The future of transport: How is Malta responding?

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Transport Malta

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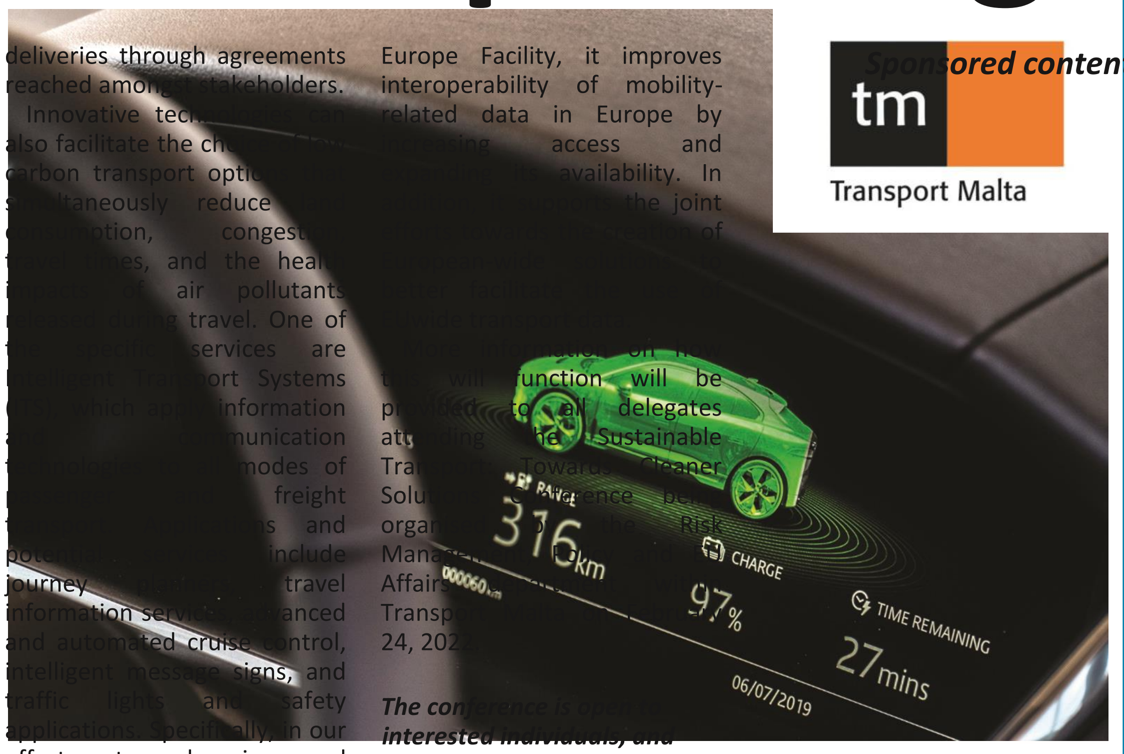
Urbanisation across Europe is leading to the emergence of smarter cities, which in turn call for more efficient and clean technologies in all areas, including the transport sector. Certainly, employing green energy for a healthier and more sustainable environment has become pivotal, but also more attainable. Options include the use of carbon neutral transport systems, the use of renewable energy, greenhouse gas emission management, and the reduction of pollutants to better the quality of our air and soil.

Homing in on the transport sector, achieving the energy revolution required for decarbonisation implies that efforts need to be increased to move towards renewable energy sources which include: the increased use of biofuels, hydrogen, and synthetic fuels; the use of natural gas vehicles; the electrification of transport modes and, where possible, the retrofitting of existing vehicles to reduce emissions. The main reduction is expected in road transport, but this does not exclude the shipping and air sectors in which it is anticipated that clean technologies will take a more pivotal role in the years to come. Reorganisation and reduction of land, air, and maritime traffic, coupled with a shift towards electric, hydrogen, and biogas fuel cells in the future could further enhance emission reduction.

Of course, such technologies vary in their level of maturity and research as well as in the costs involved to adapt. However, commitments made by all European Member States towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions have pushed both research and action on the ground across Europe.

Malta is no exception, and we are experiencing commitment in this direction in the form of increased grants for the scrapping of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and the purchasing of electric vehicles, grants aimed towards the promotions of micro mobility (electric bikes, motorbikes, mopeds, and quads), the installation of charging infrastructure across the island, funding dedicated for the electrification of public transport, and forthcoming projects aimed at the digitisation of various elements of the transport system amongst other initiatives. Specifically, the shift to electric vehicles is important as these do not produce the more harmful tailpipe emissions. Apart from that, operating an ICE vehicle depends on fossil fuels, a resource which is finite. Hence, the impact on our planet is not only with regard to the reduction of air quality, but also in the depletion of natural resources and the effect on the environment during their extraction.

Industry can also play a pivotal role. The transition from a traditional economy having a linear path, from usage to waste, towards a more circular economy, can have a significant positive impact. This may be done by offering a more cost-effective approach and by fostering concepts of recycling, reusing, and material substitution. Eventually, this trickles down to more affordable and reachable alternative and cleaner solutions for the public. Even more easily accomplished is the encouraging of active travel amongst employees, through the introduction of green travel plans and the use of technology enabling teleworking, thus reducing the need for commuting. In addition, there should be coordination of freight movement to reduce the number of trips required weekly, or combination of deliveries through agreements reached amongst stakeholders.



Innovative technologies can also facilitate the choice of low carbon transport options that simultaneously reduce land consumption, congestion, travel times, and the health impacts of air pollutants released during travel. One of the specific services are Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), which apply information and communication technologies to all modes of passenger and freight transport. Applications and potential services include journey planners, travel information services, advanced and automated cruise control, intelligent message signs, and traffic lights and safety applications. Specifically, in our efforts towards increased sustainable mobility, we are planning for the introduction of a National Access Point solution.

This is in line with Malta's EU commitments where mobilityrelated data and information, both that originating from the Government and also that from the private sector, can be made available for public information. The National Access Point Coordination Organisation for Europe Project (NAPCORE), which the team is presently participating in, supports our work in this regard by aiming to coordinate and harmonise mobility data platforms all over Europe. Co-financed by a Programme Support Action under the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility, it improves interoperability of mobility-related data in Europe by increasing access and expanding its availability. In addition, it supports the joint efforts towards the creation of European-wide solutions to better facilitate the use of EUwide transport data.

More information on how this will function will be provided to all delegates attending the Sustainable Transport: Towards Cleaner Solutions Conference being organised by the Risk Management, Policy and EU Affairs department within Transport Malta on February 24, 2022.

The conference is open to interested individuals, and one may register by scanning the QR code or through this link https://forms.office.com/r/1A DUexdcgN. More information can be obtained by sending an e-mail to sustainablemobility. tm@transport.gov.mt.

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