

**Inclusivity
Diversity
Community**



One Vision, Diverse Paths: How Komotini and Larissa's IAPs Foster Inclusive Urban Mobility

Written by Io Chatzivaryti, Ad Hoc Expert for URBACT IV S.M.ALL APN Network



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Urban mobility stands at the heart of sustainable city planning, shaping how people move and interact with their environments. In cities like Komotini and Larissa, where inclusive mobility is a priority, the vision extends beyond transportation—it's about creating equitable, sustainable, and accessible spaces for all. Both cities have crafted Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) to address the specific challenges and opportunities they face, demonstrating their commitment to fostering inclusivity in urban mobility. By focusing on accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement, Komotini and Larissa are not only transforming their own urban landscapes but also contributing to a larger European dialogue on sustainable and inclusive transport systems.

These cities' IAPs touch upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), emphasizing the importance of accessible infrastructure and sustainable mobility. Through practical testing, iterative strategies, and community involvement, Komotini and Larissa are setting a precedent for inclusive mobility solutions that prioritize the needs of all citizens, particularly vulnerable groups.

Strategic Priorities for Accessibility and Sustainability

Inclusive urban mobility is not just a logistical goal for cities; it's a societal imperative. It ensures that every resident, regardless of ability, age, or economic status, has the freedom to participate fully in urban life. Komotini and Larissa have embraced this challenge through their IAPs, which focus on three central pillars:

1. **Enhanced Accessibility:** Inclusive mobility begins with addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations—persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and families with young children. Both cities are committed to dismantling physical, social, and economic barriers that hinder equitable access to transportation and public spaces. By focusing on the universal design and accessibility features such as ramps, smoother sidewalks, and inclusive transportation services, aim to promote an urban environment where all individuals can navigate freely and independently.
2. **Sustainability Goals:** A key component of both cities' IAPs is the promotion of sustainable transportation. By encouraging greener modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transit, Komotini and Larissa aim to reduce their carbon footprints and combat climate change. This focus on sustainability is aligned with global environmental goals, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting eco-friendly transportation options. These initiatives not only serve environmental objectives but also promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging active forms of transport.
3. **Community-Centric Design:** Urban mobility solutions should reflect the needs and desires of the people they serve. Both cities place a strong emphasis on involving local communities in the planning and implementation process. Collaborative approaches

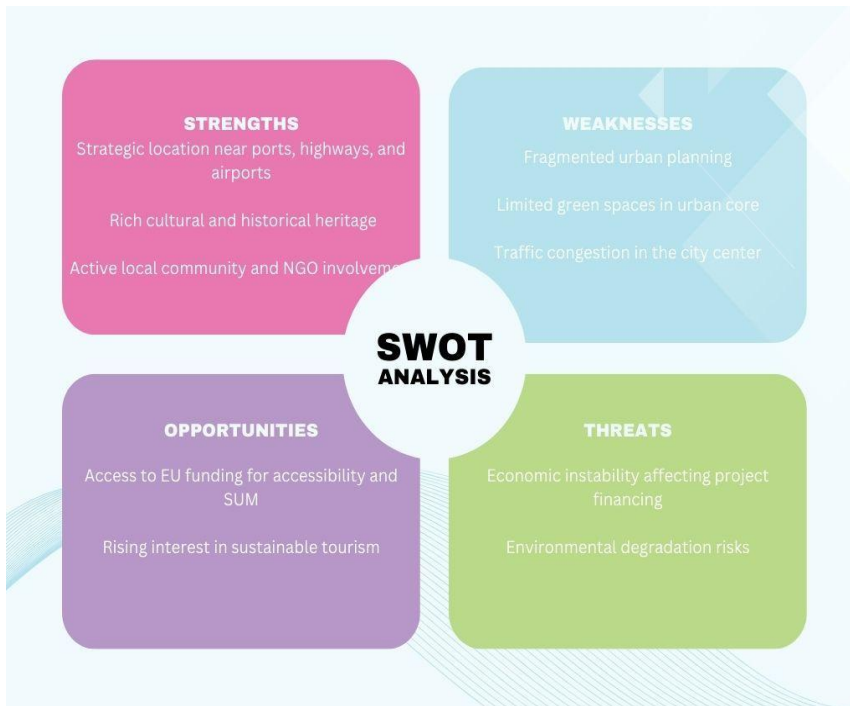
ensure that mobility solutions are context-specific, culturally appropriate, and reflect the social and economic fabric of each community. By engaging residents in ongoing feedback loops, both Komotini and Larissa are fostering trust and ensuring that their mobility initiatives are truly inclusive and effective.

