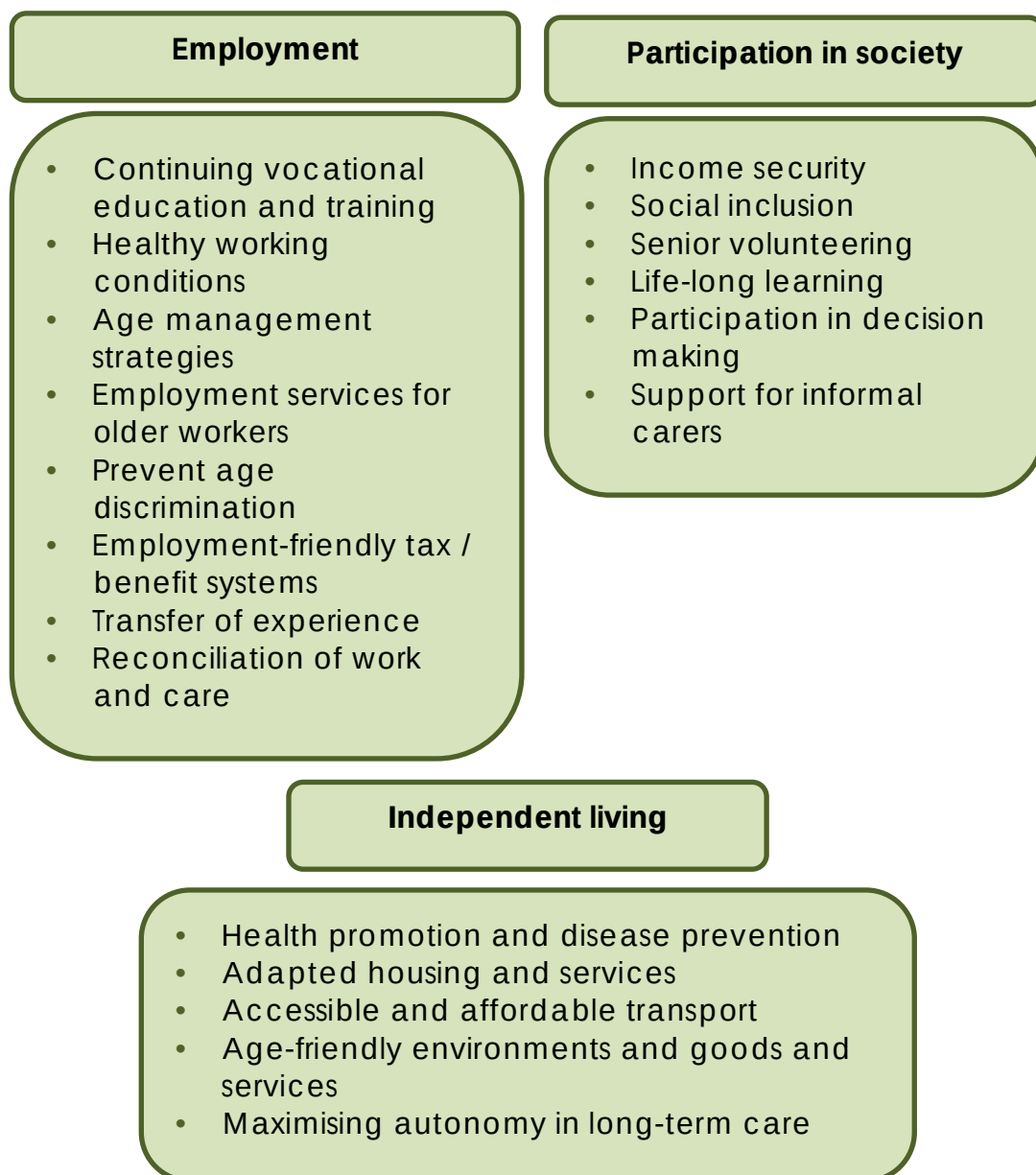
- Firstly it is important in helping older people stay independently mobile for longer, and thus contributes to their quality of life.
- Secondly, active travel can lead to health benefits for everyone, including older people, improving their quality of life and promoting cross-sector benefits such as cost savings in health and social care provision.

