

Title: WALKING – THE WORRIES OF PEDESTRIANS

Presenting Author: Christine Turetschek

Authors: C. Turetschek 1;K. Ausserer 1;l. Braguti 1;E. Füssl 1;G. Höfferer 2;

A. Risser 1;R. Risser 1;

Affiliation

1. FACTUM OHG, Vienna, Austria, 2. Free practicing lawyer, Vienna, Austria,

Abstract:

Walking is a crucial element of our everyday mobility. It is the glue of the transport system. It connects the different traffic modes and keeps the traffic system together. Walking, however, is often taken for granted. This has the effect, that the needs of pedestrians are considered of minor importance.

Speeding of car drivers, narrow pavements, the missing of crossing facilities, etc. are aspects which make walking unattractive and even dangerous. Pedestrians are the group of road users with one of the highest accident risks. If you want to make people walk more often an increase of the objective safety and of the security of pedestrians are important.

The project "Bef(w)usst unterwegs" (Consciously underway {on your feet}) was co-financed by the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology. The aim of the project was to determine those factors, which make walking a pleasant, safe and attractive transport mode. In addition, the interrelation between traffic safety, individual and social conditions, and traffic planning aspects were discussed.

Several empirical methods were used in combination, in order to get more information about those issues, which are relevant to make walking safe and attractive. It is important to know the current traffic safety situation, if you want to implement effective traffic safety measures. Thus, in a first step pedestrian accidents in Vienna from 2000-2005 were analyzed. A lawyer considered the juridical aspects of walking as a transport mode. With the help of focus group interviews attractors and barriers were identified. In order to be able to make statistically valid conclusions concerning the results of the focus group interviews a survey was carried out. In the survey people were asked to tell their opinion about pedestrian related issues at six different crossings in Vienna. In addition to the survey a behaviour observation took place to get an impression about conflict situations with pedestrians in traffic. In a workshop with experts of several disciplines the results of the empirical studies were discussed and proposals for solutions were developed.

The results of the accident analysis showed that in absolute numbers three times more pedestrians than car drivers were involved in an accident in Vienna in the time from 2000-2005. In addition, 15 times more pedestrians than car drivers were seriously injured or killed when involved in a traffic accident. Vulnerable road users are mainly endangered by car drivers.

At the same time, from a juridical point of view a single person has hardly any possibility to call for pedestrians' rights and interests and to see to it that public institutions take their responsibility.

In the survey it turned out that walking is considered as safe despite the high accident rates.

In the survey and in the observation the following aspects among others were regarded as inconvenient and dangerous while walking.

- Unattractive surroundings ("ugly environment")
- The missing of safe crossing facilities next to public transport stops
- Speeding by car drivers, viz. inappropriate speeds
- Red light running by car drivers

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In an interaction analysis several aspects were identified which influence the crossing situation for pedestrians positively; e.g. low speeds, eye contact between road users, a self-confident behaviour. Negative influence comes from high speeds, refusing to communicate, pressing one's way ahead by car drivers in spite of not having the right of way, etc. Smooth crossing of a road is reflected by getting in contact with others and interact with them.

In an expert workshop problems and solutions were discussed which are related to pedestrian traffic. Various problems (missing of information campaigns, a lack of pedestrian friendly traffic culture, etc.) and proposals of solutions (road traffic training for specific road user groups, increased enforcement and consequent punishment, etc.) were mentioned.

The study gives some hints, how you can improve the situation for pedestrians. For the future it is important to provide money for pedestrian infrastructure to appoint competent persons, who are responsible for pedestrian issues and to evaluate measures for pedestrians in a before and after study.