Komotini's Integrated Action Plan: Paving the Way for Accessible Mobility

Context and Objectives

Situated in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Komotini is a regional hub known for its strategic transport links and vibrant urban-rural mix. The city's IAP aims to enhance accessibility for all citizens, including people with disabilities and the elderly, while reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. Key objectives include expanding pedestrian-friendly areas, improving public transport systems, and establishing a network of integrated bike paths.

SWOT Analysis



Komotini's SWOT analysis offers a glimpse into its mobility landscape:

- **Strengths:** A unique urban-rural blend, proximity to transit hubs, and rich cultural heritage.
- **Weaknesses:** Limited accessibility in public spaces and outdated infrastructure.
- **Opportunities:** Availability of EU funding for sustainable mobility projects.
- **Threats:** Economic challenges and underdeveloped infrastructure.

Source: Komotini's IAP plan, Municipality of Komotini for SM.ALL APN Network

Strategic Vision

Komotini aspires to become an inclusive, connected, and sustainable municipality, one that respects its rich historical heritage while embracing modern urban growth. This vision prioritizes accessibility and sustainable mobility, ensuring that all residents can fully participate in the city's public, economic, and cultural life.



Source: Komotini's IAP plan, Municipality of Komotini

Komotini envisions a city that bridges its historical charm with modern mobility solutions. The strategic plan emphasizes:

- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Enhancing sidewalks and creating bike-friendly streets.
- **Legislative Compliance:** Incorporating universal design principles into public spaces.
- **Public Awareness:** Promoting the benefits of sustainable urban mobility (SUM) through education campaigns.

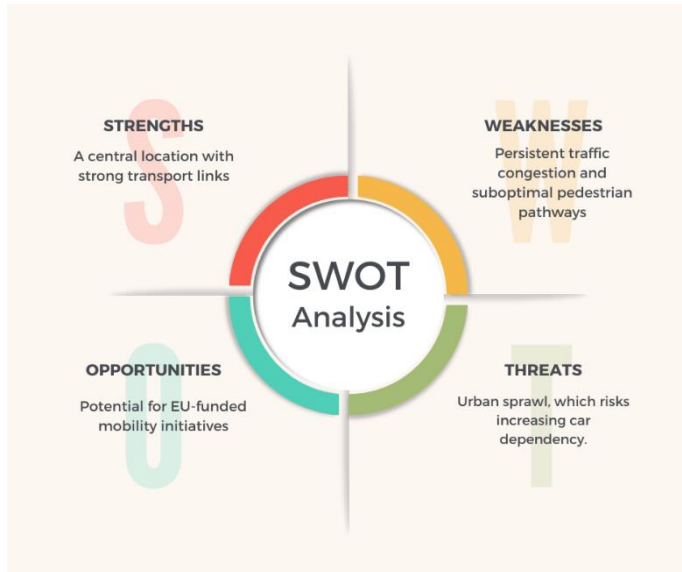
Strategically, Komotini aims to **upgrade infrastructure, comply with universal design principles, and raise public awareness about sustainable urban mobility (SUM)**. These actions will not only improve accessibility but also contribute to environmental sustainability, creating an urban environment where residents can thrive, regardless of their physical abilities.

Larissa's Integrated Action Plan: A Blueprint for Sustainable Mobility

Context and Objectives

Larissa, located in the heart of Thessaly, faces its own unique challenges, **including traffic congestion and limited accessibility for vulnerable populations**. Its IAP seeks to transform the city into a sustainable urban environment through **improved public transport, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and the promotion of cycling**. Larissa's SWOT analysis highlights:

SWOT Analysis



Larissa's SWOT analysis highlights its strengths and areas for improvement:

- **Strengths:** A central location with strong transport links.
- **Weaknesses:** Persistent traffic congestion and suboptimal pedestrian pathways.
- **Opportunities:** Potential for EU-funded mobility initiatives.
- **Threats:** Urban sprawl, which risks increasing car dependency.

