1st Meeting of the European Rural Mobility Network

6-7 June 2023 (Online)

Meeting Report

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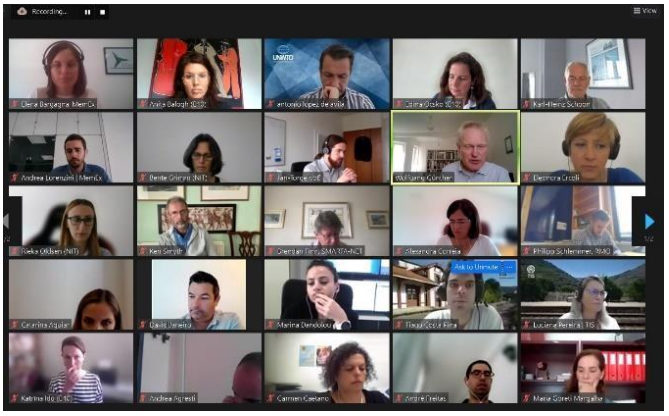
1. Purpose of the event

The 1st Meeting of the European Rural Mobility Network (ERMN) took place on 6-7th June 2023 via the Zoom platform, with the primary purpose of bringing together first-time and future members of the ERMN consisting of rural municipalities and rural regional representatives interested in addressing rural mobility challenges.



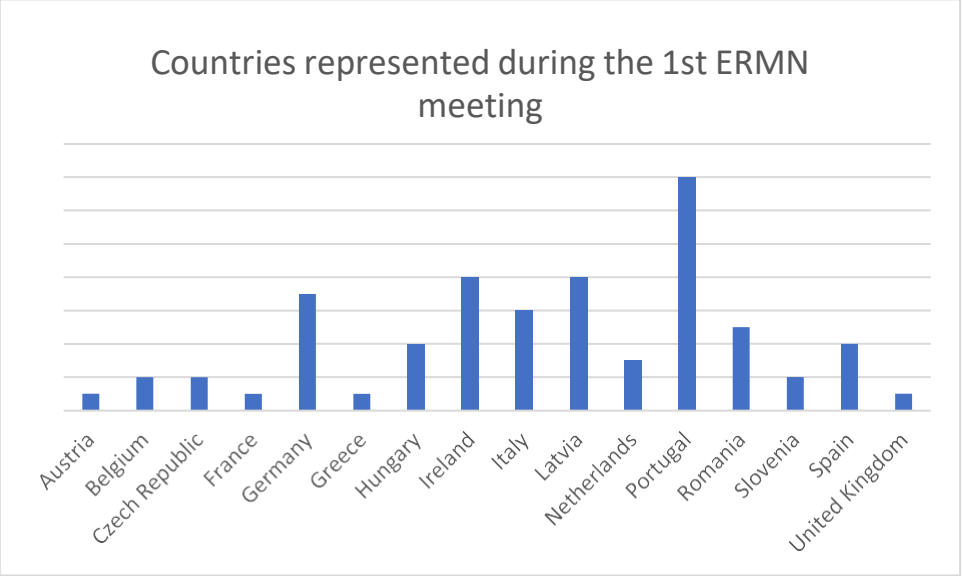
The event aimed to facilitate the exchange of opinions, perspectives, and innovative solutions, with a special focus on local shared mobility solutions also introducing SMARTA-NET project and its activities.

The meeting was the first in a series of six events where the ERMN members are planned to be engaged to discuss and share opinions and synergies on rural mobility.

1.1 Participants

During a two-day event, a total of 69 participants from 16 different countries attended. These countries included Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The participants represented various sectors, including representatives of rural or other municipalities, regions, Local Action Groups (LAGs), tourism organizations, and other entities such as partners, transport practitioners, and stakeholders.



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1.2 Agenda

The agenda of the meeting is presented below. You can read the main findings of the sessions by clicking the main titles that brings you further down in the report to the relevant section. You can also have a look at presentation slides and/or listen to the livestream recording of various sessions by clicking the links and 'camera icons' below.