⁴ EuroHealthNet 2013

⁵ Authors’ illustration, based on Council of the European Union 2012

Transport is, in other words, an important consideration for governments as they seek to deal with ageing populations.

Guiding principles for active ageing and solidarity between generations



The GOAL project

While TRACY focused on existing policy approaches to transport in an ageing society, our sister project GOAL (Growing Older, Staying Mobile), produced a complementary Action Plan based on their research into innovative solutions for the transport needs of older people in the near future⁶.

The GOAL action plan used a thorough review of existing knowledge and how it is understood and interpreted, to construct future scenarios that take into account societal, technological and other developments. The GOAL team engaged in stakeholder consultation, to identify research needs.

In the course of its work, GOAL described the physical and mental characteristics of older people and used these to develop five profiles (see next Chapter) that describe the range of characteristics of different types of older people. These profiles were then used to explore both the needs of older people while driving, using public transport, walking and cycling, and the relevant information needed before and during travel.

The TRACY project drew on the profiles to develop a list of qualities that the transport system should possess if it is successfully to meet the transport needs of an ageing society (see chapter 3 for more detail).



⁶ www.goal-project.eu; Cf. GOAL - Growing Older, staying mobile: Transport needs for an ageing society 2012, 2013

3. Quality features of an age friendly transport and mobility system

Issues that affect how older people wish and need to use mobility and transport systems are essential to consider in all phases and levels of policymaking⁷. We summarise our relevant findings in the following pages.

Approaching the transport needs of older people

We first acknowledged that people have various layers of *general* needs. There are “basic needs” that are essential for survival (food, water, shelter etc.) and “lifestyle needs” that are necessary for people to thrive (social interaction, education etc.). While literature identifies that these needs are common to all people, the manner in which they are felt varies depending on a number of factors, one of which can be age.

The transport and mobility system should help people to meet their needs. Basic needs are clearly the most immediately significant, but fashioning a transport system capable of meeting older people’s lifestyle needs will have wider benefits for society in terms of social inclusion and improved health.

The next step was to compare the needs of older people with GOAL’s five profiles. Our analysis showed that there are clear differences in terms of which needs older people struggle to meet according to their personal circumstances, and also that they can experience decline in terms of their physical, sensory and cognitive abilities as well as changes in terms of their living arrangements.

Some of the differences and similarities that the transport and mobility system will need to cater for, are:

- Some older people will have an active social life (potentially including voluntary work), while others will become increasingly isolated due to the changes associated with age.
- Older people are likely to experience some level of cognitive decline.
The residential area in which an older person lives can impact upon their opportunities and activities.
- Access to friends and family forms an important part of social activities and may also fulfil a supportive function for an older person.

⁷ This was set out in detail in WP3 (cf. D3.2, Chapter 2 for full details).

- Access to technology varies, but “younger” old people are more likely to use it than “older” old people.
- Older people are dynamic and likely to move between profiles as they age.
- The loss of a spouse may lead to a transition between profiles and often a loss of confidence and independence.
- Older people can become more dependent on public transport as they age.

It is important to note that these issues will not be universal, and will be experienced more by some older people than by others. Given the changes that people go through as they age, however, it is likely that many older people will experience some of these issues at some time or another.

Transport and mobility system qualities

Based on an analysis of information from a number of sources including the previous considerations of needs, wishes and capabilities of older people, TRACY identified a number of “system qualities” that an age-friendly transport and mobility system should possess (most of these qualities would make the transport system more friendly for everyone, not just older people).

