

# Incentives and information for the public

## Almada (PT)

### GENERAL ASPECTS

The municipality of Almada (160,000 inhabitants) is part of the Setubal District and is one of the 18 municipalities that make up Greater Lisbon area (2,550,000 inhabitants). It is situated on the south bank of the Tagus and is crossed by the A2 motorway linking Lisbon to Faro (Algarve). It is a young city, more than 40% of its population being under 35 and only 7% over 75.

Port activities, which used to be the major force, went through difficult times in the 1980's with, as a result, the merging of a number of shipbuilding companies. Since then, many SME's have been created and promoted in the metallurgy and micro-electronics sector. Tourism is also booming and contributes to the diversification of the local economy. The university has played a major role in the creation of a Science and Technology Park.



### CONTEXT

Being situated close to Lisbon, Almada is affected by major urban transport problems. In 1993, the municipality launched a programme to measure and assess the impact of transport on air pollution, greenhouse gases and noise levels. The results obtained were used to develop a public transport policy aimed at reducing private car use. Pursuing the same logic, Almada joined several international networks that combat air pollution and greenhouse gases (Iclei, Cities for Climate Protection). The municipality is also preparing a Local Agenda 21.

In March 1999, the municipality created, with the support of the European Commission (SAVE programme), a Local Energy Management Agency called AGENEAL which is a member of Energie-Cités. One of the first objectives of the agency has been to define an energy municipal plan and a renewable energy development strategy aimed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The actions carried out by AGENEAL are varied: building energy certification (underway), implementation of a local strategy on thermal regulation, energy management programmes in schools, including awareness-raising actions, raising public awareness of environmental issues, notably those related to mobility problems, or the "better without my car" programme that will be presented in more details in the present case study.

# MELHOR SEM CARROS

"Better without my car" is a project supported by the SAVE programme (DG TREN). Its main objective is to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants and to make the city a pleasant place to live and work. The project was co-ordinated by IDAE (Spanish Energy Agency) and involved the city of Almada in Portugal as well as those of Grenada and Gijón in Spain. It started in November 2000 and finished in December 2001. The city of Almada, which had run this SAVE project under the name of "Melhor sem carros", decided to continue the campaign after the project was officially finished.



## The objective

The prime objective of the campaign was to reduce energy consumption in the urban transport sector by promoting a more rational use of private cars and by increasing public transport utilisation. The idea was to analyse the reasons for traffic congestion and holdups and to show the inhabitants that they are one of the keys to the problem, while promoting a more participative approach. To achieve this aim, an indirect financial incentive programme (reduced public transport fares, discounts on sports activities and in some shops in the city) was set up for those who accepted not to use their cars a certain day in the week, Thursday in the case of Almada. A commitment certificate was signed between each participant and the City Mayor.

## The targets

Project targets were the inhabitants who use their cars every day to travel to and from work, to go shopping, to take their children to school etc. as well as people living outside Almada but commuting to the city to work. A number of companies as well as a university were identified as generating a lot of traffic and were also potential targets for this programme.



## The "Melhor sem carros" incentive campaign

The incentive campaign lasted 6 months from March to September 2001. A Website in Portuguese and English was created to give further details on the action [www.melhorsemcarros.org](http://www.melhorsemcarros.org)

The communication media used to promote this campaign are extremely varied so as to reach as many people as possible:

- Newspapers and advertising,
- TV commercials,
- posters,
- brochures and associated media,
- stickers for the vehicles involved in the project,
- participant identification card and card case,
- monthly colour stamp to update the card,
- commitment certificate signed by the participant and the mayor,

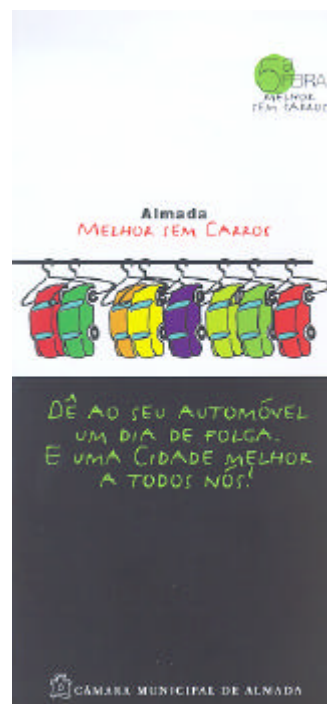
- stickers to identify the shops taking part in the campaign,
- writing paper, envelopes and invitations for the campaign opening ceremony,
- marketing materials: magnets, tee-shirts, fabric bags, etc.