6th of June (1st day of the event)

9.30-10.30 Introduction to the SMARTA-NET project with a specific focus on the SMARTA-NET guidelines, evaluation of COVID-19 impacts and attitudes in rural mobility and training programme, presented by lead partners

PRESENTATIONS		
Introduction to SMARTA-NET & the Purpose of the meeting (MemEx)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Guidance on Transferability assessment and long-term sustainability of target Shared Mobility Solutions by Elena Bargagna (MemEx)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Guidance on connecting tourist destinations to resilient mobility networks by Bente Grimm and Rieka Oldsen (NIT)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Guidance on integrating a rural dimension in SUMPs by André Freitas (TIS)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
The SMARTA-NET Task on financing options for Rural Mobility by Elena Bargagna (MemEx)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
The Evaluation of Covid-19 impact and attitudes on rural mobility (Panteia)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
The SMARTA-NET Training programme (TIS)	Download PPT	Watch presentation

10.30-11.30 Introduction to the European Rural Mobility Network

PRESENTATIONS		
Introduction to the European Rural Mobility Network (E40)	Download PPT	Watch presentation

11.45-13.30 Presentation of inspiring mobility examples and Lighthouse Sites

PRESENTATIONS		
The SMARTA-NET Task on the analysis of sustainable mobility solutions from previous SMARTA projects, by Elena Bargagna (MemEx)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Presentation of Narni, Italy by Pietro Flori (Municipality of Narni	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Presentation of Vidzeme, Latvia by Raitis Sijats, Latvia Greenways Association	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Presentation of Madeira, Portugal by Christina Loreto (Regional Government, Regional Secretariat for Economy)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Presentation of Saleska Valley, Slovenia by Tina Belina (Šalek Valley Tourist Board)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Concluding remarks and short introduction of Day 2, Brendan Finn	n/a	n/a

7th of June (1st day of the event)

9.30-11.15 Introduction to the day and Parallel Workshop Sessions on sustainable rural mobility & tourism solutions

PRESENTATIONS		
Introduction to Day 2 Agenda by Andrea Lorenzini MemEx	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Parallel Workshop Sessions: Local shared mobility solutions (MemEx)		
Regionalmanagement Osttirol & E-car sharing for alpine villages by Philipp Schlemmer (Regional Management Osttirol)	Download PPT	n/a
Citizens' bus in the district of Kusel, Bürgerbus by Karl Heinz Schoon (Kusel District)	Download PPT	n/a
Kilkenny Integrated Transport Evolution (KITE) by Declan Rice (Kilkenny LEADER Partnership)	Download PPT	n/a
Hub Groningen Drenthe by Martin Courtz (Groningen Drenthe)	Download PPT	n/a
Parallel Workshop Sessions: Sustainable tourism & mobility (NIT)		
Mobility challenges for rural tourism regions and first steps to overcome by Bente Grimm (NIT	Download PPT	n/a
Good practice examples of sustainable tourist mobility offers, Rieka Oldsen (NIT)	Download PPT	n/a
Parallel Workshop Sessions: Rural sensitive SUMPs - a focus on the analyse of current mobility situation – (TIS and Panteia)		
Designing mobility policies and plan- Are rural areas of interest for a SUMP? André Freitas (TIS/ Portugal)	Download PPT	n/a
Rural Connections to Kilkenny City. The Challenges of Incorporating Rural Mobility into an Urban Mobility Plan by Caitriona Corr (Kilkenny County Council)	Download PPT	n/a

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SUMP in Polycentric regions – Aveiro Region case study by Tiago Pina (TIS/ Portugal)	Download PPT	n/a
Introducing rural sensitive SUMPs. A focus on the analysis of current mobility situation by Geert Koops (Panteia)	Download PPT	n/a
Mobilising the power of citizen science to support the transition to sustainable mobility. The experience of Straarvinken and Straat-O-Sfeer by Huib Huyse (KU Leuven University)	Download PPT	n/a