The definitions of the system qualities presented here are the result of several iterations, and served as the basis for our detailed analysis of national policies relating to transport in an ageing society⁸. In short, age-friendly transport and mobility systems should be:



⁸ See D3.2 for full details.

Affordable: Use of the transport and mobility system should be possible within older people's financial means.

Available: The mobility and transport system should exist in a way that older people can use it.

Barrier free: The system's facilities should be usable by disabled persons without any specific difficulty and without assistance from third persons⁹. They should as such be designed to take into account the physical, sensory and cognitive impairments more likely to be experienced by older people.

Comfortable: The transport and mobility system should be designed or adapted to ensure that older people can use it without experiencing undue discomfort, pain, stress or anxiety.

Comprehensible: Information about the transport and mobility system should be communicated in ways that make it easy for older people to understand.

Efficient: It should be possible to travel to the required destination within a reasonable amount of time.

Friendly: The transport and mobility system should be approachable for older people. Where applicable staff should be available in a number of ways (phone, face to face) and should be aware of the particular needs of older people.

Reliable: The transport and mobility system should perform as advertised, allowing for an element of unpredictability caused by unforeseen events, e.g. by extreme weather.

Safe: The transport and mobility system should not be dangerous for older people, with specific needs, to use. They should not feel unsafe while using it.

⁹ Cf. the German Federal Law for Equality of Disabled People §4.

Secure: The transport and mobility system should be dependable and should not present unnecessary risks to older people. They should feel confident that they are not at risk when using it.

Transparent: Older people should be aware of the existence of the transport and mobility options available to them, and understand how to use them.

Complementary: The transport and mobility system should be supported by policies capable of promoting accessibility for older people by means other than personal transport, e.g. internet access, mobile services.



4. Recommendations for future research and action

In line with our aim of identifying research and policy gaps and contributing towards a strategy capable of tackling transport needs in an ageing society, we advance 10 recommendations for further research and future policies.

Our recommendations about research refer both to the need for new knowledge and the need for better communication of existing knowledge, and should establish a basis for policies and actions.

The list on the next page contains an overview of our recommendations. Before discussing them in more detail, we briefly discuss the concept of *Design for All* in the context of transport needs for an ageing society. While on the one hand Design for All could be regarded as a basis for all potential action geared towards securing an age-friendly transport and mobility system, on the other hand a targeted approach focusing on older people may still be needed.



Research recommendations – a better understanding of problems and needs

- I. Harmonisation of travel surveys to establish a European overview of transport needs
- II. Statistics and information about accidents and risks in relation to all transport modes
- III. Improving knowledge about individual transport means for older people
- IV. Research on virtual mobility and complementary mobile services
- V. Assessing driver training programmes and preparing for the transition from the car to other transport modes
- VI. Establishing an overview of best practice at the local level and lessons for EU-policies

Policy recommendations – tackling problems and needs more effectively

- VII. Promoting an all-mode approach, including walking and cycling
- VIII. Encouraging policy evaluation and impact assessment in certain fields
- IX. Developing European guidance on age-friendly road and street design
- X. Developing European guidance on less frequently considered qualities of an age-friendly transport system

Design for All versus a more targeted approach focusing on older people

Policies based on Design for All (DfA) include needs of older people and are regarded as a basis for our recommendations.

DfA¹⁰ is very wide-ranging. It is defined as: the intervention in environments, products and services with the aim that everyone, including future generations, regardless of age, gender, capabilities or cultural background, can enjoy participating in society, with equal opportunities for economic, social, cultural, recreational and entertainment activities, while also being able to access, use and understand whatever part of the environment with as much independence as possible (Aragall et al. 2003, p. 23).

In this way a wide range of users can benefit, with the aim that generally no needs must be met by extra segregated solutions or services. Besides, discrimination is avoided and when the fulfilment of various needs is covered by one main solution, this tends to be efficient. Furthermore transport policies based on DfA secure that diversity in the population is taken into account, and this includes various groups of older people (e.g. the five GOAL profiles) and their needs.



