

Sustainable Transport: Public and Private: An Alliance Towards a Modal Shift / The Sustainable Multi-Intermodal Transport Hubs (SMITHS) Final Conference

The SMITHS final conference was organized by The Risk Management, Policy, and EU Affairs within Transport Malta at the Excelsior Hotel, Floriana, on Monday 18th September between 8.30hrs and 16.00hrs. The scope of such conference *Public and Private: An Alliance Towards a Modal Shift* was to bring together key stakeholders to discuss past and current scenarios with the intent of implementing future opportunities in relation to the transition towards more sustainable transport. The ultimate goal is that of enhancing and supporting the transition towards more sustainable means of mobility which contribute to a more sustainable future and better quality of life. The event itself was funded through The Sustainable Multi-Intermodal Transport Hubs (SMITHS) Project.

The salient points discussed were the importance of decarbonization, air quality, reduction of GHG emissions, reduction of traveling time, alternative and sustainable means of transport, and nonetheless the overall well-being of the population. We need to move away from the mentality of one-size-fits-all, it is essential to tackle such a preeminent issue from different perspectives while taking into consideration the needs of all involved. It is in the interest of all parties to work and cooperate such as the government, the private sector, researchers, and academia to find a way forward in a synergized way. Through several initiatives and collaborations, the European Union has been pumping funds into funding programmes such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Just Funds, and the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). By means of these projects, we are aiming to achieve long-lasting results that will help minimize the current effects of climate change.

The collection of real-time data is pivotal in this regard as it helps us analyze, test, and possibly find solutions for such an imminent crisis. The ideal solution is a combination of different models integrated together to push forward mobility changes that can be viable for the Maltese Islands. The alignment of such systems will help us be more efficient, transparent, accessible, and reliable while at the same time allowing the concerned authorities to better enforce legislation. The ability to be able to reuse this type of data would at the same time make it more sustainable. From today's conference, it also transpired that the entire process revolves around four dominant aspects: Research, Prioritisation of measures, Consultation, and Communication. The SMITHS project's main objective is battling climate change and not the business prosperity itself.

Throughout the afternoon session, 3 parallel workshops were conducted where the delegates had the opportunity to focus on specific areas of their interest.

The first workshop focused on: Zero Emission Transport, The Plug and Beyond. During this workshop, it emerged how much transport actually impacts the overall quality of life and that by choosing more sustainable and alternative means of transportation we can actually improve same. Customers' needs should always be given priority at the planning stage, issuing more schemes is also important while keeping in mind the proper infrastructure need. Change needs to start now, with each and every one of us not only in Malta but across the entire European Community. Maritime and Aviation also need to be brought on board.

The second workshop focused on: Exploiting the Potential of Waterborne Transport in Malta. As already mentioned during this workshop it has been brought up that yes waterborne transport can be a game changer for the Maltese Islands but let us not rush things as there is a lot to be done yet, such as the increase of ferry landing sites and the need for fuel importation together with a cultural change. An upgrade of the current infrastructure is also a must to be able to properly cater to the demand.

The third and final workshop focused on: Embedding Sustainability into your Business DNA. At the bottom of a successful business, we inevitably find its employees and management who need to have a positive and proactive mindset. This needs to be a group-effort approach as the saying says 'No man is an island', the government, private and public sectors together with the general public need to work towards a common goal that is of being more sustainable while remaining profitable. Short and long-term measures need to be implemented in the hope of tackling the constant challenges.

The final address was conducted by Mr. Jonathan Borg Transport Malta's CEO, where he once again emphasized the fact that we need to act now but cautiously in confronting the Climate Change issue by means of an amalgamation of different means of sustainable means of transport based on accurate research and innovation.

In conclusion, we can firmly consider today's conference as a very successful one where we had the opportunity to acquire different points of view and information which will help the authority and the concerned stakeholders to better target the present and future challenges which lay ahead.

SMITHS PROJECT SUMMARY:

SMITHS aims to encourage a modal shift from private car use to collective, sustainable, and alternative low-carbon transport modes, improve air quality, and reduce GHG emissions. The different components of the project were designed to facilitate inter-modality and address cleaner air through the introduction of various inter-modal choices. In particular, the project includes the upgrading of ferry infrastructure and the introduction of segregated cycling lanes and pedestrian paths along the road network. SMITHS also works towards the transition to a low-carbon transport system through the introduction of a new multimodal hub in Gozo including a park-and-the-ride facility operated by clean collective modes of transport and, the extension of the national electric vehicle charging networks across Malta and Gozo.

The project is made up of the following components:

- 1) The deployment of activities related to Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)
- 2) The collection of monitoring data on all the Actions
- 3) The deployment of the National Information and Dissemination Campaign
- 4) The deployment of segregating infrastructure for promoting safe pedestrian and cycling paths (three pedestrian bridges and three cycle lanes)
- 5) The deployment of Electric buses and Multimodal Hub in Xewkija, Gozo
- 6) The deployment of ferry Infrastructure
- 7) The extension of the national EV Charging Infrastructure

MTIP as the project coordinator/contact person of the project regularly organizes coordination meetings among all parties to follow upon the progress on implementation, disbursement, reporting, and other obligations of the beneficiary organizations in addition to, separate individual meetings or requests for clarifications, updates, and follow up with the beneficiary organizations concerned, as necessary, for the smooth running of the project.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project intends to increase public and communal transport patronage/uptake through state-of-the-art information systems, as well as campaigns earmarked to influence behavioural patterns. This included infrastructural work linked to the use and introduction of new/improved and or additional modes of transport as well as additional complimentary investment in this area including sea landing places as well as investment in cleaner public transport were also undertaken.

SMITHS directly contributes towards the provision of better ferry infrastructure, safer cycling, safer pedestrian access, and non-carbon transport. The low-carbon and holistic transport system to be created because of this project shall be directly promoted through the information and awareness-raising campaign forming part of the same project.

NET €36,864,295.09	VAT €3,753,679.09	TOTAL €40,617,974.18
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