



Joint CEMR - EURO CITIES
Statement on
Access Restriction Schemes
in cities

SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

HELPFUL: EU ACTION COULD BE USEFUL IN THE FOLLOWING FIELDS:

- Promote best practice and exchange of information between cities and towns on the different traffic management schemes in Europe in order to achieve better quality of life in cities.
- Provide appropriate funding to facilitate best practice exchange and support local authorities in the development of access restriction schemes.
- Support the development and deployment of innovative information and communication technologies to ease the implementation of access restriction schemes, as well as their enforcement.
- Help develop and share best practice in terms of consultation steps required before introducing a green zone or a congestion charge in order to gain public acceptance.
- Ensure one central point of information, available in multiple languages, on all schemes across Europe to enable effective journey planning and good flow of information.
- Ensure better co-ordination between the EU legislation on air quality and legislation on vehicle emissions, and make emission standards for vehicles rapidly more stringent.
- Establish standard vehicle documentation that would enable cross border recognition of vehicles' characteristics, including standard documentation for retrofitted vehicles.
- Provide legislation to allow effective cross border enforcement of green zones.
- Cities should be fully consulted on any EU measures that relate to, or impact upon, access restriction schemes. In particular, they should be appropriately represented in any future advisory group to be set up at EU level.

UNHELPFUL: CEMR AND EUROCITIES OPPOSE ANY ACTION GOING IN THE FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS:

- Harmonisation in general at the EU level or imposition of common minimum thresholds for access restriction schemes as there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Environmental conditions or traffic patterns vary across the EU and within Member States. Developing access restriction schemes is a local competence that is best addressed when local authorities are given the flexibility to respond with appropriate solutions.
- Unified standards for green zones across the EU as this would undermine local efforts to raise air quality standards to meet EU legislation with the limited range of policy options that are effective in tackling air quality issues.
- A single EU-wide website for interactive vehicle registration and the payment of access charges. Cities would not have the resources for a bespoke payment channel via a centralised website, but would welcome a central point of reference which would then allow users to access a city website in order to process any registration or payment.
- Our networks would also like to point out a lack of clarity in the European Commission definitions of its work on access restriction schemes: while the Urban Mobility Action Plan mentioned the launch of a study on green zones specifically, the European Commission's study then effectively referred to access restriction schemes, which covers obviously a broader scope. The tendency to group different schemes together is unhelpful and misleading as their aims and the regulations related to them are different.

DETAILED POSITION

Access restriction schemes, such as green zones or congestion charges, are schemes aimed at limiting traffic in selected urban areas. These schemes are of great interest to CEMR and EUROCIITIES members as they provide a valuable tool to achieve the mandatory air quality objectives set down in EU legislation and bring about a range of economic, social and health benefits, increasing the quality of life in cities. European cities and towns are interested in learning from other local experiences in developing access restriction schemes in order to assess the value of such a tool to their own mobility and environmental policies.

In their contributions to the Green Paper on Urban Mobility adopted in 2008¹², CEMR and EUROCIITIES both stated that the promotion of modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport should be a cornerstone of any urban transport policy and that it is essential to promote restrictive measures to discourage the use of cars while developing incentives. We believe that access restriction schemes can effectively contribute to this modal shift and welcome the European Commission's efforts to promote their use throughout Europe.

CEMR and EUROCIITIES recognise the value of recent efforts by the European Commission to promote access restriction schemes in Europe. However, we would like to bring the following points to the attention of the European Commission and other stakeholders.

Setting up an access restriction scheme: A local competence

1. CEMR and EUROCIITIES oppose any attempt by the EU to impose common criteria, standards or harmonisation for access restriction schemes (including green zones). The European Commission should maintain the non-legislative approach found in the Green Paper and Action Plan on Urban Mobility, which respects the responsibilities of local authorities in line with the principle of subsidiarity.
2. To be effective, traffic management schemes should be designed and implemented at the local level in response to local conditions. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, since environmental conditions or traffic patterns vary across the EU and within Member States. Such problems are best addressed when local authorities are given the flexibility to respond with appropriate measures. In particular, they should neither be obliged nor prevented by the law to introduce an access restriction scheme.
3. It should also be noted that imposing green zones or access restriction measures can be a very controversial political issue at local level. Cities need as much flexibility as possible to design local schemes in ways which will find support amongst citizens and stakeholders.
4. Harmonisation could be achieved as to the emission criteria used to set the standards of a green zone. For zones where the entry criterion is vehicle emissions, the threshold should be based on the EURO standards classification. This would also help the work of cities by providing a predefined set of emissions standards, ensure greater clarity for motorists, increase acceptance by citizens and make the scheme more efficient and better enforceable.
5. Nevertheless, such standardisation should not extend to specifying the EURO level for green zones, nor other features of the scheme, which depend on the level of pollution in a given area, which differs from one city to another. Harmonising rules for entering access restriction schemes or setting standards for their design could burden local authorities with additional costs and reduce their flexibility, reducing the likelihood of

¹ CEMR contribution is available at www.ccre.org/prises_de_positions_detail_en.htm?ID=69&idca=1

² EUROCIITIES contribution is available at www.eurocities.eu

traffic management schemes to be introduced and resulting in poorer environmental, economic and social outcomes.