¹⁰ An related approach is Universal Design, which is included in the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" of United Nations: "Universal design" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed" (United Nations 2006, Article 2).

Still, additional policies based on a targeted approach focusing on older people may be needed.

Even though policies based on DfA provide a good basis for action, policies focusing on older people as a group may be needed for the following reasons:

- Although DfA is wide-ranging, our analysis showed that some of the system qualities identified in Chapter 3 – security, friendliness etc. – are overlooked.
- The DfA approach focuses on service providers. At least to a certain extent, mobility can also be improved by paying attention to enabling actions focusing on the customers.
- A specific focus on older people may be needed to deal with the extent to which this group is growing and/or changing considerably, where a better understanding of the evolving set of challenges is needed.
- Older people may have travel patterns that are different from other average passengers, and the respective special needs may not be covered by a traditional needs-based approach.



I. Harmonisation of travel surveys to establish a European overview on transport needs

The challenge

In some countries the travel behaviour of older people is poorly understood and there is very little data available with which to compare behaviour and needs at the EU level. This means it is difficult to establish what support and action is necessary where, and if this differs from place to place.

Furthermore, many countries do not seem to have an in-depth understanding of the barriers to travel that are likely to affect an ageing society. There are national surveys on registered travel behaviour, but transport needs are not identified. National travel surveys usually look at who travels in what way by which transport mode, but there is relatively little information about why a certain mode is chosen for a certain type of trip. Also there is a lack of knowledge about trips that are wanted but not actually undertaken, for whatever reason.

Where data do exist, it is not always easy comparing them between the different national surveys. It would be useful if comparable data were available, as they could be used more extensively and provide a good basis for transnational research. This would also better inform and support European policymaking in the context of determining the likely future consequences for transport flows and demand in an ageing society.



Description of the recommendation

In order to create an environment where transport is not a barrier to older people achieving a good quality of life, we still need to understand more about the transport needs of this group. The process of generating better knowledge might start at the local level where people really realise their mobility in the framework of the existing transport environment.

Currently some countries have data in this regard while others do not: national authorities should be encouraged to ensure that they have a good level of understanding of the likely travel behaviour of their ageing population, and are aware of the main barriers to travel affecting this group. The EU can play a vital role in this by guiding national governments on how they can collect data at the local level. This should take place in combination with undertaking research to identify the transport barriers and patterns of the elderly at the EU level.

Key elements of the national travel surveys should be common at the European level. It is unlikely – and probably undesirable – that travel surveys are totally harmonised across all member states, but a series of common basic elements would allow a more consistent analysis.

Examples of elements about travel behaviour to be harmonised include the definitions of age groups, types of travels and modes of transport used.

Information about transport needs should be included in the harmonised travel survey. In addition to recording who travels in what way and why, it would be useful to include information of trips not taken, and the main reasons for not travelling. This might give indications of the real transport needs, and how transport volumes may change if barriers to travel are removed.

II. Statistics and information about accidents and risks in relation to all transport modes

The challenge

Although a lot of research and reports exist in these fields, a degree of confusion is detectable in policy documentation. In essence this seems to revolve around when older people represent a risk to other people in the transport system, and when they are at risk themselves because they are more vulnerable to the effects of accidents than younger people.

Moreover, information about risks in relation to non-car modes is rather limited. At the moment research tends to relate to accidents involving a vehicle, and those not involving a vehicle do not always get recorded in road safety statistics. This is important to note, because some studies indicate that the number of accidents in the non-car modes is high, and that a significant proportion of these accidents are related to older people. Falls are reported as the most common accident for older people (cf. Sagberg & Glad 1999), and although some of those falls happen while using the transport systems, they may not be reported as traffic accidents.

More knowledge is therefore needed about the causes of older people's accidents in transport and the impact this has on health and quality of life. Deepening our understanding of the prevalence and impact of such accidents would help with the design and implementation of actions to reduce them.



