Summary of survey results presented in Bucharest

Work Package 1 of the ACUTE project, led by University of Westminster and Université Gustave Eiffel, aims to support the funded ENUAC projects and enable cross-project cooperation through knowledge sharing, the mapping of key projects with a focus on accessibility and connectivity in Europe, and the consolidation of a community of researchers & practitioners.

Towards these goals, a survey led by Enrica Papa and Sabina Cioboata at the University of Westminster was launched in January 2023 and shared amongst partners involved in the ENUAC projects, with the primary aim of cross analysing the projects and identifying and mapping links and overlaps. The survey has so far gathered over 70 responses, and preliminary results were presented at the ENUAC Mid-Term Meeting in Bucharest, in May 2023. While respondents pertain to all 15 projects originally targeted (ASAP, Catapult, Dymon, Easier, Ex-TRA, Geosence, ITEM, Justice, Myfairshare, Smarthubs, SortedMobility, TAP, TuneOurBlock and WalkUrban), and range from scientific team partner's members to project coordinators, contributors, and principal investigators, the survey is still open and data collection ongoing. Preliminary results were presented across two different dimensions: an exercise mapping the existing project network, and a brief cross-analysis of links and overlaps between different reported project outputs, with a specific focus on project impacts and applications in real-life settings.

The network mapping exercise draws from links reported by survey respondents, from the submitted ENUAC projects proposal, and from the Year 1 annual progress reports. In this sense, the network mapping goes beyond the 15 core ENUAC projects and visualises links to other relevant accessibility and connectivity projects at a variety of scales ranging from local projects to national projects, European projects, relevant policy frameworks, and overarching hubs/networks (Figure 1). Future steps will include delving deeper into an investigation of the nature of links identified so far, with the aim of expanding the network and strengthening the links, particularly across the 15 ENUAC funded projects.
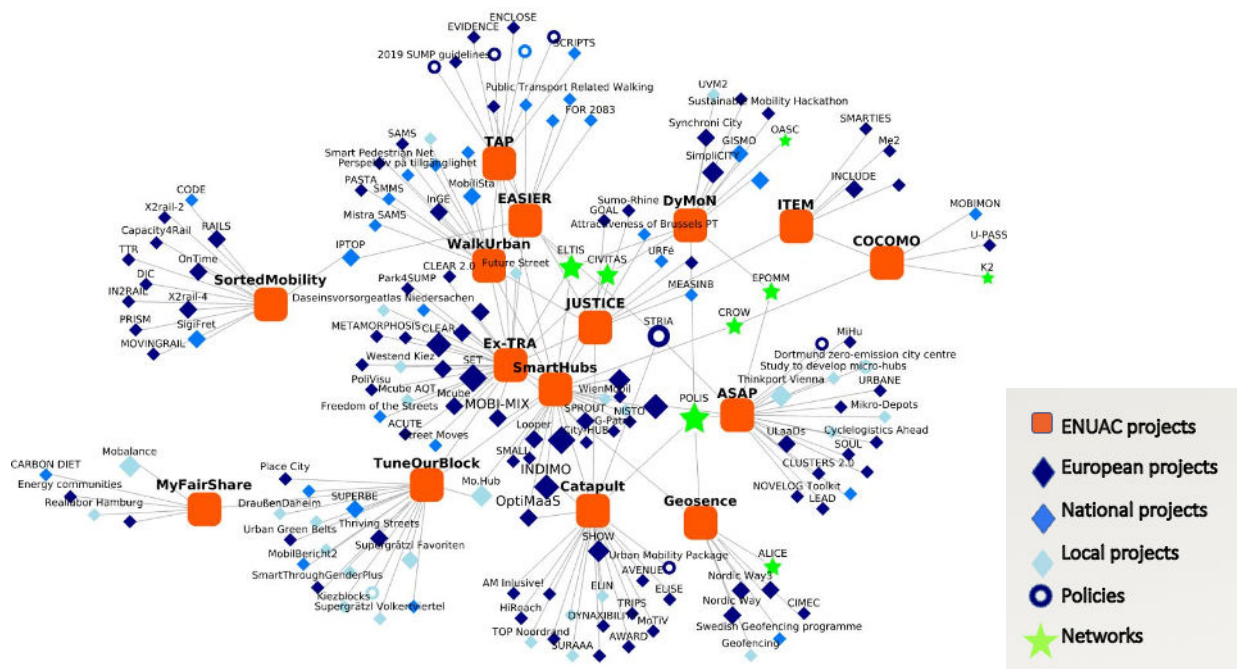

Figure 1. ENUAC Projects Network Mapping

In parallel, results from the survey revealed a diversity of overlapping project outputs, specifically reflecting on strategies to increase societal impacts and test out real-life applications. Using a transition management framework which analyses outputs across strategic, tactical, operational and reflexive dimensions, examples of such applications fall under the categories briefly summarised below:

1. Strategic: organising multi-actor networks
All ENUAC project reported a strategic agenda of bridging gaps between academia, policy, practice and communities, materialising in the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships from the public and private sectors.

2. Tactical: developing sustainability visions and joint strategies
Central to the projects was also the development of collective sustainability visions and joint strategies. This was facilitated through implementing processes of knowledge co-creation and stakeholder dialogue during multi-actor workshops and scenario building exercises with communities and practitioners.

3. Operational: executing projects and experiments
Aiming to catalyse urban transformation and innovation, the projects also facilitated spaces for experimentation and testing out of various solutions, tools, and methods. In this sense, several projects set up living labs in cities across Europe, in collaboration with local municipalities and communities, and implemented prototypes that were subsequently examined through action research.

4. Reflexive: evaluating, monitoring and learning
Finally, the projects have been involved in a reiterative process of evaluation, monitoring and dissemination, with the aim of facilitating learning and providing recommendations and tools for decision-makers and communities. In this sense, the projects have been developing policy recommendations, practical design and planning guidelines, as well as tools such as innovative methodologies and software.

What is more, the survey introduced a quantitative self-assessment section, designed to collect views on the potential of the projects to be triggers of socio-technical transitions across different dimensions including radical, challenge-driven, feasible, strategic, and communicative transformation. A similar section prompted respondents to estimate how they would rate their projects in terms of behavioural, institutional, material, and organizational dimensions of change. The project self-assessment exercise will inform future research steps, which aim to investigate in more detail different score discrepancies, and to gain a better understanding of why respondents evaluated their projects in a certain way.

Survey findings also provide details into future agendas for maximising impact, which include, across all projects, the following: planned dissemination activities (further workshops, conferences, podcasts, press releases), stakeholder involvement activities (further co-creation workshops and strengthening practitioner networks), the continued development of open-source guidelines and tools and plans to influence policy through awareness-raising and policy recommendation documents. Such planned activities were also reflected on in more detail during a participant workshop carried out with ENUAC project representatives during the meeting in Bucharest. Finally, the survey has been critical in collecting preliminary insights into the research and practical support that projects would still need in order to increase their policy and practice impact. This includes but is not limited to a need for additional resources for data collection, innovation, setting up of living labs and testing out applications; further knowledge exchange mechanisms including dissemination channels, networking, effective communication, and more centralised platforms for cross-project exchanges; and enhanced cooperation channels, particularly with actors beyond academia.

This set of preliminary results will be critical in informing ACUTE's Work Package 1 strategic agenda in the coming months, with a particular focus on future research plans that will include interviews and focus groups.