Federal Ministry
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TerritorialAgenda
A future for lagging regions

Implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030

Pilot action:
"A future for lagging regions: Fostering the implementation of spatial strategies"

MAIN CONCLUSIONS 4th PARTNER MEETING on MOBILITY SOLUTIONS IN RURAL AREAS

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Implementation of the Territorial Agenda 2030

Pilot action "A future for lagging regions: Fostering the implementation of spatial strategies"

MAIN CONCLUSIONS 4th PARTNER MEETING on MOBILITY SOLUTIONS IN RURAL AREAS // 21. – 23.9.2022

In order to ensure sustainable mobility in rural areas in future, mobility actors need to provide flexible types of services and solutions adapted to the regional needs. Prioritising mobility rather than transport must be understood as a new paradigm and actions should be aligned accordingly. New "unusual" alliances and strong local cooperation are essential to deal with these tasks.

Rural areas face great challenges regarding the provision of mobility. The traffic situation is often problematic and public transport services are decreasing. Due to dispersed settlement structures and lower population density, the demand situation for local public transport is often low and it is difficult for the regions to provide an economically viable and needs-oriented public mobility service. The reduction and centralisation of services and infrastructures effects especially those rural areas characterised by shrinking population and demographic ageing. The dependence on private cars is high – also a result of a mobility paradigm that for decades has focused on (car) traffic and corresponding infrastructure. The needs of people who cannot or do not want to use their own car are not in the focus, and people's mobility needs are often insufficiently served. In order to create equal living conditions, the provision of mobility services for citizens must also take into account the current and future challenges of climate change and demographic change. The creation of new mobility structures that are sustainable in the long term is an important task for local and regional authorities.

During the 4th meeting of the partnership, providing and securing mobility solutions in rural regions was discussed based on external scientific and practitioner's input from the partnership. The partners presented various innovative projects for the provision of sustainable mobility solutions in their regions and jointly discussed possible organisational and bureaucratic challenges as well as strategies and framework conditions for the implementation in other local contexts. A special focus was set on the importance of demand-oriented changes, which require a sensitive cooperation between different local and regional actors and the local people.

This publication summarises the most important results of the partner meeting and presents regional examples from the pilot partners' regions.

Mobility planning based on people's actual social needs

In the field of transport, creating equal living conditions means ensuring the provision of mobility and accessibility for all people. All people must be able to travel well, safely and under appropriate conditions. For people living in rural areas, mobility provides access to work, school and educational facilities, daily supply, social services, travel/leisure facilities, friends/family and information. Mobility therefore also plays an important role for social participation and interaction. Mobility planners should base their work on people's actual social demands, considering the specific needs of different social groups such as older people, children and future generations. In many cases, public transport services today fail to meet people's mobility needs, as they are organised in a too

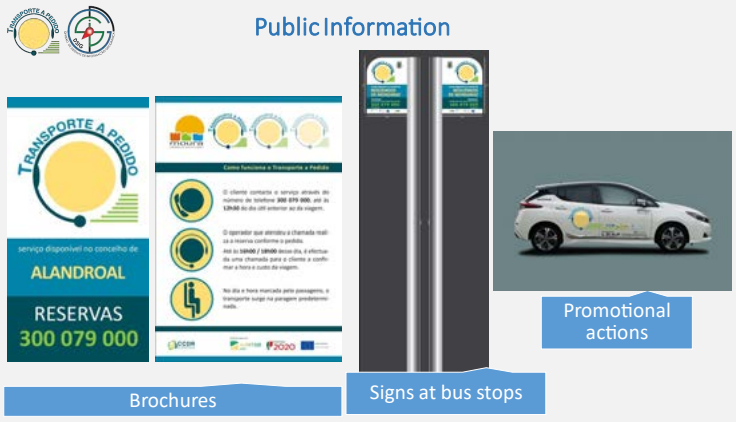
static way with defined transport lines and fixed timetables. To meet the individual transport needs, mobility actors should put more and more flexible mobility models in place.

Plenty of solutions exists to organise transport in rural areas with low demand that offer options to complement and possibly replace regular transport partially. It often makes sense to increase the flexibility of fixed-route transport by complementing or replacing them with new forms of services, such as on-demand buses or community buses. A major advantage of such services over traditional public transport is that part of the costs only incurs if the service is actually used. However, here too, a critical number of journeys is necessary in order to establish a viable system. Some regions test approaches for carpooling in private cars via apps or carpooling stops as a public transport supplement as well as various car- and bike-sharing concepts.

