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By [News Editor](#) / Updated: 29 Aug 2014

## [Participation of young and old in mobility projects \(Flanders. Belgium\)](#)



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**Topic:**

Mobility management

Archive

**Description**

When the local governments outline their mobility policy, they often forget to think about their youngest inhabitants. However they usually come first in the mobility choices of their parents. Besides, kids have specific mobility needs. Therefore Mobiel 21, IMOB and Provincial College Limburg started 'Traffic autonomy of Kids'. This large-scale research project wanted to get an overall picture of their movements and how children can get a real voice in local mobility projects.

## **Background and objectives**

Recent research showed that a lot and regular movement has a good influence on the motor system of children. These skills lower the vulnerability in traffic. Daily movement has a good influence on the health. Independent movements also reduce the number of car displacements and are replaced

by ecologically well alternatives.

The project wants to get quantitative and qualitative results around traffic movements and the traffic autonomy of kids between 10 and 13 years old:

- How (in)dependent are the movements of kids?
- How can we improve and stimulate safe, ecological well and independent movements?

## Implementation

First you need to know how children think about mobility and how they move. Therefore the researchers started with focus groups. The information collected from these focus groups served as input for a list of questions. In total 2.500 kids in the fifth and sixth elementary school year and first and second secondary school year were questioned about their transport and traffic behaviour. They also kept a journal. In this journal they had to write every traffic movement they made.

## Results

The difference between boys and girls is one of the most remarkable results. Girls make more traffic movements (2.96) a day than boys (2.76). The researchers also noticed a striking difference in the use of transport vehicles. Girls use a car for 46% of their movements, boys just 37%. Boys between 10 and 13 years old take almost as often their bicycle (32%). Girls use their bikes for 22% of their movements. Movements by bike are mostly autonomous, but movements by car never. We can conclude that boys move more independent than girls. In the position towards the different transport possibilities is notable that boys like the autonomous possibilities more than girls. >Girls attach more value to comfort elements (listening music in a car, ...) and the social side of a transport vehicle (chat with friends, ...).

The social element isn't only a point of difference between boys and girls, but it becomes important as they gain age. Secondary school students attach more value to the social element (45%) than elementary school kids (15%). The use of public transport scores better in secondary schools. 50% of the secondary school kids admit that they use an other transport vehicle to go to school. The important changes are: by bike to by public transport and by car to by bike.

## Steps for participation

Children participation could be integrated in local mobility projects. To get to this, you can use the 'Child participation route'. This is the covering term for suggested steps:

- Analysis of the point of departure
- Making of a strategically plan
- Implement and process of actions

## Example

A former military domain in Boechout, Belgium gets a new local intention. In the future this will become the attraction point for children and young people. The accessibility of the domain was viewed from the viewing point of children (from 10 till 13) within the framework of child participation. Students of the elementary and secondary school made cyclist trips in the near environment. Routes and bottlenecks were put in map. The pupils stopped at every crossroad and analysed the safety, they timed the crossing time, they made pictures of problems they experienced, ... .

## Conclusion

Kids are often forgotten in local mobility project, but they are important traffic users. That is why children participation is important. Kids don't have a message for information moments. To get to significant interactions you have to use more attractive methods (see example).

Mobiel 21 vzw ([www.mobiel21.be](http://www.mobiel21.be)) has made a Dutch brochure with the main research results, methods applied and case studies to stimulate participation of young people in mobility projects.

### Keywords

campaigns (large scale)

measures - awareness raising

MM for cities & Regions

MM for schools

monitoring / evaluation

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