The campaign was launched at a public ceremony in the presence of the Mayor of Almada, who took part in the campaign with his official car. The greatest number of registrations were achieved between March and June. Thirteen registration places were opened in Almada to cover a maximum of the municipal territory. However, most of the registrations were made in the town centre. To register, the participants were requested to fill in a questionnaire/form to provide information on their mobility profile. An identification card was then sent to each participant, who could therefore benefit from the discounts offered as part of the campaign. This card had to be validated every month by sticking on it a colour stamp received by post. The objective of this system was essentially to maintain the contact with the participants. The Almada police forces accepted to take part, on a voluntary basis, in the project by checking that the vehicles identified by a sticker were not on the roads on Thursdays. No infringement has been registered up to now and those who had to use their car on a specific Thursday asked for permission beforehand. The small group who joined the campaign was therefore an extremely committed one. The main problems concerned a small number of shops at the beginning of the campaign, where shop assistants refused to grant the expected discount to the participants because their employers had not provided them with the correct information. All these small problems quickly found a solution after a few months and everything went off smoothly.

**Results achieved**

After six months in operation, 91 persons in total had signed a commitment certificate. This may seem quite low, but a survey showed that nearly 60% of the inhabitants of Almada knew the



existence of the campaign and that 70% thought it was a good solution to the problem. The survey further demonstrated that the campaign contributed to promoting the debate on urban mobility and alerting public opinion to the energy and pollution problems raised by intensive private car use.

A survey is being carried out to gain better understanding of the inhabitants' travelling habits. Data are still in the process of being analysed.

A few data on the participants could be obtained from the registration forms:

- 41% are under 35,
- 30% are between 36 and 55,
- 29% are over 56,

The age of the participants is therefore extremely varied, which is a positive factor. The elders joined the campaign in numbers, probably because they are retired and can more easily organise their daily travels without using their cars. It must be noted that 45% of the participants make journeys of less than 10 km (23% less than 5 km), an appropriate distance to be covered by public transport.

The main reasons put forward for using the car are:

- rapidity (41%),
- comfort (22%),
- lack of alternative solution (18%),
- to practice a sports activity (10%),
- to go back home for lunch (9%),
- to drive the children to school (9%),
- necessity to take the car to go to work (9%),
- health reasons (6%),
- others (7%).

Car parking at the place of destination is:

- free in the car park of the work place (34%),
- free on the streets (27%),
- paying on the streets (3%),
- paying in a covered car park (3%),
- no answer (21%).

The aspects that must be improved in Almada public transport system (participants mainly refer to the bus service which is privately operated) are by order of preference:

- comfort,
- frequency,
- vehicle condition and maintenance,
- staff politeness,
- information at bus stops,
- punctuality,
- pollutant emissions,
- route,
- safety,
- price,
- priority lanes for public transport vehicles.

Another aspect which must not be overlooked is the involvement of a number of organisms in Almada, public and private alike, which took ownership of the project together with the municipality and the energy agency. These are: the private transport operators, the university, the Chamber of Commerce, local associations, retailers. The project contributed to fostering partnerships between the above organisms, although these had no previous experience of working together on a common project to promote a more sustainable urban environment.

## Costs

The preparation of the campaign, its implementation and marketing cost around 60,000 euros. Up to 22 September 2001, 60% of the financing was provided by the Municipality of Almada. After this date, the city took charge of all the costs. However, it is the initial design and image building phase which required the most important investment. The costs currently supported by the municipality are marginal additional costs compared to the initial investment.

## PERSPECTIVES

The motivations of the municipality to continue the Melhor sem carros campaign in 2002 are essentially medium-term motivations. The objective is indeed to promote an in-depth debate and develop awareness-raising actions in schools and universities rather than launching new costly campaigns in the media.

In parallel with the Melhor sem carros campaign, Almada is working on improving alternative solutions in terms of public transport, a key element to their traffic problems. Public transport quality (comfort, reliability, regularity, frequency, etc) must also be improved in order to encourage the people of Almada to change their travelling habits.

A tram line will be put into service in 2004 in Almada as part of a series of restructuring projects aimed at revitalising the public transport offer in the city.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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