11.30-13.00 Feedback on workshops and panel session

PRESENTATIONS		
Feedback from parallel workshops and Panel Discussion on What can SMARTA- NET do to address rural mobility challenges at all levels? Questions & reflections from participants – Panellists: Antonio López De Ávila (UNWTO), Mercedes Muñoz (European Greenways Association), Alexandra Correia (Alentejo Regional Development Agency) Brendan Finn (MemEx)	Download PPT	Watch presentation
Concluding remarks - Andrea Lorenzini (MemEx)	Download PPT	n/a

2. Outcomes of Day 1 (6th of June)

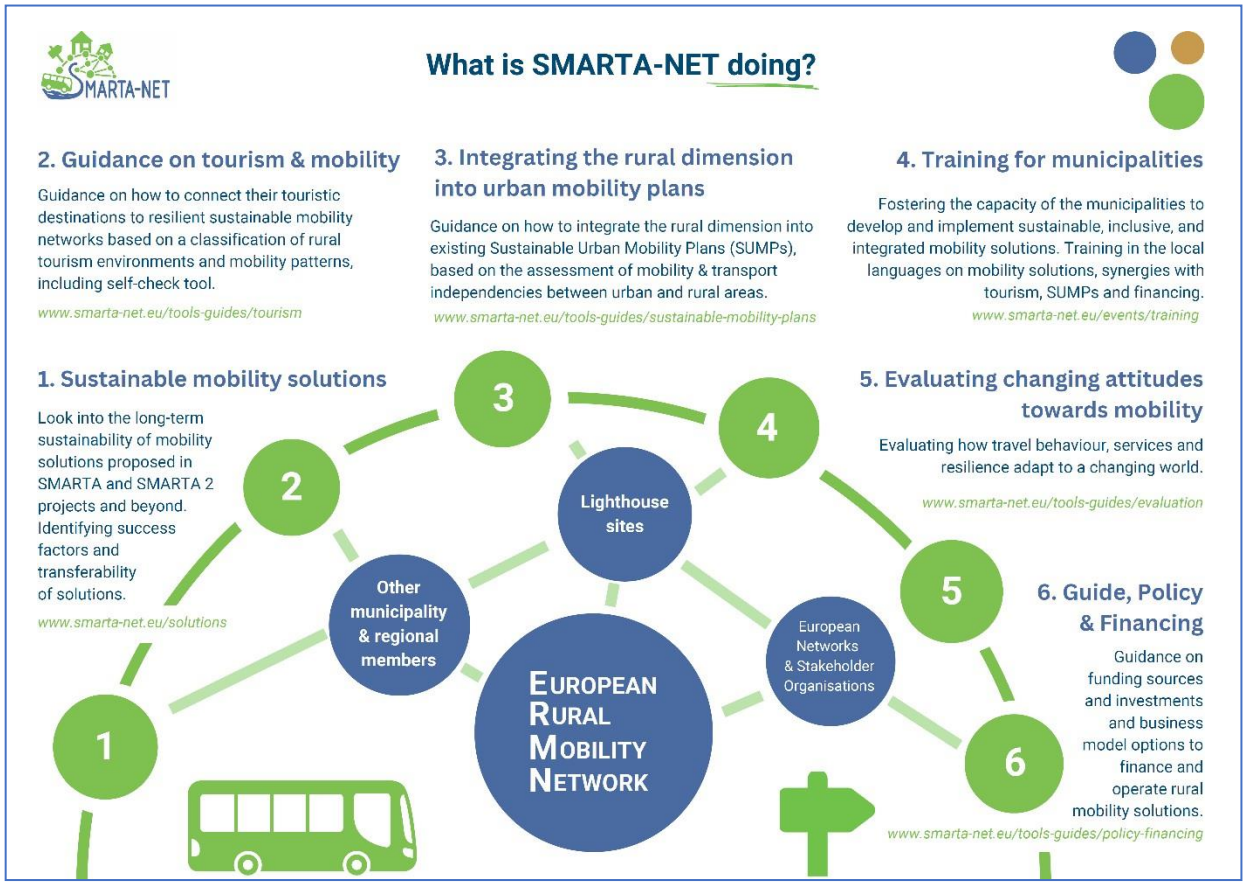
2.1 Introduction to the SMARTA-NET project

