

PRESS RELEASE

«Transport and Energy» report

«Connect yourself for Justice» reminds us that every time we decide how to move, we are deciding the world we want to live in.

A recent report analyses the effects of the current transport model and the most environmentally sustainable alternatives

Madrid, 21st January 2020. - In Spain, around 25% of the CO2 emissions that are released into the atmosphere correspond to transport. It is estimated that there are currently 1,200 million vehicles in the world. Almost 30 million of them are used in our country. This figure will increase to more to 2,000 million vehicles in the world by 2050.

In view of this information, contained in the report recently published by the "Connect yourself for Justice" initiative under the title "Transport and Energy", there are few doubts about the urgency of tackling the transport habits in our lives and of becoming aware that "every time you decide how to move, you are deciding the world to live in".

For the entities boosting the campaign "If you care for the Planet, you fight against poverty" led by "Connect yourself for Justice" - Caritas, CEDIS, CONFER, Justice and Peace, Manos Unidas and REDES (Network of Entities for Solidarity Development) - it is a priority to keep improving in the awareness of the risks identified in the Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the care of the Common Home. And one of these risks is the misuse of transport in modern life

As stated on number 153 of the encyclic, "The quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport, which are often a source of much suffering for those who use them. [...] Many specialists agree on the need to give priority to public transportation. Yet some measures needed will not prove easily acceptable to society unless substantial improvements are made in the systems themselves, which in many cities force people to put up with undignified conditions due to crowding, inconvenience, infrequent service and lack of safety".

This is the aim of the "Transport and Energy" report, which addresses both the causes and consequences of our living habits in this area, the existing solutions and the changes at personal, church, community and political levels that can be promoted in order to move towards a new model of sustainable mobility based on respect for the environment

EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

In the section on consequences, air pollution and health associated with the current means of transport based on combustion engines and the massive use of private transport are the problems pointed out, as well as the limitations presented by alternatives such as the electric car, the consequences of traffic congestion on the use of time and land-use planning, or the ever-increasing constraints posed by environmental labels when buying a vehicle.

The causes underlying the current transport model are analyzed, such as the oligopoly that dominates the energy market and that basically favors the maintenance of the current means of transport; or the risks associated with access to new extraction techniques, such as fracking. Fracking is a technique, with cleaner resources than coal, that responds to the growing demand for energy according to its defenders. This technique is considered a serious risk to health and the environment for its detractors.

The fact is that an estimated 90% of the EU's urban population is exposed to high concentrations of air pollutants that are particularly harmful to health, such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and suspended

particles [PM]. This is a serious public health problem: according to the European Environment Agency, 518,700 premature deaths related to air pollutants occurred in Europe in 2018, while the World Health Organization (WHO) claims that one in ten deaths of children under 5 years of age is related to poor air quality.

Electric cars are not exempt of problems, as indicated on the report “Transport and energy”, since although it is true that do not produce scape gases, they generate fine particles emissions. In addition, electric cars tend to be heavier than conventional cars, and the heavier the vehicle, the more non-exhaust emissions it produces. The origin of the energy that moves them is also an issue, as the electricity that powers their batteries may well be generated in plants that use fossil fuels or nuclear power.

Electric transport has obvious advantages compared to combustion engines in terms of emissions and our health. However, electric cars bring their own problems beyond those mentioned. For example, cobalt, a key component in lithium-ion batteries, is a raw material related to children exploitation. It is worth to remember the existence of conflicts related to lithium extraction in places like Tibet and Bolivia. Nowadays there is no environmentally safe way to recycle lithium-ion batteries either.

The Report gives much emphasis to the existing alternatives to the current model, based on public policies and habits aimed at improving this situation. In cities with better cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, there is more movement by these means than in places where there has been no investment in the design of a more life friendly city. Likewise, moving on foot or by bicycle has many added benefits, making us more physically active and improving our cardiovascular health.

In the case of environmental labels, the authors of the Report warn that they present some issues to be resolved, considering that new cars with low-powered combustion engines pollute less than many of the heavier and more powerful hybrids with an Eco14 label. On the other hand, as we have already mentioned, 45% of fine particle emissions come from wear emissions on the road, wheels and brakes that are even present in electric vehicles. If the new green paradigm promoted by large companies, governments and many NGO is not analyzed, there will be a risk of getting us in a traffic jam, in our electric vehicle, 2 hours a day, to go to our free of CO2 work.

EXISTING SOLUTIONS

From “Connect yourself for Justice” we recur to SDG (sustainable development goals) of Agenda 2030 that focuses on the priorities our world needs, also on issues related with transport and energy. In particular, the importance of Objectives 3, 7 and 11 is highlighted, especially in the following aspects expressly addressed in their formulation

SDG 3: “To reduce substantially the number of deaths and illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals and the pollution of air, water and soil in 2030”.

SDG 7: “To enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable sources, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean technologies from now to 2030”.

SDG 11: “To provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, and improve road safety, in particular by expanding public transport, paying special attention to the needs of people in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons until 2030”.

Apart from working to put the bases of a new international law order including these questions, “Connect yourself for Justice” launches an invitation to consider how, in our everyday life, we can live better betting for a mobility that reduces pollution and congestion, with subsequent benefits for our health and for the health of all living species we share planet life with.

CHANGES IN PERSONAL HABITS

1. Walk, bike and take advantage of public transport. If you don't have a bike, you will use municipal bicycle rental systems.
2. Think about how the energy you consume is generated, distributed and financed and what its consequences are. From this reflection, it will be easier for you to think about changing the electricity company, and invest your money more responsibly in a different economy.
3. Look for ways to share the car with people when you finally have to drive it.
4. Think about whether online buying, is needed for today. Home delivery multiplies the number of trips in the city. These trips aggravate environmental problems and create new ones due to precariousness jobs.

CHANGES IN POLICY

It is urgent to promote urban planning designed to provide people with a clean and healthy environment that allows them to develop their personal and family life in the most satisfactory way possible. In this sense, greater investment in public transport is essential, increasing services and lowering prices until the offer of public transport is more profitable than the private vehicle.

Public authorities must take ambitious and effective measures to reduce air pollution. The design of cities and mobility strategies must always take into account citizenship's health.

If we want a less polluting model, it shall be good to include the polluter pays principle. This reflection can implicate, for example, the need for DGT label systems to benefit the cars that really are less contaminant and to review all vehicle-related taxes to favor the less polluting ones.

Finally, in the case of Spain, a Due Diligence Law is demanded and it could contribute to a Binding Treaty in the framework of the United Nations for the respect of Human Rights by transnational corporations. At the global level, incentives are also very necessary to redirect credit to Energy Transition projects.

#ConnectEnergyPoverty

More information: www.enlazateporlajusticia.org/en