Description of the recommendation

The lack of information about certain types of accidents makes it difficult to work towards reducing them. It is therefore recommended to create a broader knowledge base about the older people's accidents in transport and the impact this has on health, quality of life and the realisation of an independent lifestyle during old age¹¹.

Developing a deeper understanding of the prevalence, causes (e.g. infrastructure related, weather-related, steps, travel speed) and impact of such accidents (including trips and falls) would help with the design and implementation of approaches to minimise accident risk on public transport systems, for walkability and for the use of cycles in public spaces. In this context, new routines of accident reporting and new research should be established to identify risks related to the use of public transport, walking and cycling.

In addition, the facts about risks and accidents should be communicated more clearly and consequently so that it is easy to determine what is agreed upon and what is still not clear. These facts have a wider audience than the traffic safety experts' community – they are used in a wide range of discussions related to old people and transport – and it would be helpful to reduce confusion and misunderstanding.

¹¹ See the importance of the system quality *safe* and the impact it might have on older people's travel behaviour, e.g. in relation to the fear of accidents influencing an older person's mobility and thus substantial negative impact on an older person's quality of life and independence.

III. Improving knowledge about individual transport means for older people

The challenge

In addition to the use of cars and public transport, there are some more individual transport means that are usually used for shorter trips. Among this group of alternative means we include mobility scooters and other vehicles that can be used without a driving licence, such as electric cycles, pedelecs and rollator walkers. Such means represent a category that is quickly growing in importance, at least in certain parts of Europe.

While some of the literature reviewed referred to issues associated with the potential of electric bikes for older people, knowledge about how alternative individual transport means can improve older people's mobility options is limited at the moment. These transport means may have different areas of use and different requirements regarding the users' capabilities.



Description of the recommendation

A deeper knowledge of how alternative individual transport means such as mobility scooters and electric cycles can influence older people's mobility situations is required.

It would be useful to monitor the uptake and use of these means among older people and identify their benefits and risks, considering the heterogeneity of older people with their range needs and their capabilities.

Furthermore it would be useful to understand whether such alternative individual transport means should be more widely promoted to older people as new ways to maintain their independent and autonomous mobility, and how this could be undertaken. Especially due to the nature of the opportunity they present, for example, electric cycles might make cycling significantly more attractive and/or feasible for many older people.

The potential wider positive and negative consequences of increased use of these transport means need also to be considered, and thus we recommend the investigation of these in relation to:

- Safety (for the user and for other people in the transport systems).
- Environmental changes and health benefits.
- Requirements for design and planning of infrastructure and public space.



IV. Research on virtual mobility and complementary mobile services

The challenge

As the population ages it is likely that older people will become more IT literate and there may be scope for more “virtual solutions” than currently applied. Indeed, the role of technological solutions is likely to grow in importance in all areas of life.

The extent to which virtual solutions are meeting the needs of older people is more difficult to establish because the capacity to reduce the need to travel among other people and replace it with virtual mobility is not fully understood.

This is an area where change is likely to happen over time, as generations who have been more familiar with the use of technology over their lifetimes continue to engage with it as they age. There is the danger, however, especially in the context of the increased likelihood of living alone, that relying too heavily on virtual solutions could promote social isolation and loneliness.

In addition, our detailed review of policies did not identify many examples of the promotion of mobile services, such as shops and libraries that can be used to bring services to communities, especially in rural areas. While the ideal solution is to ensure older people can access the services they need locally, mobile services may provide a good alternative in areas where population density is too low to support full-time local options.



Description of the recommendation

The potential impact of technological solutions and mobile services on the mobility behaviour of older people is not certain, especially in relation to their capacity to replace trips.

While virtual approaches could have benefits in reducing the burden of travel for essential activities, they might also lead to a reduction in physical activity and personal social contact.