The event opened with a welcome Speech by Brendan Finn (MemEx), SMARTA-NET Project Manager. Brendan highlighted that the event is the first meeting of the first pan-European network of authorities, practitioners, and other interested stakeholders who want to promote sustainable policies and strategies for improving the accessibility of rural territories across Europe. SMARTA-NET builds on the legacy of the previous SMARTA and SMARTA2 projects. It aimsto bring rural mobility a step forward with a particular emphasis on those rural territories where tourism plays a

significant role in the local economy. Brendan outlined that the Project aims to find a progression path for the ERMN, ensuring a future of the ERMN beyond the project to be shaped by the Members themselves during 2024.

Andrea Lorenzini (MemEx), SMARTA-NET Project Coordinator, presented the main pillars of the SMARTA-NET Project, including general information on the Project objectives, tasks, and timeline. SMARTA-NET seeks to collaborate with a set of "Lighthouse Sites", to engage rural municipalitiesin at least fifteen European Countries. The ERMN will enable networking among rural municipalities throughout Europe that are commonly interested and active in rural mobility, tourism, and rural development. This would, in turn, facilitate the sharing of information learning from peers, the setting up of relationships and working groups, and the gathering of evidence to convince and lobby stakeholders and policymakers.

Figure 1 The main tasks of the SMARTA-NET Project



A short presentation of the SMARTA-NET guidelines is offered by lead partners:

- Elena Bargagna (MemEx) presented the Guidance on "*Transferability assessment and long-term sustainability of target Shared Mobility Solutions*". It aims to support rural

municipalities and practitioners in the delivery of a blend of formal and informal forms of mobility services, by sharing insights on sustainable and shared mobility and transport good practices implemented in different rural EU contexts. Elena also introduced the Guidance on "*Funding streams and financial issues and opportunity for rural mobility solutions*". It will outline the funding opportunities and implementation mechanisms on shared mobility solutions, with a focus on the related revenue-earning potential and the assessment of the sufficiency and durability of observed financing arrangements.

- André Freitas (TISpt) presented the Guidance on "*Integration of rural dimension in SUMPs*". It will support urban and rural planners and practitioners in i) Learning how to mainstream rural mobility aspects along all phases of SUMP design to enhance territorial cohesion; ii) Extending the usual catchment area of SUMPs to ´leave no one behind´; iii) Addressing concerns about the surrounding rural communities and the tourist flows between urban and rural sites.
- Bente Grimm (NIT) outlined the Guidance on "*Connecting tourist destinations to resilient mobility networks*". The guidance will help users to gain knowledge of sustainable mobility in rural tourism communities, gives good practice examples of inspiring and sustainable touristic mobility offers, and provides guidance on how to implement sustainable mobility solutions in their regions.
- Geert Koops (Panteia) introduced the Evaluation task of SMARTA-NET. The evaluations in SMARTA-NET are based on direct collaboration with the SMARTA-NET Lighthouse Sites, which willbe the test bed for the assessment of the impacts of recent external shocks (COVID-19, War in Ukraine) on the rural regions, while also taking into account the impact on other policy domains.The evaluations in SMARTA-NET will enable lighthouse sites to understand the attitudes and behaviours of individuals towards innovative ways of sharing mobility and know whether rural mobility projects within the selected municipality can be considered best practices to make the region more resilient against future shocks.

The session concluded with a presentation on the SMARTA-NET Training Programme by Luciana Pereira (TISpt). The purpose of the SMARTA-NET Training Programme is to foster the capacity of municipalities to develop and implement sustainable, inclusive, and integrated mobility solutionsin its territories to pursue stronger, resilient, connected, and prosperous rural areas. SMARTA-NET will implement training and capacity building on the Guidelines in each of the member countries,in their own country and language, for the ERMN members and other interested stakeholders.