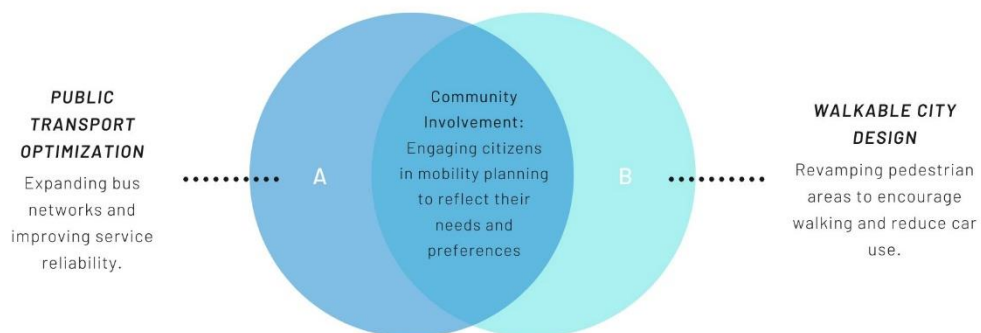
Source: Io Chatzivaryti, developed for the purposes of S.M.ALL URBACT APN Network

Strategic Vision

Larissa envisions itself as a model city for sustainable urban mobility. The city's strategic focus includes expanding public transport networks, optimizing pedestrian spaces, and involving citizens in the planning process, particularly through initiatives like the S.M.ALL project. By addressing local traffic issues and promoting alternative modes of transport, Larissa is committed to creating a more accessible, walkable city for all.

LARISSA'S STRATEGIC VISION

IO CHATZIVARYTI, DEVELOPED FOR S.M.ALL APN NETWORK



Larissa aspires to create a city where residents can access essential services efficiently and sustainably. Its strategy focuses on:

- **Public Transport Optimization:** Expanding bus networks and improving service reliability.

- **Walkable City Design:** Revamping pedestrian areas to encourage walking and reduce car use.
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging citizens in mobility planning to reflect their needs and preferences.

A Comparative Look at Komotini and Larissa’s Action Plans

Feature	Komotini	Larissa
Geographic Context	Urban-rural blend; border municipality	Central urban hub with strong transport links
Key Challenges	Limited green spaces; aging infrastructure	Traffic congestion; inadequate pedestrian pathways
Common Goals	Accessibility for all; SUM initiatives	Accessibility; pedestrian infrastructure improvements
Funding Opportunities	EU funding through mobility programs	Potential EU funding for similar initiatives
Strategic Focus Areas	Infrastructure upgrades; universal design compliance	Public transport enhancement; citizen engagement

Testing Actions: A Laboratory for Innovation

A distinguishing feature of Komotini and Larissa’s IAPs is their focus on practical testing through pilot projects and real-world trials. Testing actions enable the cities to experiment with innovative solutions, evaluate their impact, and refine strategies based on feedback and outcomes. Testing actions is a cornerstone of their IAP and trigger to foster IAP smooth implantation, successfully engaging local stakeholders.

Komotini Testing Action

The Accessible Routes Monitoring System (ARMS) is a dedicated Small-Scale Action (SSA) to enhance accessibility within the historic center of Komotini. This initiative introduces a web-based application that provides real-time updates on accessible routes for individuals with mobility challenges, including wheelchair users, elderly residents, and parents with pushchairs. By ensuring accessible and safe navigation within Komotini’s historic city center, ARMS will contribute to a more inclusive urban environment for both locals and visitors.

Features and Functionality

- **Interactive Map:** The application, accessible on both mobile devices and desktop computers, will feature an interactive map highlighting current accessibility conditions.

- **Real-Time Data:** Users can view up-to-date information on accessibility features such as ramps, smooth pathways, and barriers (e.g., construction zones, uneven surfaces).