On demand services: successful examples are demand-driven and digital

Mobility services need to be demand-based, digital, networked and data-driven. Partner regions are testing various approaches and initial experiences show good results. The experiences from the Rostock Planning Region (DE), the Alentejo CCDR Region (PT) and the Schleswig-Flensburg District (DE) with the introduction of on-demand services show that these services, as a supplement to regular local public transport, can be a practical way of linking existing mobility services without creating overlaps. Every region is different and needs individual mobility solutions. A successful mobility model does not automatically succeed in another region. Still, regions can draw important learnings from good practises elsewhere.

Transporte a Perdido (transport on demand) Alentejo Region (PT) (https://mobilidade.alentejo.pt/)



Public information and cooperate design © CCDRA@2020

The *Transporte a Pedido* (transport on demand) of the Alentejo Region is a service introduced on municipal level that intends to complement the existing services, in places where services do not exist or are deficient. They never overlap with the existing offer of public transportation. The project aims to provide a solution for "Mobility as a Service to the Alentejo Region" and to guarantee an adequate and complementary response to citizens' needs in a very low-density territory with sparse occupation. The core of the project is an electronic platform and a personal reservation service with a user and a provider interface. No prior user registration is required and booking a trip is possible by phone call. The region puts a special emphasis on customer service, with direct contacts and as low barriers as possible for people who are less tech-savvy. This should appeal especially to the older population, who are often difficult to convince to use new kinds of services. Another focus is on the active promotion of the service. To make as many people as possible aware of the service, there is a uniform design in brochures, at bus stops and on the vehicles. Currently, the project is still in a pilot phase, but in future, the Alentejo Region plans to extend it to all municipalities, in which CCDRA is responsible for coordinating regional policies.

The Rostock Planning Region and the Schleswig Flensburg District have introduced two similar on-demand mobility systems with the “RUBI call system” and the “Smarter DorfSHUTTLE”. In both regions, individual trips can be requested with minibuses that supplement the regular public bus service. Users can access both systems via app or phone call. The minibuses operate without fixed departure times and without a fixed route. They stop at virtual as well as regular bus stops. Both projects also serve to collect data on how often the service is used, which routes are frequently requested, how the service is accepted and evaluated overall.

Smarter DorfSHUTTLE © Amt Süderbrarup

Smarter DorfSHUTTLE in Schleswig Flensburg District (DE) (https://smartes-dorfshuttle.de/)

The Smarter DorfSHUTTLE is a pilot project of 3 years initially. After one year of operation, it has already operated more than 10.000 rides. The principle is an on-demand ride-pooling, thus an algorithm-optimised call-bus system. The project including the algorithm basis and the software originate from a cooperation of the district of Schleswig-Felnsburg, the regional transportation company and a software provider. One of the success factors is an easy to use passenger app, a professional operating software as well as driver app. A close-meshed network of virtual and regular stops has been set up throughout the Süderbrarup area, in which the shuttle service operates. Fixed service hours, which vary on weekdays and weekends, are set. The service operates during the day until early evening. 90 Percent of the passengers graded their trip very high. Currently, two vehicles are used, one of which is barrier-free and one of which is fully electric. The fare is a fixed rate per trip and corresponds to the regular public transport ticket price, with children up to 14 years paying less than adults. This on-demand service is a user-friendly complement to regular public transport and promotes a connection between different types of mobility. For example, the local train station is a popular destination for users. The system uses the potential of digitalisation, creates more accessibility, and contributes to improve the image of public transport in private car dominated rural areas. A further roll-out throughout the region is under development.

Integrate mobility planning and settlement development: Mobility hubs as quality public spaces

One of the challenges of rural transport is the general negative image of public transport in rural areas. This is due to a limited supply but also to unattractive places such as stations and bus stops. The Region of Vorarlberg including Walgau (AT) presented approaches for a general rethinking of mobility in rural areas. The region focuses on design, recognition and continuity in order to increase the attractiveness of public transport and especially regular bus services and to make the services more accessible. To this end, they developed a common design language for the region to increase identification, simplify orientation and thus promote a positive user experience. The intuitive guidance system consists of a clear colour design for city buses and inter-regional bus routes. This concept was also transferred to the design of bus stops and timetables. So even tourists can immediately recognise which bus line they have to use to reach their destination. Mobility hubs are a second focus of the region in mobility planning. Currently, there are 15-20 mobility hubs at important rural railway stations in the region, which form the backbone

of the mobility system. Aspects of settlement development and different modes of mobility are thought together in order to motivate people to change from their cars to other means of transport. The region develops train stations and mobility hubs in rural areas as high-quality public places. They should represent attractive places, where people feel comfortable to be. In this context, even small investments, such as the expansion of protected bicycle parking at the mobility hubs, are already useful and have a great impact on people's daily lives and mobility decisions. For this, cooperation between municipalities was important and facilitated by a coherent approach to integrated mobility.

