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## **Citizens' panel, EESC members and EU stakeholders discuss how to make urban transport R&D more effective**

At the conference "MOVING TOGETHER TOWARDS A NEW CULTURE FOR URBAN MOBILITY: Citizens' views on EU research for sustainable urban transport" held today at the European Economic and Social Committee, citizens from the 27 EU member states dialogued with EESC members, experienced stakeholders and decision-makers in the urban transport sector. The Citizens, representing the different cultures and urban settings of Europe, emphasised the need to stop the excessive use of cars and to boost walking, cycling, public transport use and information services to obtain more liveable cities. They also called for stronger involvement of citizens in EU transport research to make it more applicable and bring it closer to the needs of all transport users.

At today's launching conference of the research project "MOVE TOGETHER", financed under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme for RTD, citizens from the 27 EU member states presented their assessment of EU sustainable transport research to high-level EU policy makers and stakeholders. The conference, co-organised by the **European Economic and Social Committee** and the **Institute of Studies for the Integration of Systems (ISIS, Italy)**, highlighted the results of two focus groups of 27 lay citizens selected randomly from all the EU Member States, in which these assessed the results of urban transport research

**Mr Stephane Buffetaut (EESC Group I, Employers, France), Vice-President of the EESC's Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society**, welcomed the direct interaction between citizens and stakeholders: "This project is an excellent example of the value added by lay-person expertise. The sincerity and quality of the citizens' statements impress me. The EESC should consider drawing more often on the lay expertise of European citizens." "The key belief of this project is that raising the awareness of current or expected achievements of EU research will help citizens and the decision makers across Europe to "move together" towards a new and more sustainable urban mobility culture." explained **Mr Carlo Sessa, co-ordinator of the Move-Together project**.

**Artwell Cain, from the Netherlands, member of the citizens' panel**, summarized the key recommendation for future EU transport research: "We believe that the citizens should be consulted at all stages of research, and that there should be much greater emphasis on including anthropological and sociological research in the scope of technological projects."

**Marika Mirtic from Slovenia**, another member of the citizens' panel, added: "We believe mobility freedom means having more options, more services, more information, more comfort and safety. In order to regain that mobility freedom we need to boost four major axes: walking, cycling, public transportation and integrating these with the movement of cars and trucks."

These statements were welcomed by members of the EESC: "The citizens confirm what the EESC recommends in its opinion: A prioritisation of public transport with a high level of quality and protection for passengers, the creation of public areas for pedestrians and cyclists and an integrated approach to infrastructure." noted **Rafael Barbadillo, EESC Group I, Employers, Spain) and co-rapporteur of the EESC opinion on the green book "Towards a new culture of urban mobility"**. **Lutz Ribbe, (EESC Group III, Various interests, Germany), rapporteur of the EESC's opinion on transport in urban and metropolitan areas**, underlined the value of citizens' panels: "No one can accuse this group of citizens from different countries, different ages and different layers of society of being biased. So I think they send a strong message to all EU institutions. We must keep this in mind in our choices as consumers, as politicians and as responsible citizens."

**Stanislaw Rozycki (EESC Group II, Employees, Poland)** stressed the importance of the project's outcome for the new EU Member States: "Many citizens in my country as in other new member states still recall the high share of public transport we have had for a long time. We must work with this potential." The EU policy makers praised the work of "MOVE TOGETHER": **Eleni Kopanezou, Head of the Unit for Clean Transport and Urban Transport, European Commission, Directorate General Energy and Transport**, explained "The project addresses the challenges raised in the Green Paper "Towards a new culture for urban mobility" and provides valuable civil-society input to the Action Plan on urban mobility, currently in preparation."

**Andr s Siegler, Director of the Transport Directorate in Directorate-General for Research, European Commission**, underlined the importance of stakeholder participation in the EU's urban transport research: "Demand for transport is growing at an exponential rate, and the transport modes we use are too polluting, the oil it depends on is too expensive, and our infrastructures and environment can no longer cope. Stakeholders at the local level are key to achieving sustainable urban transport systems: they are the ones who have the knowledge of the problems on the ground and the capacity to implement effective solutions."

More details regarding the "MOVE TOGETHER" project are available at: <http://www.move-together.net>

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*The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the Community decision-making process. The Committee has 344 members, who are appointed by the Council of Ministers.*