The main goal of the project is the development of an intuitive and user-friendly mobile application which will help change driving habits, encourage ecodriving and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions produced by vehicles. The application will be innovative on a global scale, because it will be the first application ever designed in a manner that takes into account the social and cultural factors that shape the driving habits within a specific region. Since the application will be affordable and widely available for use on smartphones, it will be primarily intended for end-users in the markets on Southeast Europe with a lower purchasing power (if compared to Central and West Europe). This way we will encourage ecodriving in the region even among people who cannot afford the latest vehicles with integrated solutions for reducing harmful exhaust fumes and fuel consumption.

The application will be designed on the basis of a multi-sited ethnographic study which will determine which approaches to encouraging ecodriving are the most appropriate for four urban centers in Southeast Europe: for Ljubljana, Belgrade, Budapest and Istanbul. Southeast Europe was chosen because other studies have shown that vehicle fleets in this region are rather outdated, few vehicles are equipped with modern propulsion systems (e.g. hybrid and electric vehicles) and few drivers utilize telematics solutions which would offer them route optimization and help reduce CO2 emissions. In addition, the driving habits observed in Southeast Europe are somewhat specific and differ substantially from those in other parts of Europe. The region itself is very diverse as well and driving habits vary from one country or area to the next.

Ethnographic research will be supplemented by quantitative measurements of driving style. Telematics solutions developed by CVS Mobile will be used to gather data on everyday driving habits in the above four cities; to measure fuel consumption, calculate CO2 emissions and track the key elements of a driving style (acceleration, breaking, idling). This way we will gain a comprehensive overview of the driving habits present in the chosen locations. By analyzing the results, we will set the groundwork for further interdisciplinary study of traffic. We are also opening a new field in anthropology, which has hardly dealt with driving and traffic at all in the past, despite the important role that traffic plays in the everyday life of an individual as well as on national and international levels. According to our research, no such in-depth comparative ethnographic study on traffic or driving habits has been carried out thus far. This project will attempt to fill that void.

Our research will also provide a basis for development procedures; the findings will tell us which elements of the mobile application will need to be adjusted for the various driving habits in Southeast Europe. They will also influence the design of the user interface. This way we will be able to create an application with a major advantage over other similar technologies: it will help the user choose the optimal motivational approach for ecodriving. The approach will be determined by the individual’s driving habits, traffic infrastructure, the number of vehicles on the road and other socio-cultural and technological factors.

The application will be developed for smartphones running the Android operating system. It will be widely available, easy to use and intended for a broad target user group. An important part of its development will be devoted to safety, because we are highly aware of the potential dangers that using a mobile phone while driving poses. That is why the mobile application will be designed in a way that will allow the mobile device to function as a tool for tracking and changing driving habits (similar to the popular navigation devices) rather than as a communication device.

The next applied output of the proposed project will be a community of eco drivers which will bring drivers together within a network (an eco-community) where users will be able to share their achievements with one another either directly or via on-line social networks (e.g. Facebook). Another applied output of the project will be a list of ecodriving recommendations specifically tailored for the region, which will prove useful in educating drivers and in preparing both national and international awareness-raising campaigns dedicated to promoting safe and energy-efficient driving.

The success of the project is guaranteed by an interdisciplinary team of top experts with compatible knowledge and rich experience in research and development. Researchers from the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts will address the socio-cultural factors that need to be taken into account in order to achieve a balance between people, technologies and the environment. Researchers from the Laboratory for Telecommunications at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana, will design and test the user interface and the multimodal interactions on the basis of the ethnographic research done earlier in the project. The development and testing of the mobile application will be handled by the company CVS Mobile, a leading manufacturer of telematics solutions for commercial vehicles in Southeast Europe.