Mobility solution "rickshaw-system" for elderly in Walgau
(https://radelnohnealter.at/standorte/)


Rickshaw service for elderly, © Radeln ohne Alter Lustenau

In the Walgau Region (AT), the Danish initiative "Cycling without Age" has become a best practice, as in several other countries. The idea is to offer mobility solutions to the elderly by giving them rides on cargo bikes or rickshaws. The service is free of charge and organised through a network of volunteers. The bikes can also be rented for private trips. For insurance reasons, all riders are covered by insurance through the initiative. Initially, it was difficult to reach users, as many older people were ashamed to be judged by neighbours or in public by using such a service. However, by approaching the children and grandchildren of the target group, it was easier to convince them. Especially in rural areas of the region, the service is very popular. Possible reasons for this are that people have grown up in nature and have a close connection to it, can experience it again and the community is smaller and thus the barrier to using the service is lower.

Break up existing structures and promote cooperation for rural mobility

The local level bears great opportunities for providing good mobility solutions. Regional and national framework conditions need to enable local action and experimentation. Municipal mobility management can be a useful instrument as it coordinates and balances the requirements and interests of the different actors on the local level and of the municipal and inter-municipal authorities. It can help to form new partnerships of responsibility for ensuring accessibility and mobility in rural areas, to enter new alliances and to promote cooperation between municipal, private and voluntary actors. Through cooperation and networks, synergies can be used sensibly and competing structures can be avoided. New and perhaps unusual alliances considering the local conditions can create lasting changes.

An example from the Grand Est Region (FR) shows an approach that breaks up existing structures and promotes cooperation. The

Municipal Mobility Management by local authorities

Municipal mobility management is an instrument to influence mobility behaviour at the municipal/local level and to coordinate the planning and action of the specialised units in the municipal/local administration that are responsible for transport and mobility. It specifically includes mobility in transport planning and thus opens up new fields of action for integrated and effective transport planning by the municipalities. The focus is on a cross-departmental coordination and decision-making process from sectors and stakeholders to an integrated strategy.

so-called "basins de mobilité" (mobility areas), which extend beyond administrative areas, aim to facilitate cooperation between areas. Local and regional administrations share responsibilities for mobility services. The historical role of regional transport planning was to focus on long-distance transport between central places and agglomerations. Instead, nowadays, the region focuses on intra-regional mobility. To this end, the region supports several projects, e.g. a projected regional carpooling structure, for which it provides the data infrastructure, while the territories provide the infrastructure for carpooling.

The above-mentioned example of the RUBI call system from the Rostock Planning Region also shows that stakeholders urgently need to engage in practical cooperation. In order to make the project possible, the district as the responsible authority for local public transport and services of general interest, the local transport company and the state commissioner for transport, as the licensing authority, worked closely together. The municipalities in the region identify local needs, advertise the service and provide support, for example by making parking spaces available for the call bus.

Evidence on mobility patterns and user-statistics help moving forward

In order to form local alliances and to find supporters for a mobility change local actors require reliable data on mobility habits and needs to make informed decisions and enable strategic mobility planning. To get a more detailed overview of mobility patterns the use of big data, for example from mobile/telephone service providers can be relevant. In France, all digital travel assistance providers are required to share this data with the regions by law. After a new service was introduced, the user experience perspective is of great interest in order to close the loop to the "demand-driven change". This requires ongoing data collection and evaluation. The partners are already using their projects intensively to collect and document data on how often the services are used, which routes are requested particularly often or how the new offer is accepted and evaluated by the users overall. For example, the Görlitz District (DE) currently tests a community bus as a pilot project for a limited period. A minibus runs on a fixed route connecting 18 settlements and the nearest railway stations. The service operates once a week as a supplement to the regular bus service with four additional bus routes and two bus vehicles free of charge for all passengers. The project is undergoing an evaluation in order to draw conclusions for adapting the service in future.

In cases where such evaluations show a limited use, it is important to look at what conditions may be holding users back. Sometimes, reasons may not be apparent at first sight. Elderly persons may be ashamed to call a large bus for a personal journey, for others the private car is the better choice after considering all advantages and disadvantages. Thus, negative experience reports are also useful to find out whether people's needs may be misunderstood or whether, in addition to pull factors, additional push factors, e.g. fewer and more expensive parking spaces are needed to change people's mobility behaviour. Launching communication campaigns to spread the information among future users about the services, is a necessity that should not be underestimated. The experience of the partners shows that direct contact with users as well as with institutions such as schools, municipalities or doctors can be helpful to reach more people and to identify needs and provide information. For a successful implementation of new services, local people need to be sufficiently informed and sometimes convinced to actually use new services.

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