

Essen

Towards a more inclusive transport modal split

Essen in context

Essen, with a population of 594,000, is a central city in the Ruhr metropolitan region, Europe's third-largest urban area with 5.1 million residents. Historically, Essen's identity has been deeply rooted in coal and steel production, driving its rapid industrial growth in the 19th century. However, the decline of the coal industry in the 1960s prompted a structural shift towards a service-based economy with an emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises.

The city faced environmental challenges due to industrialization, but extensive revitalization efforts have led to ecological, economic and social renewal. Today, Essen is evolving as a diverse hub, encompassing roles as a conference destination, shopping centre, university hub and cultural and green capital in Europe. This is also one of the reasons why Essen was named the European Green Capital in 2017.

Climate protection in Essen

The City of Essen has been a member of the Climate Alliance since 1993, actively working on climate protection projects and goals. Their main objective is to achieve climate neutrality by 2040. To prioritise climate protection, the Essen City Council has tasked the city administration with creating a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), building upon the Integrated Energy and Climate Concept (IEKK) from 2009.

This SECAP outlines Essen's strategic approach to climate protection and adaptation beyond 2020, offering specific recommendations and measures until 2030. Key areas of focus include energy-efficient renovation of old buildings, responsible electricity consumption, renewable energy expansion, sustainable transportation, and smart sector integration to create climate-neutral neighbourhood solutions. In terms of sustainable transportation, Essen aims for a modal split of 75% sustainable transport options by 2035, reducing car use to 25%. The [Essen Mobility Plan](#) (SUMP) is currently being developed with citizens and stakeholders, focusing on the accessibility, safety and efficiency of sustainable transport options to achieve the city's climate targets.

Essen's demographic profile and social equity challenges

- **Vulnerable groups:** While Essen has undergone revitalization efforts, there are still pockets of the population facing economic challenges such as low-income households.
- **Migration:** About one in six residents is non-German. Main non-German groups are Syrians and Turkish people. The freeway A40 manifests a strong social and economic divide of the city into a privileged/academic southern part and a migrant influenced and economically less developed northern part. About one sixth of the city's population receives social welfare benefits.
- **Unemployment:** Essen has one of the highest unemployment rates in Germany. In February of 2022, the unemployment rate in Essen was 10% compared to the average national unemployment rate of 5,5 %.

Overview of the chosen climate measures for INCLU:DE

The city of Essen's cargo bike program was selected as the focus for the INCLU:DE project. By incorporating the needs of low-income households into the design of this program, Essen aims to enable and incentivise all residents to make use of these alternative modes of transportation. Essen seeks to attain a more sustainable modal split through the expansion of its municipal subsidy program for buying cargo bikes (and bike trailers). Its public cargo bike sharing system will also soon be rolled out across the city and will complement the existing civil society-led cargo bike sharing system.

Essen goals on INCLU:DE

- ✓ Inclusive distribution of cargo-bike subsidies.
- ✓ Development of an inclusive communications strategy to successfully reach and encourage low-income communities to apply for the subsidies.

