

Anastasia Nikolaidou , Greece

**Researcher at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki**

Anastasia Nikolaidou studied Civil Engineering at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, specialising in Transportation Studies. She also has an MSc in Transport Planning. She is currently working on her PhD and is also a Researcher at the same university. She also cooperates with the private sector on local, regional and national projects.

- 1) Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) have enabled researchers and planners to successfully identify the specific requirements of different social groups and transport users.**
- 2) Different social groups need to be persuaded and convinced to join public discussions in order for their voices to be heard when drawing up SUMPs.**

Could you briefly tell us something about your background, and your area of expertise in the field of transport with gender and diversity? What field are you currently working in?

I studied Civil Engineering at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and specialised in Transportation Studies. When I completed my undergraduate degree, I was accepted on and completed the MSc Transport Planning course. Since then, I have only worked on transport-related projects instead of traditional civil engineering areas. I have been studying my PhD for the last five years, and since 2015, I have also been a Researcher at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki at the Transport Engineering Laboratory. I have also been cooperating on transport-related projects for the private sector at local, regional and national level.

The majority of my work has centred on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans as well as transport analyses.

In your area of expertise, what have been the greatest breakthroughs in transport conditions in terms of gender and diversity?

In my professional experience, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) have enabled researchers and planners to successfully identify the specific requirements of different social groups and transport users, outside the standard groups that usually appear. Thus, I believe SUMPs are a breakthrough in terms of improving transport conditions in terms of gender and diversity. This is the opposite of the traditional transportation analyses that were previously conducted. Public discussions and public engagement have

improved in general in recent years and hopefully further strides forward will be made in this regard.

What are the biggest challenges in terms of the issues discussed above?

The main challenges are mainly the lack of related data due to the fact that data collection methods do not currently take gender and diversity dimensions into account. This has been identified as a major issue which researchers need to address thoroughly and accurately.

What road maps need to be set out to increase gender and diversity in mobility at national and EU level?

Including gender and diversity-sensitive data collection methods would be one of the major steps in this sense, as this would take the identified parameters into account and integrate them into transport analyses. This could then be forwarded into transport planning and finally into the implementation of measures and specific actions.

As an expert in drawing up SUMP, what problems have you identified in the process regarding the inability to integrate the needs and challenges of relevant social groups. Are there any women and gender equality issues?

The initial problem starts with the researchers who, more often than not during public discussions to draw up SUMP, are unable to identify all social groups. It is not enough just to invite them. They need to be persuaded and convinced to join public discussions in order for their voices to be heard. Moreover, public discussions need to be broad ranging and open so everybody can participate and hear public opinions. Moreover, the lack of time and, in many cases, financial constraints limit researchers' efforts to conduct their tasks appropriately. Another problem is that the public has lost faith and trust in public stakeholders and researchers find it difficult to factor in their opinions, feedback and comments. Finally, researchers often propose SUMP which are not then correctly implemented by local authorities due often to a lack of funding and other political priorities.

Which policy recommendations and measures can effectively deal with the previously identified problems?

More funding and more time would certainly facilitate seamless integration of different public opinions as well as the appropriate development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans.

Change Project is a bike-sharing related project? Can you tell us some more about it and what its outcomes are?

The Change Project aims to promote the bike-sharing economy through innovative applications. An online platform was designed to optimise bike-sharing among current and potential users throughout the city and also included other actions to promote bike-sharing. In this context, a bike design for disabled groups was developed and then created. The final design will be donated to the Northern Greece Paraplegics Association which has also taken part in the development of the bike design.

Aristotle University has recently been awarded a grant for a new project on the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. How did this project begin? What is about? What are the expected outcomes?

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we started a national transport survey in which we asked participants to describe their mobility characteristics. The objective was to compare pre-pandemic and pandemic transportation habits. The survey highlighted the difference in impact for men and women. For example, women began to use private vehicles significantly more than men and mostly as passengers not drivers, due to more limited vehicle ownership and because they didn't drive. Additionally, women limited their mobility because there were fewer people moving around the cities on a daily basis thus moving them into a more isolated and vulnerable environment.



Given the need for a universal approach to transportation issues, a consortium made up of the Transport Department at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a team of Behavioural Analysts from the University of Macedonia and a team of economists from the University of Crete was created. The main objective of the project, which is just about to start, is to apply the methodology of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans to the context of the pandemic and to assess the impacts of lockdown and other similar measures.



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