2.2 The European Rural Mobility Network

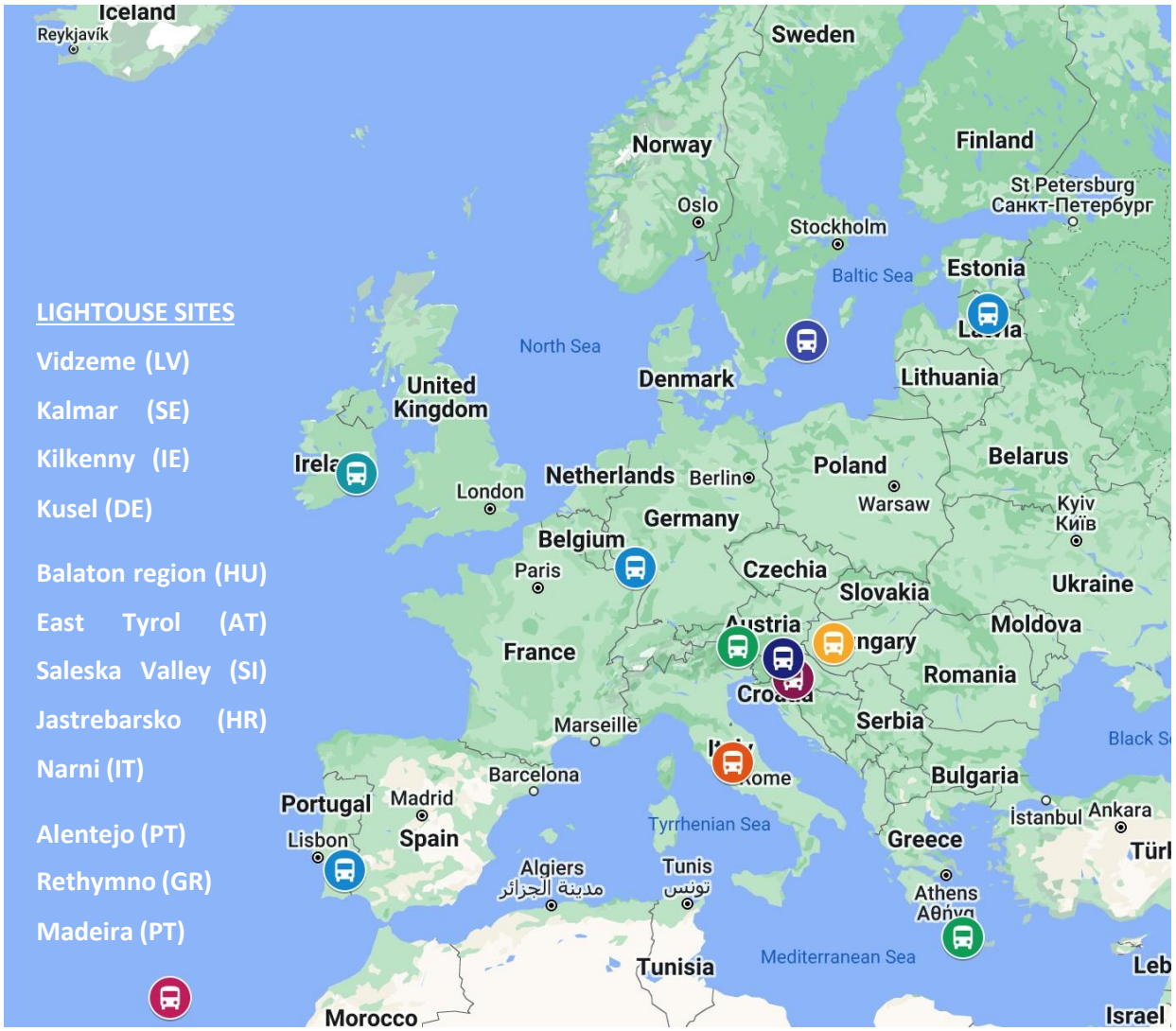
The purpose and structure of the European Rural Mobility Network (ERMN) was presented to participants by Edina Ocsko (E40). The main purpose of the ERMN is to share knowledge and experience among local authorities, practitioners, and experts on rural mobility & tourism. The membership is still flexible and open to any stakeholders with interest, capacity and mandate to act in rural mobility. The core members are rural regions (including LAGs) & municipalities; other members include 'multipliers' organisations/ networks interested in mobility and tourism.

