



Designing mobility for attractive cities

Mobility is at the crossroads of various urban policy: Thriving Streets is connecting mobility with economic prosperity, accessibility, inclusion, participation and health to encourage a change towards more resilient and attractive cities. As an URBACT Action Planning Network, this project aims to improve sustainable local policies through integrated action planning and an organised process of exchange and learning among cities across Europe. It is a network of ten cities working together to improve sustainable mobility in urban areas from an economic and social perspective.



KLAIPĖDA

**SAFE, CLEAN, AND PEDESTRIAN
ACCESSIBLE KLAIPĖDA OLD TOWN,
FULL OF ACTIVITIES AND CULTURE
ALL YEAR ROUND**

City context

- Klaipėda is the third largest city in Lithuania with a population of over 150 000; it is located on the Baltic Sea coast. It is the centre of western Lithuania, and a regional centre for business, culture, science, and tourism.
- Historically, Klaipėda has been and continues to be a multicultural city, with more than 30% of its inhabitants are of other nationalities.
- Klaipėda is the most northern Baltic seaport in Lithuania, and the only year-round ice-free port in the eastern Baltics.
- The city accounts for around 10% of Lithuania's GDP and almost 80% of the GDP of Western Lithuania.

Challenge

The Integrated Action Plan focuses on the “Old Town” of Klaipėda. This neighbourhood currently facing various challenges:

- Absence of people: rather than in the Old Town, people spend their time in shopping malls where everything is in one place and are not exposed to weather. As a result, businesses, and shops in the Old Town struggle to survive.
- Air and noise pollution: due to the high concentration of jobs and services in the Old Town combined with a car-oriented mobility (and with cobblestones) leads to increased air- and noise pollution.
- Accessibility problems: people with disabilities and parents with strollers have difficulties to safely access the Old Town.
- Cycling and public transport: missing safe paths for cyclists, failure to use the nearby river for public transport is a missed opportunity.



“Testing the water” Our small scale action

The aim of the SSA was to test a street closure model for small events in the Old Town and to ensure greater involvement of Old Town businesses in strengthening the attractiveness of the area. A series of events (cinema night, arts courtyard and the historic St. John’s Church Restoration Auction-Concert) were organized in different locations in Old Town, together with the Old Town’s businesses and community. During the events the venues were closed to traffic and the spaces were designed to be pleasant to sit and socialise in, with entertainment, food and drink on offer.

Ambition / vision

Klaipėda City Municipality and its citizens want to create a safe, clean and pedestrian-accessible Old Town for citizens, guests and businesses, full of experiences and activities – reasons to be there. All the places in the Old Town and beyond should be accessible for all the citizens and visitors.





Action plan

Our objectives:

- 1. Improve the economic environment and vibrancy of the Old Town**
Implementing joint initiatives with the Old Town Business Support Community, providing non-financial initiatives to businesses, co-financing events implemented in the Old Town public spaces, reconstructing the market square.
- 2. Improve the infrastructure in the Old Town to strengthen sustainability and accessibility**
Developing P+R parking, restricting motorized traffic in the Old Town, improving the pavements to better serve accessibility for all, installing new bicycle and walking paths, developing public transport (including water buses), active mobility awareness-raising.

Lessons learnt

- Activating the local community requires trust – and building trust takes time. Our experience shows that it is not realistic to expect people, businesses to take initiative immediately. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the municipality should give up; on the contrary, we should keep trying.
- Quality and attractiveness of a public space is a complex thing – it requires quality infrastructure, green areas, good accessibility for all, a variety of shops and cafés, diverse supply of events and programmes. All these are necessary to change the image of a place in people’s mind. And once that happens, they start to come. To get there is difficult and takes time – but when that happens, the public space comes to life – after all, people go where people are.

The City of **Klaipėda**
is a partner of the
Thriving Streets network