6. As local authorities are the actors with responsibility for introducing such schemes, the European Commission should ensure they are fully consulted on any EU measures that relate to them. Not only can local authorities provide an understanding of the practicalities of how schemes work in their local areas, they also reflect the views of those who are affected by access restriction schemes and related issues in their local area. Consultation can be done most effectively through CEMR and EUROCITIES as the European-level representative bodies for local authorities from all EU Member States.

Role of the EU: Non-legislative, but essential

A) Exchange of information and best practice at city level

7. CEMR and EUROCITIES welcome an EU role in promoting the exchange of information and best practices on access restriction measures (such as within the CURACAO project or the CIVITAS programme). Local decision-makers should be able to benefit from the experience of other cities. The EU has a valuable role to play in coordinating technical cooperation, networking activities and exchange of best practices between actors in different Member States.
8. A further EU role would be to highlight and spread good practices on holistic approaches such as the combination of parking management, access restriction schemes and improved public transport. Achieving more sustainable urban transport depends on the creation of such 'packages' and not individual actions. The EU has a unique role to promote and disseminate different integrated solutions.
9. The EU should provide appropriate funding to facilitate best practice exchange between local authorities and incentivise local administrations to adopt new solutions by financing pilot projects. In addition, it should ensure that those good practice examples are easily accessible for local authority practitioners and not fragmented across different websites and projects.
10. A European web-based database gathering relevant information and best practice would be useful to European cities and towns. They would be able to find guidance drawn from the experience of other cities. This website could also provide advice to ensure that schemes are compatible with other EU legislation.
11. There should not be a single EU website for interactive vehicle registration and the payment of access charges. Cities would not have the resources for a bespoke payment channel via another website but would support a central point of reference to link through a city website to process any payment. In fact, processing payments would make any central site expensive to set up and to maintain.
12. Innovative solutions using information and communication technologies could make it easier for local authorities to implement and manage access restriction schemes, and to improve their enforcement (e.g. integration of a common identification system in vehicles circulating in Europe). CEMR and EUROCITIES support the activities of the Expert Group on Intelligent Transport System (ITS) recently set up by the European Commission, as well as the research activities on advanced technological solutions. It is crucial that the European Commission's Expert Group on Urban intelligent transport systems contributes to the overall structure of consultation with Member States and other stakeholders established by the ITS Directive.

B) User consultation and information provision

13. The biggest barriers to the implementation of schemes such as green zones or road pricing are not technological difficulties but general concern about the issues and public scepticism.
14. As such, best practice exchange should not focus only on technical solutions, but include all aspects of the planning and implementation of a scheme. The EU should aim to establish models for effective consultation with the public and other appropriate stakeholders, for setting charges and enforcing the scheme. Besides this, the EU can also play a role in promoting the benefits of such schemes as road pricing to national governments.
15. The EU could ensure one central point of information, available in multiple languages, on all schemes across Europe to enable good flow of information and effective journey planning (e.g. expansion of the website www.lowemissionzones.eu to include congestion charging zones and more detailed information on each scheme). This could be used as a resource for newly proposed zones and enable effective publication of data to enable private companies to develop smart applications or include information into satellite navigation systems.

C) Effective cross border enforcement of green zones

16. The success of access restriction schemes depends on effective enforcement. In an increasingly integrated Europe, the EU has a role to ensure drivers can be prosecuted for traffic violations they commit in a Member State other than their own. It is essential, for instance, for an international market like freight transport to have a level playing field. The EU could usefully ensure that standard vehicle documentation is established that would enable cross border recognition of vehicle age, size, weight, CO₂ emissions and EURO standards. In addition, the EU should also establish standard retrofit documentation that would enable cross border recognition of retrofitted vehicles.
17. The recent political agreement to exchange number plate data between member states to allow for cross-border enforcement of traffic fines, is an essential step forward. So far this only applies to certain traffic offences related to road safety, but this framework should be extended, including to fines related to access restriction schemes.

D) Better co-ordination between the EU legislation on air quality and legislation on vehicle emissions

18. CEMR and EURO CITIES advocate greater co-ordination between EU legislation on air quality and that on vehicle emissions. Green zones are a useful tool to combat air pollution, but there is also potential for greater measures at source. Local and regional governments cannot directly influence the polluting emissions of private vehicles. In order to reduce air pollution effectively and significantly, they need to be supported by an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework involving other key sectors, notably the car industry. We are convinced that emission standards for vehicles need to become rapidly more stringent.
19. Finally, the EU needs to take a strategic overview of all road user proposals (e.g. Eurovignette Directive) to ensure that they do not compromise existing schemes and come at the expense of downgrading congestion or environmental schemes.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), founded in 1951, is the broadest association of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are 53 national associations of local and regional governments in almost 40 European countries.

EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities. Founded in 1986, the network brings together the local governments of over 140 large cities in some 34 European countries.

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