The Lighthouse Sites are key members of the ERMN. Lighthouse Sites from 11 countries have already been engaged. The Consortium is having discussions with additional sites in France, Spain, Poland, Czechia and Romania. 15 countries will be covered, in total. Some of them introduced their profiles and mobility solutions in more details (see below).

Finally, the activities and benefits of the ERMN were also presented including:

- ERMN Meetings: 6 meetings each with different thematic focus (good practice, tourism, planning, evaluation, training, policy)
- Access to information: Guidelines, policy papers, training
- Exchange of experience & learning from others' approaches: During meetings and through sharing of information about on SMARTA-NET media, such as good practices, etc.

Figure 2 The SMARTA-NET Lighthouse sites



Using the Mentimeter platform, participants were asked to indicate their type of organisation (see the share of different organisations above), their country (see above) and also how they would rate the relevance of various activities provided by SMARTA-NET for their own work. The findings of this exercise show that exchanging with others on mobility challenges and solutions (4,7/5) and the provisions of good practices (4,2/5) rank highest among activities, followedby guidance on mobility planning (4,1/5).

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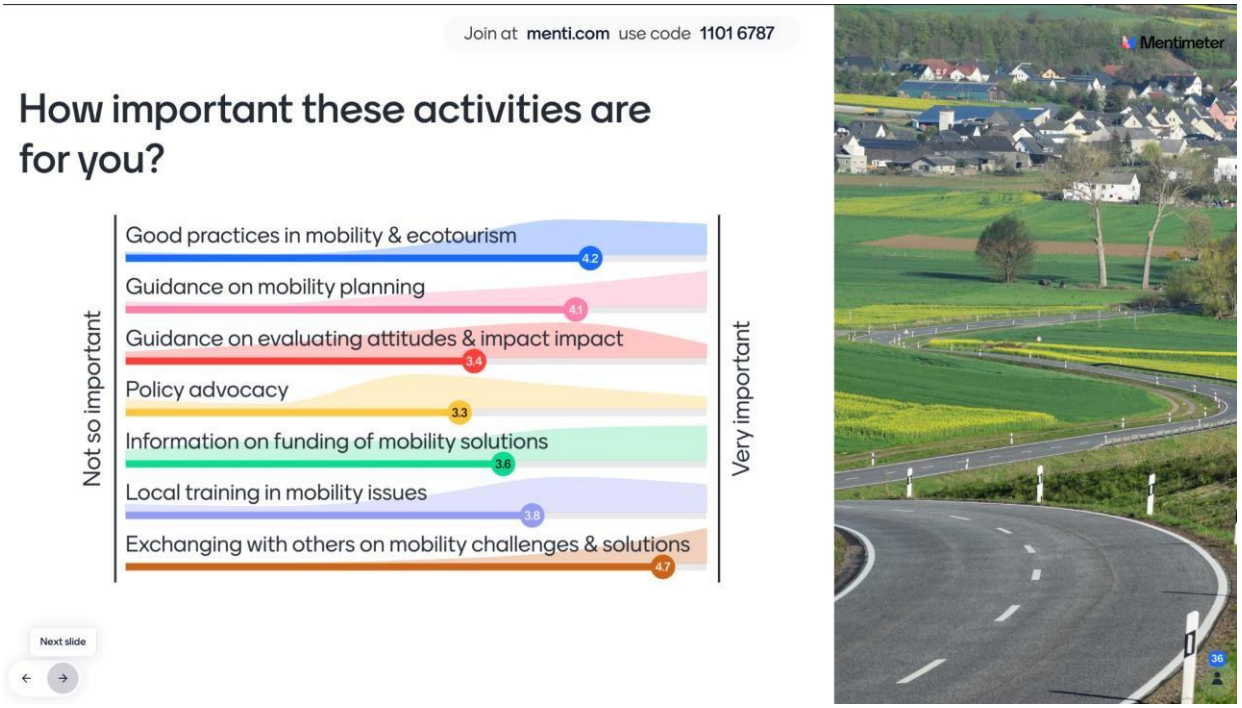