In the context of seeking to provide the highest level of adequate service for older people, virtual solutions and mobile services should be investigated in relation to their potential benefits as alternatives to travelling.

At the same time, we should remember that in relation to wellbeing there can be a value of travel as an activity in itself, and as such technological solutions and mobile services should only form one element of a wider toolkit.



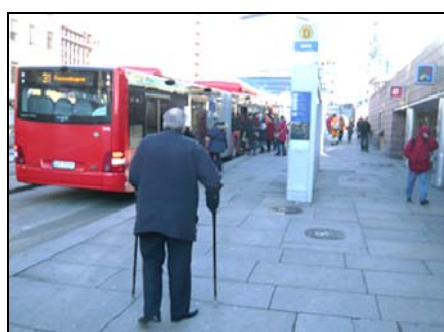
V. Assessing driver training programmes and preparing for the transition from the car to other transport modes

The challenge

Car driver training may help older people stay mobile and drive safely. “Driver training” comprises policies that support older car users to strengthen and maintain their driving capabilities. This may be additional training on a voluntary basis that ensures older drivers are aware of changes they may experience that could affect their driving, and to keep them up-to-date with rules of the road. It could also take the form of refresher courses as part of mandatory driver licence renewal.

At the same time, for those who have to give up driving, managing the transition from the car to other modes is extremely important. Many ageing people, most of them are car users, have never travelled in a regular way by public transport (cf. Berg & Levin 2011) and indeed never even consider other transport modes.

There is thus the potential need for training for people who have to make the transition from driving to using other transport modes. And since car drivers in most areas are among the most frequent group of travellers, the number of “newcomers” to other modes is potentially rather large.



Description of the recommendation

Various driver training solutions should be evaluated as a basis for European guidelines. A few assessments have already been undertaken (cf. Levin et al 2012), but the effects of such policies remain unclear. This means that more evaluation is needed – preferably at the EU level – which can be used as a basis for guidelines and best practice.

It seems also reasonable to investigate how additional information and/or training could be incorporated into the driving licence renewal process. Such initiatives may take the form of the provision of simple information, or could be more complex and involve the provision of both information and further training.

With regard to making the transition from the car to other modes, the literature suggests that older people cope better with driving cessation when it is their own choice. Nevertheless, there are few evaluations of the various training and information initiatives that already exist, but we do know that these are mostly at the local level. This allows the initiatives to be tailored to local circumstances, and as such we recommended here that guidelines and examples of best practices are disseminated across the EU.



VI. Establishing an overview of best practice at the local level and lessons for EU-policies

The challenge

Although it was not the focal point of TRACY research, we have anecdotal evidence of highly effective and innovative actions being taken at the local level to deal with the transport and mobility needs of older people (cf. AENEAS 2011).

Such local level actions apply to all fields of intervention. They sometimes are designed in the context of national policies and sometimes are responses to specific local circumstances. They are usually related to one specific transport mode, and examples include training courses to learn about current developments in car driving legislation, training for inexperienced people on how to use public transport, and actions to encourage people to walk.



Description of the recommendation

Local initiatives and practices should be analysed as a basis for national and European policies. Although such “customised solutions” are often developed for only one mode and according to local contexts, they may have properties that can be “upscaled” for wider, whole-journey benefits at the national and European levels.

We therefore recommend that research is undertaken to establish what policies are implemented at the local level. Key among the aims of such research will be to establish an overview of successful practices, to overcome obstacles and to identify transferable solutions. It will also be necessary to consider what the relationships between local, national and European level policies and actions might be in different places.



VII. Promotion of an all-mode approach, including walking and cycling

The challenge

Most trips include more than one mode, and as such working in the most effective manner to improve mobility options in an ageing society demands that the whole journey should be considered. Each link of the journey needs to be free of barriers that might unduly hinder different user groups.

This idea is underpinned by the concept of “ageing in place” that is becoming more influential in policy circles. This concept emphasises the importance of a supportive local environment that enables older people to remain independent. Since an important supporting factor is an age-friendly travel chain, creating a locally supportive environment requires urban designers and transport planners to work closely together.