- **Dynamic Updates:** By leveraging GPS data and user-submitted feedback, ARMS will dynamically adjust route conditions, offering users the safest and most accessible paths through the city center.

- **Community Integration:** The NGO **Perpato**, a regional leader in disability support, will facilitate community engagement, assist in data verification, and ensure the system meets accessibility needs accurately.

Implementation Phases and Timeline

The ARMS project is estimated to take **4-6 months to complete**.

Source: Komotini's IAP, Municipality of Komotini for SM.ALL APN Network

Larissa testing action

In an effort to enhance urban accessibility, a Testing Action was conducted in Larissa to evaluate two key routes within the city. Led by the **URBACT Local Group (ULG)**, the assessment brought together stakeholders from various sectors and community groups to identify barriers, analyze the existing infrastructure, and gather valuable insights for future interventions. The Testing Action covered two main routes:

- **Route 1**, which includes **Kyprou, Anthimou Gazi, and Papanastasiou Streets**, serves as a crucial link between key city functions and the city center. This route connects important urban areas and plays a vital role in everyday mobility for Larissa's residents.
- **Route 2**, which spans **Farsalon, Palaiologou, Ptolemaiou, Panagouli, Aiglis, Alexandroupoleos, and Gourgioti Streets**, traverses the southernmost densely built part of the city. This route connects significant landmarks, such as the **Old Cemetery of Larissa**, the **Railway Station**, and the city center, providing an important connection for both local commuters and visitors.

The primary objective of the Testing Action was to assess the accessibility of these routes, pinpoint existing barriers, and analyze the infrastructure in place. The results of this assessment will serve as a foundation for planning future interventions aimed at improving mobility and ensuring that Larissa remains an inclusive and accessible city for all residents and visitors.

Through these actions, Komotini and Larissa position themselves as laboratories for innovation, using an evidence-based approach to urban mobility. Their focus on flexibility ensures that solutions can evolve alongside the needs of their residents.

Same...but different

Komotini and Larissa, while sharing a common vision for inclusive urban mobility, approach their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) in ways that reflect the unique characteristics of their local contexts. The difference in their priorities and strategies becomes evident when considering the role of tourism, citizen engagement, and day-to-day mobility needs.

Komotini, has prioritized making local beaches and cultural sites more accessible, ensuring that visitors—especially those with mobility challenges—can navigate and enjoy these spaces. This dual focus is exemplified in initiatives like the Accessible Routes Monitoring System (ARMS), a pilot project designed to provide real-time updates on accessible routes within the historic center. By incorporating tools like ARMS and engaging NGOs like Perpató, which specializes in supporting people with disabilities, Komotini ensures that its urban mobility solutions are inclusive and align with its role as both a residential and tourist destination.

Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) Focus Areas

Aspect	Komotini	Larissa
Key Challenge	Balancing tourism mobility with local needs.	Managing congestion and optimizing urban flow.
Tourism Impact	Tourism mobility is a priority; accessibility projects for beaches and cultural spots are included.	Limited tourism focus; actions target daily urban users.
Testing Actions	Development of ARMS (Accessible Routes Monitoring System) to assist locals and tourists in navigating accessible routes.	Accessibility testing focused on two major commuting routes to improve everyday movement.
Citizen Engagement	Collaboration with NGOs (e.g., Perpató) for inclusive planning, particularly around tourism-friendly infrastructure.	Strong ULG (URBACT Local Group) involvement to refine solutions for residents' daily needs.
Mobility Type Focus	Short-distance travel, pedestrian-friendly tourism hubs, and cycling infrastructure.	Expanded public transit, pedestrian walkways, and reduced car dependency for intra-city mobility.