2.3 Presentation of inspiring mobility examples and Lighthouse Sites

After a short coffee break, Day 1 continued with the concise overview of inspiring mobility and tourism practices presented by MemEx, accompanied by the introduction of Task 1 that aims to assess target mobility solutions and services, evaluate their transferability across EU countries, analyse their long-term sustainability and adaptability to diverse needs and environments, and identify the most promising and less successful solutions. The presentation also included the showcasing of a variety of inspiring sustainable mobility solutions, e.g., Demand-responsive Transport (DRT) service '*Ring a Link'* from Ireland, Volunteer-based transport services from Slovenia and '*Bürgerbus'* from Germany, integration of ride sharing solutions with the overall mobility and Public Transport example from Italy, '*Rezo Pouce'* hitchhiking service from France and *Flugs E-Carsharing* from Austria.

This was followed by the presentation of four lighthouse sites: Narni (Italy), Madeira (Portugal), Vidzeme (Latvia), Saleska Valley (Slovenia). Each site provided a concise overview of the key characteristics of their respective areas, highlighting the mobility and transport challenges they face.

- Narni (Italy): to tackle the issues of reduced public transport lines and dispersed population, the Municipality is implementing new mobility solutions, such as the *Narni Chiama bus* (on demand service), *NarniLink* (direct line connecting the historic center with the train station, with a combined ticket for rail and bus), shuttle services for summer visitors, installation of

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electric car charging stations, transitioning the car fleet to electric cars, and introducing electric bicycle services to improve mobility options, particularly forolder people.

- Vidzeme (Latvia) shared their experience with the development of Greenways (i.e., communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorized journeys, build along disused railway corridors, canal tow paths and historic routes), the implementation of charging infrastructure for electric bikes, and improvements in train connections with other modes of transportation improving services for tourists providing transport with e-bus in their area.
- Madeira (Portugal) faces the issue of heavy reliance on private cars by residents and tourists. The region aims to be a leader in sustainable transportation tailored to tourists' needs. The main findings and recommendations include the need for improved communication tools, early delivery of information to tourists, greater cooperation with touristic suppliers, and clearer advantages such as tour suggestions and special fares. Lessons learned emphasize the achievement of sustainable mobility through integrated measures and the importance of involving local stakeholders and politicians. Addressing overcrowded tourist spots, improving accessibility, enhancing pedestrian and intermodal infrastructure, promoting peripheral locations, offering bundled services, and fostering cooperation among tourism and mobility entities are identified as key actions to overcome mobility challenges in rural tourist areas.
- Saleska Valley (Slovenia) Saleska Valley is a touristic area during summer time, their goal is to achieve a quality and comprehensive tourist experience while promoting sustainabletourism. The valley aims to be a family-friendly and green destination, implementing various sustainable mobility actions such as bike-sharing systems, city cycling networks, free local buses, and demand-responsive transport for elderly people. The objective is toincrease the share of sustainable transportation modes among both tourists and residents. During peak tourist seasons, the valley faces challenges such as limited parkingspaces, traffic congestion, and a lack of information regarding sustainable transport alternatives. To address these challenges, a mobility plan is being developed to manage tourist flows and promote the area during non-touristic seasons.

The first day of the event concluded with closing remarks from Brendan Finn who provided an overview of the next steps and activities of the SMARTA-NET project and the short teasers presented by the workshop leaders of the second day.

