



Daily mobility: how to improve the quality of life of mountain inhabitants?

Tuesday 12th October 2021 from 14:00 to 16:45

Conference report

On 12th October 2021, Euromontana organised the online conference “[Daily mobility: how to improve the quality of life of mountain inhabitants?](#)” within the framework of the mobility week [OrbiMob’](#) in Clermont-Ferrand, France. The event, moderated by **Marie Clotteau**, Director of **Euromontana**, aimed at reflecting on the constraints that affect different mobility solutions in mountain areas and at understanding how to design mobility strategies that take into account these specificities. It gave the floor to mobility experts, representatives from European institutions, entrepreneurs and regional policy makers.

Our conference on daily mobility in mountain areas was introduced by **Juanan Gutiérrez**, President of **Euromontana**, who stressed that the traditional dependence on car combined with the lack of adequate public transport solutions imposes social and territorial exclusion of certain segment of people.



Poor provision of transport services also affects the attractiveness of a region, no matter how much effort is at the same time put into education, promotion of tourism or development of new economic initiatives. Euromontana’s President also recalled that mountains cover 29% of the European Union territory, and host 13% of its population, but face important challenges due to the long distances to travel, the slopes, altitude, and cost of infrastructures. Given the importance of mobility, including for young people, concluded Juanan Gutiérrez, it is key to develop solutions adapted to the needs of mountain residents and not just to replicate those applied in urban areas.

Dr Patrick Oliva, cofounder of **Paris Process on Mobility and Climate and Transport Decarbonization Alliance**, opened the conference by setting the scene about methodology for territorial mobility. With OrbiMob', an initiative in Auvergne, France in which Mr Oliva is involved as expert, local actors want to make of Auvergne a reference in terms of territorial mobility.



Mobility plays a key role in the attractiveness of a region, he said, as it impacts the access to employment and the quality of life. Yet, some obstacles in mountain areas hinder the development of efficient mobility offers. Dr Oliva in particular stressed the need for reliable information on mobility solutions and innovations to avoid dogmatic decisions on existing or future options. He also deplored a silo reflection on different transport modes while in mountain areas it is necessary to connect these options, such as bicycle, bus and train, to create a coherent and efficient transport system for all. Moreover, the expert encouraged stakeholders and decision makers to be ambitious, to get inspired from the successful examples implemented in other areas and to develop existing solutions immediately without spending too much time on testing approaches again and again.

Yet, Dr Patrick Oliva warned that the chosen investments or combination of solutions must remain frugal and adapted to the needs of each territory, as solutions from urban areas cannot apply to mountain areas. He insisted on the fact that in mountain areas the problem does not rely on mobility solutions, such as batteries or engines, but on the methodology. The expert therefore invited mobility stakeholders and decision makers to think mobility has a whole in mountain areas, to cultivate an appetite for progress and to be innovative like on ticketing. He also recalled that mountain areas benefit from natural resources, such as biomass, that can be valorised to produce renewable energies useful for mobility. Mountain areas should be further encouraged to deploy different decentralised solutions to deploy renewable energies and become self-sufficient encouraged Rana Adib, in charge of an international network on renewable energies (REN21).

Mr Oliva also mentioned short air travel innovations that could work in mountain areas, such as drone mobility or the use of airships and electric helicopters.

All these principles will be applied in the next 6 years in the framework of OrbiMob', which should encourage the electrification of vehicles and transition to renewable energies, foster innovative air and rail solutions, promote multimodality and ticketing simplification and develop education on mobility.

Session 1: Towards green, sustainable and affordable mobility

To provide a more European perspective of mobility issues, **Joshua Salsby**, policy expert from the **European Commission's DG MOVE**, presented the main outlines of the new [EU Strategy for greener, smarter, and affordable mobility](#) in Europe. The Strategy was adopted in December 2020 in the framework of the European Green Deal, which calls for a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas



emissions from transport by 2050. The Strategy aims at making the European transport system more sustainable, smart, and resilient through an Action Plan, explained Mr Salsby. Some of the planned actions are already included in the new Fitfor55 package. Overall, the new EU Strategy wants to support more sustainable transport modes and to make alternatives widely available. Mr Salsby for instance mentioned that the European Commission will promote multimodal transport systems and will put in place incentives towards more sustainable mobility options, like the polluters payer's principle or user payer's principle or incentives to further use rail freight.

Still at the EU level, some policy recommendations for European institutions were also presented by **Andrea Lorenzini**, Transport Engineer at **MemEx** and coordinator of the **SMARTA** project. SMARTA was a European funded initiative (2018-2021), sponsored by the European Parliament and funded through EU Transport Ministry - DG MOVE, to improve both policies and practices on rural mobility.



It gathered different good practices and mobility demonstrations through 14 pilot sites across Europe. As explained by Mr Lorenzini, the lack of policies and frameworks dedicated to rural mobility leads to a lack of service provision and limited mobility and access to services for rural inhabitants, which risk excluding vulnerable segments of the population from society and causes a decline in territorial attractiveness. For this reason, SMARTA wanted to raise awareness on the car-dependency of rural population, and on issues related to economically vulnerable people, some older adults, young people etc. To improve rural mobility policies, Andrea Lorenzini explained that SMARTA advocates for a policy framework to be adopted at the EU level and migrated downwards to local development plans and programs by the EU Member States. To achieve this, the project designed three possible pathways (*Supportive, Persuasive, Mandatory*) which, depending on the one chosen, would use different legislative tools, binding or not, and have direct or indirect impacts on rural mobility.