Larissa, by contrast, presents a more urban-centered profile with a far lower emphasis on tourism. Located in the heart of Thessaly, the city's mobility plan focuses squarely on addressing the everyday needs of its residents. Larissa grapples with significant challenges such as traffic congestion and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, which impact its citizens' daily lives. Unlike Komotini's tourism-driven focus, Larissa's IAP revolves around optimizing its public transport networks and improving pedestrian routes to facilitate more efficient urban movement. For example, the testing action conducted in Larissa assessed two key commuting routes to identify barriers and propose enhancements that directly benefit residents who rely on these paths for work, errands, and access to services. This practical, user-focused approach

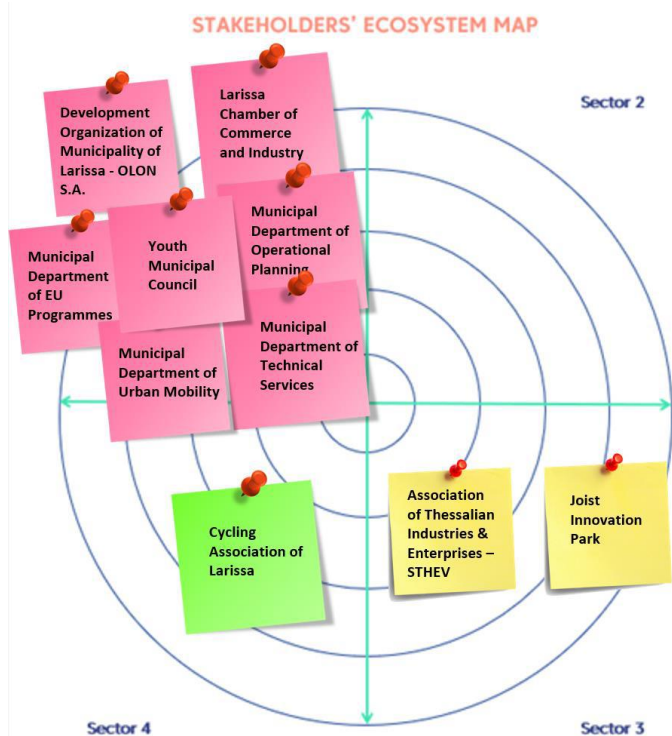
reflects the city’s goal of creating a walkable, accessible environment tailored specifically to its commuters.



The structural composition of each city’s Urban Local Group (ULG) also reveals important distinctions. In Komotini, stakeholders include NGOs, governmental institutions, academia, SMEs and local actors with a specific emphasis on accessibility for vulnerable groups, particularly those impacted by tourism infrastructure, such as people with disabilities or families with young children. The involvement of Perpato, for example, ensures that accessibility projects are sensitive to real-world challenges faced by residents and visitors alike.

Komotini’s ULG Structure Source: Komotini’s IAP, Municipality of Komotini for SM.ALL APN Network

In Larissa, the ULG operates with a more technical focus, prioritizing the evaluation of routes and gathering direct feedback from residents to address everyday mobility issues. The synthesis of the city’s ULG involves public entities, NGOs, SMEs, and innovation hubs. Prioritizing smart solutions to improve the quality of mobility



solutions to improve the quality of mobility solutions. The city’s testing actions, therefore, highlight its emphasis on solving immediate problems, such as physical barriers or unreliable infrastructure, rather than promoting accessibility for external visitors.

The participatory nature of the ULGs in both cities underscores the power of collective action and effective team synthesis. As Henry Ford said: *"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."* The success of both Komotini and Larissa’s IAPs lies not only in their strategic planning but also in their ability to bring together diverse stakeholders—local governments, NGOs, community groups, and technical experts—whose collaboration drives these ambitious mobility transformations. In Komotini, the synthesis of expertise and local knowledge ensures that solutions address both tourism and residential accessibility.

Larissa’s Stakeholder Ecosystem Source: Larissa’s IAP, Municipality of Larissa for SM.ALL APN Network

In Larissa, teamwork among planners, citizens, and urban analysts results in practical solutions that improve daily mobility for residents.

Ultimately, Komotini and Larissa showcase two distinct but equally valuable approaches to inclusive urban mobility. Komotini’s vision integrates local accessibility with tourism development, positioning itself as a city where visitors and residents alike can enjoy cultural and natural landmarks with ease. Meanwhile, Larissa prioritizes functional, day-to-day improvements to meet the immediate needs of its commuting population. By tailoring their strategies to their unique challenges, both cities demonstrate how urban mobility can be transformed into a tool for inclusion, sustainability, and local development.

