

Kristina Gaučė, Lithuania

## Gender inequality issue in transport is strongly culturally influenced

### Representative of the European Platform on Mobility Management (EPOMM) in Lithuania

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**As far as I know, you work with innovative solutions related to communication and mobility. Could you give a brief overview of your job and your area of expertise in the field of transport / mobility related to gender and other diversity issues? What field are you currently working in?**

I specialize in the management of complex national and international projects, giving priority to projects focused on innovative, intelligent communication solutions which implement the principles of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. I am also a representative of the **European Platform on Mobility Management (EPOMM)** in Lithuania, and a member of the ECOMM (European Conference on Mobility Management) programme committee for its annual conference.

More specifically, my educational background is in **urban planning**. My Master's degree was on **urban transport**, and my dissertation was on **mobility** and urban planning. These three themes have all been a constant in what I have done since then, through

my work in mobility management, transport, and territorial and strategic urban transport planning.

**From a professional perspective, do you perceive any challenges for people based on their gender or as members of specific social groups in the field of mobility?**

From the passenger's perspective, Vilnius, for example, is ideal for young men around 30 years of age, who use an electric scooter and mobility-sharing tools. The anthropology of the city itself is favourable to people who are aggressive and not afraid of choices, in a good sense. However, **women tend to have more household chores**, and their travel characteristics are different, so they find it more difficult to fit into this city context.

The sense of safety is also important. Very few females walk round at night without feeling scared. Women are very protective of both

themselves and their daughters. Even small but unpleasant experiences from the past make them more cautious.

From an employee's perspective, the inequality context has very little to do with the fact that this is a transport area. It is actually a cultural-related issue, for example, referring to a young woman as a "girl" in a negative sense, especially for a woman.

Equality. Although the proportion of women and men in Lithuania may seem relatively gender-balanced in terms of achievements, as there are quite a few women who have been successful in this field, this is not necessarily the case. There is a very backward attitude towards women. There are fewer women, but it is unclear whether this is because of the nature of transport itself or because it is harder for women to reach certain professional heights. Inequality itself, in my opinion, is more felt through the age culture, especially in the public sector. It is harder to make your mark because you're seen more through an age filter.

**Do you think that mobility (smart mobility) has the potential to be or become an equally accessible and convenient tool for all social groups? Could you share your views on this?**

I cannot really conclude that it is very unsafe, and the fact is that there is a great deal of exclusion that can be remedied with the help of processes or goods. At the moment, stereotypes and passenger behaviour are more relevant.

**The primary reason for using or not using a transport is price.** On average, about 15% of personal income goes on cars (if used) and about 3% on public transport (if used). Nevertheless, technology and smart solutions can sometimes achieve huge breakthroughs in the field of mobility, though sometimes this can be a drop in the ocean, but it may still be useful. However, I don't believe that this will fundamentally change the basic constants of mobility. There are certain constants in transport: the price of the trip, the number of trips, the duration of the trips. These will essentially remain the same, and they are the essence of the willingness to use mobility. Femininity plays a minimal role here.

**In your work, have you come across any breakthroughs in the field of mobility related to gender and diversity?**

What I really call a breakthrough (I take a bird's eye view of mobility) are the following elements: the advent of the **sharing economy**, i.e. cars and

The image shows a video call interface with a speaker, Kristina Gauce, in a small window at the top. Below her is a presentation slide. The slide has a title 'Background for multimodality and Citizens' involvement' and features a map of Vilnius with various transport routes and multimodality points marked. A flowchart on the right side of the slide shows the hierarchy: 'Vilnius SUMP' leads to 'Part of Vilnius – Antakalnis SUMPlanning', which leads to 'Multimodality points'. The 'cities. multimodal' logo is in the bottom right corner. A small text box on the map reads: 'Infrastrukūrinų objektų rengimo vietas nurodytos preliminarai, todėl turi būti orientaciniai rengiant atitinkamus dokumentus'.

bikes. Before this, a large part of the community found it difficult to easily reach the busiest public transport hubs. And now it is normal practice in the world to use an Uber, for example, to reach the main public transport connections. Multimodality and its growth through sharing platforms, including micro-gadgets (scooters), is actually changing the overall global picture. New modes of transport have arrived on the market which have changed attitudes from something that everyone wants to own to something everyone wants to share. In addition, shared spaces somehow also change human perceptions so that people don't feel as though they are an obstacle to traffic. Instead, they are equal participants in traffic. Sharing streets, sharing spaces, redesigning spaces to discriminate against cars is a sort of breakthrough. This shows a change in general cultural perceptions and self-identification with the city. It seems to me that there is greater emphasis in this area rather than in certain technological or engineering solutions.

**In your area of competence, what are the main challenges to increasing mobility in terms of gender and specific social groups?**

I would mention a totally measurable challenge: who will pay for it. There is an economic effect and a fear of doing various pilot tests that are costly and whose results are not clear. It is very difficult to summarize these challenges: how to get funding, how to get the right people, how to find a project host, how to coordinate or reach a decision with other target groups and key actors. Challenges also depend on the scale of the

projects (for example, bicycle storage – the leader of the settlements does not agree, the questionable metro issue in Vilnius – they are completely different challenges: starting with legislation that does not exist through to the absence of end users). The barriers depend very much on the situation.

**What plans need to be put in place to increase gender-based mobility at national and EU level?**

The overall indicator of Lithuania's backwardness and the challenge comes from its weak institutional capacity. Europe is developing good practices and tools that work for some individual regions but not for others. We do not have the strength or the knowledge to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU, for example. These opportunities exist, but there is no local talent. Theoretically, the bigger the umbrella, the easier it is to improve the situation and implement different solutions, but to do so, specific work needs to be done by specialists who are not necessarily professionals, so the benefits of these initial measures do not have much impact. There is a need to generate capacity at local level, because at a higher level, organization, planning and funding fade into the background in terms of institutional capacity. There are no professional solutions or intellectual power in planning terms. Political commitment is also felt in the nature of the problem.



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