Description of the recommendation

All-mode approaches should ideally be taken when and wherever possible. They should also always include walking and cycling, because trips very often begin and end using one or the other of these modes. Where these links have barriers that render them the weakest elements in the travel chain, they will require particular consideration.

It is also important to place a special focus on transfer points. The identification and removal of barriers at transfer points, including but not only public transport terminals, has effects on all modes involved in a trip as they represent important links in the travel chains.

These points are linked to the consideration of the whole of the travel chain: policy changes associated with different modes need to work together to make the whole journey easier. Thinking about a journey from the beginning (planning the journey) to the end (reaching the final destination) is a useful exercise in the identification of barriers.

More broadly, it is important to ensure that transport is considered as part of the wider world. Transport systems have to be capable of what policy makers want them to achieve in a wider socio-economic sense (allowing people to access life opportunities, etc.) New infrastructure developments, for example, should meet the transport needs of older people by being “walkable” and having good transport connections. Improvements can also be made to existing developments to meet these needs.

Currently the “all-modes” policies that have been identified tend to highlight problems or potential issues, but to be weak in terms of providing structured guidance and tangible actions. The EU can support consideration of transport within the frame of the wider world by ensuring that transport is entrenched within other policy areas, and forms a key part of relevant infrastructure and research projects. Design for All can be a basis for all such development and design, not only in relation to transport (see above).



VIII. Encouraging policy evaluation and impact assessment in certain fields

The challenge

One of the main obstacles encountered during TRACY was identifying which policies were likely to be more or less successful at meeting their aims. This was because national level policies relating to transport in an ageing society are quite frequently poorly evaluated, if indeed they are evaluated at all. This means it is very difficult to assess whether or not policies are successful. As such, it is also difficult to establish whether resources are used effectively, or whether changes are needed.

Regarded from a wider perspective, poor evaluation limits the capacity for best practice to be identified. Especially in policy areas that are widely applied in very different ways, a better knowledge base about policy outcomes is desirable.

Among the very common transport policy schemes with special importance for older people are the examples of driver licensing schemes and concessionary fares in public transport. Varying practice around the EU sheds little light on whether or not mandatory driving licence renewal is advisable, and on whether there should be an agreed approach to renewal (see above). It might be reasonable to assess if there is a need for a more common European driver licensing regime, and what the benefits might be.

Concessionary fares policies – schemes that allow older people to use different public transport modes at low fares or for free – are also variously applied across the EU. The reduced fares may be important for some travellers, but the systems may also transfer public money to rather wealthy groups in the population. An overview on a European level of the various solutions, their costs and benefits might be useful to inform future policy direction.

Description of the recommendation

From the TRACY research it is apparent that national governments need to be encouraged to undertake evaluation of their policies. Furthermore they need to be encouraged to give guidance which ensures that consistent evaluation takes place also at the local level.

Good support for this ambition might come from further research aimed at identifying the best ways of evaluating policies aimed at catering for the transport needs of older people. This research might create a good basis for the development and establishment of an appropriate evaluation framework.



IX. Developing European guidance on age-friendly road and street design

The challenge

Roads and streets can be designed in a more age-friendly way. In our policy review we found few policies aimed at transport and planning authorities who deal with the design of roads and other aspects of the driving environment. Since characteristics that would make a road age-friendly are likely to also be useful for other road users this is surprising.

The policies we did find relate to recognising the needs of older drivers and contain guidance about the needs of older people as drivers and how these should be considered in terms of design principles for intersections and roundabouts, pavements, lighting, signage etc..

Apart from specific guidance for the creation of a barrier free pedestrian environment, our point applies in a similar way to the approaches regarding the creation of age-friendly walking and cycling environments.



Description of the recommendation

Road design guidance could be developed on European level; simple changes to road design may help older people drive more safely for longer.