Learning by Doing: Adapting to Unique Local Needs

A key strength of the IAPs is their adaptability to local contexts. While Komotini and Larissa share overarching goals, each city tailors its strategies to address unique challenges. Komotini, with its compact urban layout and diverse population, focuses on solutions that address **short-distance travel and enhance social and economic inclusion**. In contrast, Larissa, with its larger urban center and greater congestion, emphasizes **reducing private car use and expanding shared transport options** to create more sustainable movement throughout the city.

Feedback and Refinement: Building Resilient Systems

Community feedback plays a central role in the success and sustainability of urban mobility plans in Komotini and Larissa. The participatory process ensures that the solutions implemented are not only effective but also truly responsive to the needs of residents. Engaging citizens through open dialogue allows for a deeper understanding of the real-world challenges they face, enabling the cities to create mobility systems that reflect the unique characteristics of their communities.

For instance, a bike-sharing program can be significantly improved by listening to user preferences. Feedback on aspects such as pricing models, bike availability, station placement, or even the introduction of e-bikes can help refine the service to better suit the demands of the population. Similarly, smart mobility hubs, which integrate various modes of transport, require continuous feedback to troubleshoot real-time technical issues and improve the user experience.

Civic engagement goes beyond just gathering opinions; it is about fostering a sense of ownership among residents. When citizens actively participate in shaping the urban environment, they are more likely to adopt and sustain the systems in place. By involving local communities in the decision-making process, both cities build trust, ensure that solutions align with the needs of their users, and increase public buy-in.

Moreover, this feedback-driven approach allows for flexibility in urban planning. As the cities grow and evolve, new challenges and opportunities will inevitably arise. By maintaining open communication channels, Komotini and Larissa can remain agile and adapt to changing circumstances, ensuring that their mobility systems are both resilient and long-lasting. The incorporation of community feedback ensures that these systems are not static but instead evolve with the city’s dynamic needs, creating a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban environment for all.

Toward a Shared Future of Inclusive Mobility

The experiences of Komotini and Larissa provide valuable lessons for creating **adaptable urban mobility systems** across European cities. These cities showcase the importance of tailoring mobility solutions to local contexts while remaining flexible to address evolving needs and challenges. By focusing on community-driven planning, sustainability, technological integration, and resilience, their approaches offer a framework for urban mobility that balances immediate goals with long-term adaptability.

At the heart of this framework is participatory planning. Both cities prioritize **community engagement** through initiatives like Urban Local Groups (ULGs), which unite stakeholders such as local authorities, residents, NGOs, and technical experts. This inclusive approach ensures that mobility solutions reflect the needs of the population while remaining open to iterative refinement. Pilot projects and real-time feedback mechanisms enable cities to test and adjust strategies effectively, ensuring that solutions remain relevant amidst shifting economic conditions or unexpected crises, such as a pandemic.

Sustainability, smart technologies, and resilience are integral to this framework. Komotini and Larissa focus on **eco-friendly transport options**—like enhanced public transit, pedestrian pathways, and cycling infrastructure—that improve quality of life while addressing environmental concerns. Smart technologies, such as Komotini’s Accessible Routes Monitoring System (ARMS), **optimize mobility through real-time data analysis**, helping cities anticipate demand and improve services. By diversifying transportation modes and integrating green solutions, these cities demonstrate how urban mobility systems can be both adaptive to immediate challenges and sustainable for future generations.

Conclusion

Komotini and Larissa’s Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) reflect a shift toward inclusive, adaptive, and data-driven urban mobility solutions. By prioritizing accessibility and sustainability, these cities address key challenges in modern transportation. The ongoing initiatives provide a practical look at the future of mobility, blending residents' needs with environmental and technological goals. As these plans develop, they will serve as a model for other cities, demonstrating that urban mobility is about more than just transportation—it’s about fostering connection, equity, and sustainability. Komotini and Larissa's commitment to inclusive mobility highlights a vision for cities that thrive through innovation, collaboration, and shared responsibility.