Session 2: Practical examples to improve daily mobility in mountain areas

The conference was also the opportunity for mountain stakeholders to introduce some concrete examples for daily mobility. **Laurence Minne**, from the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region, introduced **Zero Emission Valley**, an initiative to develop the green hydrogen mobility in the region.



Through Zero Emission Valley, the region wants to create 20 hydrogen charging stations and deploy 1200 green hydrogen vehicles by 2023. As explained by Ms Minne, the first charging point was created in Chambéry and, during the first semester 2022, 5 more stations will be set-up, including one in Moutiers. Each charging station contains 3 electrolyse terminals. As for hydrogen vehicles, Ms Minne explained that a call was launched among companies: after a selection based on the size of the enterprise and the number of annual kilometres travelled,

the chosen companies will receive up to 12.000 euros as support to purchase a hydrogen vehicle. Private companies, public authorities and businesses like taxi companies are eligible; the scheme does not target individuals so far. In the future, as mentioned by our speaker, the goal will also be to encourage the hydrogen transition for garbage trucks, snow groomers, buses and in general heavy vehicles by using the retrofit to convert former thermal vehicles into hydrogen ones. Zero Emission Valley is supported by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility programme (10 million euros) and by the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region (15 million euros). The total cost of the project (50 million euros) is also supported by other public and private actors, such as ENGIE, Michelin, Crédit Agricole and la Banque des Territoires.

Another practical example of mobility solutions for mountain areas was presented by **Matthieu Jacquot**, member of **Mobicoope** that is integrating **Rezo/Pouce** services. He explained how this hitchhiking scheme can benefit mountain people on a daily basis. Rezo Pouce is a well-developed solution in French mountains and, as explained by Mr Jacquot, is a mix between carpooling and hitchhiking.



This mobility offer is not 100% comparable to classic carsharing options as it is not necessary to book a trip in advance. It is not either traditional hitchhiking because it is more organised, visible, and easy for users. There are for instance official stops, with signs, logos of Rezo Pouce and sometimes even the main directions to help people show where they want to go. Stops were also chosen depending on the number of passing cars and on the space and ease of stopping safely. To use the service, people do not need to register or book a trip and wait on average 6 minutes before being picked-up. Overall, summarised Matthieu Jacquot, Rezo Pouce is a model that fits well the specificities of mobility in mountain areas, with traffic being concentrated on fewer roads and cars passing either down into the valley or up.

Shortly introduced by [video](#), **La Exclusiva** is another mobility solution which addresses the needs of vulnerable and older population in mountain areas. This SME operates in the Province of Soria, Spain, and is a reversed mobility solution: instead of people travelling to access goods, goods are travelling to them.



La Exclusiva covers 24 rural mountainous villages, where it delivers basic goods to older adults with no additional cost. This example was identified as a [best practice](#) within the Interreg Europe [SILVER SMEs](#) project, working on the development of the Silver Economy in rural and mountainous areas.

The last example of solution for daily mobility in mountain areas was presented by **Elena di Bella**, from **Città Metropolitana di Torino** (Italy), who introduced participants to the Interreg ALCOTRA [MobiLab](#) and [Coeur Solidaire](#) projects.



The goal, as explained our speaker, is to address “mobility poverty” by ensuring better access to mobility for people who do not have car, such as older adults, young people, newcomers etc. Paradoxically in some mountain villages, buses are empty, but cars are full. This initiative will thus look at how building a more efficient and inclusive transport scheme through on-demand transport. At the same time, stated Ms Di Bella, such transport scheme would help reducing air pollution, avoiding some car accidents, reducing the budget dedicated to buying a car and would create jobs. Indeed, the objective would be to go beyond a volunteering-based offer to make the model also economically sustainable and viable. At the moment, the project coordinator is looking for an economic actor that wants to carry out this service, while they have already identified 2 social cooperatives and 1 bus company interested.

André Marcon, Senate member of **Euromontana** and President of **MACEO**, concluded the conference by underlining the importance of physical, virtual and health mobility. He underlined that “mountains are a space of the future, with a wish to go to a healthier environment that should remained attractive”.



Therefore, he invited participants, mountain stakeholders and policy makers, to adapt to mountains’ specificities, to combine solutions, innovate and get inspiration from other successful territories while keeping a frugal approach.

You can also refer to:

- [Dr Patrick Oliva’s presentation about the methodology for territorial mobility transformation](#)
- [Joshua Salsby’s presentation about the European Commission’s Strategy for greener, smarter and affordable mobility in Europe](#)
- [Andrea Lorenzini’s presentation on the recommendations of the SMARTA project](#)
- [Laurence Minne’s presentation on the hydrogen initiative “Zero Emission Valley” in Auvergne Rhone Alpes region](#)
- [Matthieu Jacquot’s presentation about the daily hitchhiking system RezoPouce](#)
- [The video about La Exclusiva, a reversed mobility service delivering basic goods to older adults in the mountainous in the province of Soria](#)
- [Elena di Bella’s presentation on how MobiLab can create a tailored made mobility scheme in the Metropolitana di Torino](#)