

ECOVOLIS – COMMUNITY BIKE SHARING SYSTEM

Country: Albania

OVERVIEW

Ecovolis is a bike-sharing program created by an Albanian not-for-profit social enterprise called PASS (Programi Alternativave Sociale Stimuluese, Social Stimulating Alternative Programme) in Tirana, Albania, justified by the need to create a solution to the congestion and pollution affecting the streets of Tirana.

It was established in 2002 with the goal of encouraging community action and raising public awareness of local social and environmental issues in the Albanian capital city of Tirana and its rural surroundings.

Ecovolis started operations in 2011 thanks to the donations of bicycles and the work done by Ecovolis's strongest partner, Pedals for Progress, that made the program take hold.

As a result, Ecovolis users immediately embraced the idea of using recycled bicycles for Tirana's bike-sharing system rather than purchasing new and potentially costly or unreliable alternatives.

Therefore, whilst Ecovolis provide jobs for workers maintaining and managing the bicycles, the bikes themselves also help reduce the social and economic isolation of suburban and rural communities by providing dedicated transportation from the city suburbs to the centre.



Ecovolis – Community bike sharing system

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

- Need to reduce pollution in Tirana's city centre dominated by car traffic
- Social and economic isolation of people living on the outskirts of Tirana and in rural areas.

Main objectives of the good practice

- Ecovolis targets the needs of rural / city- based residents who require access to transport, in an attempt to raise awareness and responsibility of social and environmental issues produced by a car-centric culture.
- Specifically, Ecovolis' mission is to provide a community-based, and community supported, economically viable and consumer-oriented, quality transportation service for both city and rural residents.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

<i>Region</i>	<i>Target area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population density</i>
The aim is to provide transportation services to Tirana city residents and its suburban/rural areas.	1110 [Km ²]	According to the 2011 Census, Tirana has 278,000 rural inhabitants making up 37% of its total overall population (478,000 inhabitants).	Not available

Target user groups and needs

Ecovolis bikes provide access from city suburbs to the town to those at risk of social and economic isolation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

Ecovolis was launched in March 2011.

Bodies involved

- Ecovolis is run by an environmental NGO called Social Stimulating Alternatives Program (PASS).
- The US-based Pedal for Progress organization initially donated bikes to help get the project off the ground.

Mobility services provided/addressed

- The system is based on 6 bike stations, respectively staffed by two employees in two shifts.
- Each station contains 30-60 bicycles.
- Within two months, 2,000 people had registered for the system, half of them women.
- As of 2014, four stations are in operation in Tirana, and about 2000 people have subscribed.
- In order to use the bicycles it is required to provide a personal identification document (such as passport or ID card) or by subscribing to the Ecovolis Membership Card.
- The bicycle is equipped with a front bicycle basket, a behind carrier, a comfortable saddle and a public

fender with the Ecovolis sign. The bicycle stations also provide touristic information to the visitors and a list of the city attractions.

- Moreover, being a non-profit social enterprise, during particular days the program offers free bicycle service, cycling courses, donations of bicycles and helmets for children in need, bike tours and a bicycle recycle program.

Legal Framework

- Ecovolis is run by an NGO, and so subject to these regulations.

Cost and Financing sources

- The Tirana Community Bicycle Albania project won the backing of Tirana City Hall and garnered financial support of USD 24,000 from the George Soros-funded Open Society Foundation Albania (OSFA). The US-based Pedal for Progress organisation donated 450 bicycles.
- Before the start of the project, they struggled to gain interest from companies to sponsor the project. However, given its early success, companies quickly became interested and began to sponsor the project to continue.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Organizational set-up

- The Ecovolis scheme is run by an NGO.
- Each station is staffed by attendants, often from financially-disadvantaged backgrounds.

Supporting technologies

- The scheme can be used either by providing identification documents or by signing up to a membership card.
- Unlike bike-sharing schemes in other countries, Ecovolis is entirely people-powered, and attendants staff each station and check bikes in and out.

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Ecovolis aims to get companies to support and sponsor the project, and welcomes donations (and also buys) used bicycles for its scheme.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

N/A

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

N/A

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

Ecovolis is entirely people-powered – each station is staffed by attendants who check the bikes in and out. This is important to enable all to use the scheme, and does not exclude those who do not have access to technology like in other city bike schemes.

OTHER (E.G. SOCIAL INNOVATION, ETC.)

The scheme also donates bikes to children in needy families and to PASS volunteers; and employs financially-disadvantaged people to give them an income.

ASSESSMENT

Ridership and other key metrics/results (through key-indicators, where applicable)

- According to Wikipedia, Ecovolis stations are staffed with two employees in two shifts and contain 30 – 60 bicycles. As of 2014, four stations are in operation in Tirana, and about 2000 people subscribed to the service.
- Subscription methods: identification document (such as passport or ID card) or by subscribing to the Ecovolis membership Card.
- During particular days the program, PASS as a non-profit social enterprise offers free bicycle service, cycling courses, donations of bicycles and helmets for children in need, bike tours and a bicycle recycle program.
- Visitors not being members are charged a cost of about \$1.00 per day to use the service.
- In 2014, Ecovolis allowed users at some of its kiosks to earn credit towards free bicycle use by returning metal cans for recycling.

Good Governance

- Ecovolis has a good strong community engagement feel, and has helped to introduce the community to an inexpensive, environmentally friendly form of transport - the bicycle.
- Ecovolis program has proven successful in significantly increasing bicycle use in Tirana.

Success factors/strengths

- The initiative relies heavily on volunteers which strengthens the community aspect of Ecovolis.
- It also employs financially-disadvantaged individuals.
- In 2014, Ecovolis allowed users at some of its kiosks to earn credit towards free bicycle use by returning metal cans for recycling.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

- The scheme is somewhat reliant on volunteer work to keep the initiative running.
- From March 2011, when the Ecovolis initiative began, 80 bicycles have not been returned or have been stolen since this year, i.e. an average 10 bicycles per month or 2.5 a week. During three different phases, the bicycles have been replaced and added to the stations.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE (LESSON(S) LEARNT)

The Ecovolis program has proven successful in significantly increasing bicycle use in Tirana

Key references

- Ecovolis: Exemplary Results from Bicycle Recycling
www.p4p.org/?p=1269
- Instat (2014) "A new urban-rural classification of Albanian population"
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecovolis>
- Albanian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection (2007) "Inter-sectoral rural development strategy of Albania, ISRDSA 2007-2013"
<http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/alb149615.pdf>

Websites

- Ecovolis website: www.ecovolis.al