

## Rural Taxi with Medical Purposes

*In the Province of Castellón (Spain), the lack of transport offer challenges the quality of life of local communities and complicates the access to healthcare infrastructures for vulnerable groups. To facilitate the access to care services, the Provincial Government of Castellón set up in 2018 the 'Rural Taxi with Medical Purposes'.*

### Mobility, population density, healthcare: connected challenges

Castellón is a coastal and mountainous province where many rural municipalities face depopulation. Due to the low population density, classic public transport offers are not viable enough in these villages - which leads to the vicious circle of depopulation linked to the decline in the quality of life and a decrease in the attractiveness of the territory.

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The availability of transport offers is in particular important for those who are not in age or condition to drive a private vehicle, such as youth and older adults. For seniors, living at home in their village is sometimes an option only if they can also easily access healthcare services.

### A Rural Taxi with Medical Purposes

To address these interconnected challenges, the [Provincial Government of Castellón](#) launched in 2018 an on-demand transport offer dedicated to vulnerable people who need to go to a medical appointment. This '[Rural Taxi with Medical Purposes](#)' aims at facilitating the access to healthcare for older adults living in municipalities counting less than 5,000 inhabitants.

This door-to-door service is free of charge for users who do not have a private car, who are (even temporary) unable to drive or who do not have a driving licence. Local authorities subcontract this service to local taxi companies and act as interfaces between users and drivers. To use the service, people can make a request in the municipality they live in, justifying their need by providing their ID card, the doctor's note and a statement on their need for making use of the taxi for medical purposes.



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### Governance and resources

The 'Rural Taxi with Medical Purposes' was developed by the Provincial Government of Castellón as part of its repopulation strategy "[REPOBLEM](#)". This strategy aims at increasing the quality of life and the attractiveness of the area. Other measures undertaken within REPOBLEM are for instance the support to nursery schools, the development of municipal Wi-Fi, resting units for families taking care of a vulnerable person, and a mobile library service to ensure that every village has access to culture.

The initiative was allocated an initial budget of €300,000 at the provincial scale. Each municipality is then responsible for the management of the service on their territory and establishes the municipal annual budget allocated to the service.

Tírig was the first municipality of the Province to launch the service in September 2018, with a budget amounting € 1,075.02 for the period September to December 2018. While this new offer is beneficial to local communities, the budget remains limited, which is why the local authorities in charge of the service strictly reserve it for people who have no other mobility options. In the Province, 115 municipalities of less than 5,000 people are now offering this on-demand transport. In municipalities like Montán, where the 370 inhabitants live at 60km from the closest hospital, the taxi service is key to ensure the connectivity between the village and care services – in particular for older adults.

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### Innovative aspect

By developing an on-demand transport offer dedicated to people with restricted mobility but care needs, the Castellón Province increases the quality of life in the area, in particular for older adults who can more easily live at home if they want to. By identifying and prioritising a specific segment of the population – people who do not have access to private cars - local authorities also found a way to develop a viable transport offer.

### For more information, please contact:

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