At the same time, the knowledge base needs reviewing and testing. This requires the identification of how age-friendly road design could be better incorporated into existing guidance, and an effective means of ascertaining the effectiveness of implementation of this guidance on all road users.

As roads are more or less similar all over Europe, it might be that existing national policies could be harmonised into European guidance to assist national and local authorities with implementation. This guidance should include all elements of the transport environment for the most effective integrated use of all transport modes available.

Similar guidance on how to satisfy the needs of older people in walking and cycling environments should be established. A wide approach, including signage, environments and “readability” is important.

Also design to avoid crime and to make users feel safe should be included. For example being able to rely upon a well maintained network of well usable footpaths can increase the confidence with which an older person might travel to a destination on foot. Consistent urban design is something that could contribute to this.



X. Developing European guidance on less frequently considered qualities of an age-friendly transport system

The challenge

Countries are tackling the “qualities” that the transport system should have to meet the needs of older people to differing extents.

As identified in the literature, the existence of public transport in itself does not mean it is useful to an older person – there are many additional barriers that may prevent an older person from travelling. Some of the more tangible barriers are understood and often covered by Design for All policies, while the less tangible ones often seem to get overlooked. This may impact upon public transport use by older people since the literature indicates that the most important barriers for older people may be related to these less tangible aspects (cf. Hjorthol et al 2011).

The system qualities that are best understood are safety, affordability and barrier freedom, and many countries have policies in place that deal with potential issues affecting older people in relation to each of these.

Areas considered to a lesser extent, at least at the national level, were in particular public transport, service quality and service design. Since information availability and driver friendliness are listed in the literature as key characteristics that encourage older people to use public transport this is an area where more work may be required.



Description of the recommendation

There is scope for the creation of comprehensive European policy guidance that deals with less frequently catered-for transport system qualities that are likely to have a very real impact on willingness to use public transport.

While some good examples for how such barriers can be tackled might be found at the local level, these are unlikely to be consistent across a country, and in some areas they will not exist at all. Guidance to national governments on how best to guide their local authorities to consider these less frequently catered for transport system qualities might pay dividends. For example, softer measures that encourage older people to use public transport. This will help them to maintain quality of life when they can no longer drive, and may therefore also have a health benefit.

Of course the effects of catering for the frequently overlooked transport system qualities for older people need to be properly assessed. As the barriers that seem currently overlooked are among the most important ones for old people, it is recommended to monitor how their removal impacts upon the mobility choices and transport behaviour of older people.



5. Conclusions

In this action plan we have summarised the findings from the TRACY project. We have also set out our recommendations for further research and future policy action in relation to the EU and the national levels.

From the outset, one of the main limitations of this project has been its focus on the national level. Some of the policy and indeed research gaps we have identified may already have been dealt with at the regional or local levels, and we identify that a research gap exists in relation to a comprehensive knowledge of these. None of this, however, changes the fact that some national governments are not currently implementing significant actions that could help older people meet their transport needs. Were these actions to be implemented at the national and/or EU levels, the transport needs of older people in an ageing society may better be met in the future.

We have tried to frame the actions and research gaps relevant to the transport system within the wider picture of the whole journey. It is important that, as far as possible, older people can complete their journeys using a range of possible modes using a transport system that possesses several important “system qualities”. Of course geographical differences between places, not to mention the differences between older people themselves (for example, in relation to the five GOAL profiles), mean that different actions are likely to be required in different locations.

National and local governments considering the feasibility of whole journeys in their proper socio-economic context will bring about far greater improvements than if changes are made only to individual policies or modes in isolation. The Commission can support this by providing research and guidance on the best approaches and practices.

While the transport needs of an ageing society will continue to change, the findings from TRACY have identified a series of actions that can help ease the burden of this change and thereby enable more older people access opportunities in society by a range of transport and other means in ways that best meet their needs.

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