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3. Outcomes of Day 2 (7th of June)

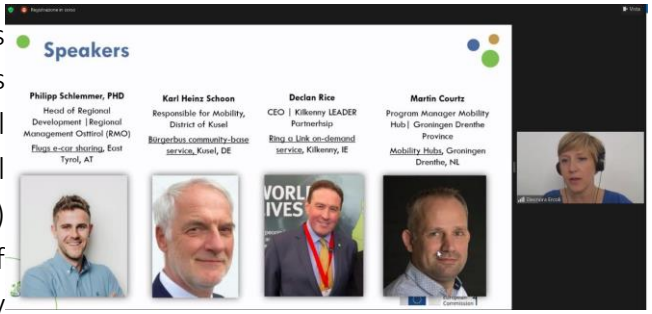
The focus of the second day of the event was on workshops focusing on different topics (see below). The outcomes of these workshops were further discussed in a panel discussion.

3.1 Parallel Workshop Sessions: Sustainable rural mobility & tourism solutions

The second day started with the parallel workshop sessions on (1) Local shared mobility solutions, (2) Sustainable tourism mobility in rural regions (3) Rural sensitive SUMPs - a focus on the analysis of current mobility situation.

3.1.1 Workshop 1 on local shared mobility solutions

The workshop on local shared mobility solutions led by MemEx aimed to share experiences from successful rural mobility schemes implemented across Europe, focusing on initiating, operating, and sustaining mobility schemes for rural inhabitants and visitors. Representatives from East Tyrol (AT), Kusel (DE), Kilkenny (IE), and Groningen Drenthe (NL) provided insights into their respective schemes. The presentations facilitated discussions on mobilization and operational phases of target mobility services. Key findings included the implementation of e-carsharing stations in low-density areas, the establishment of a community-based transport service with volunteer drivers, the integration of fixed route and demand-responsive transport services, and the development of inclusive mobility hubs. The workshop highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships, technology utilization, and community engagement. The identified good practices included tailored solutions to specific contexts. Recommended next steps involve awareness- raising campaigns, cross-border cooperation, the creation of mobility hubs, and engaging local, regional, and national authorities.

Workshop Lead	MemEx
Short description of the workshop:	
The workshop aimed to share key experiences from successful rural mobility schemes implemented across Europe. Local representatives from East Tyrol (AT), Kusel (DE), Kilkenny(IE) and Groningen Drenthe (NL) provided insights from their experience of initiating,operating, and sustaining a mobility scheme for rural inhabitants and visitors.	

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The presentations from speakers facilitated the discussion among participants on the issues around the mobilisation (in terms of identifying needs, bringing stakeholders together, developing the strategy, etc.) and operational phases (dealing with service design, IT platforms, technical approach, etc.) of target mobility services.

Short summary of presentations

Philipp Schlemmer (East Tyrol, Regional Management Osttirol (RMO), Austria)

Title of presentation: *Regionalmanagement Osttirol & E-car sharing for alpine villages*

The Regionsmanagement Osttirol (RMO) is a non-profit association based in Lienz and financed mainly by the municipalities of the district. The mission of the association is the development of long-term sustainable, affordable (for users), flexible and climate friendly mobility solutions for the area. The area is an alpine region and is composed by 33 municipalities. Flugs E-car sharing is the mobility solutions presented during the workshop and implemented in Est Tyrol Region. It started in 2015 in the city of Lienz with one e-car. Now, there are 12 e-carsharing stations available in the region of East Tyrol and a fleet of 13e-cars. The project is supported by RMO with the cooperation of a local energy institution and the municipality of Lienz.

Karl Heinz Schoon (Kusel District/ Responsible for Mobility, District of Kusel/ Germany)Title of presentation: *Citizens' bus in the district of Kusel, Bürgerbus*

Bürgerbus is a volunteer-based community transport service operated in Oberes-Glantal Municipality in the Kusel District. Oberes-Glantal was created from the voluntary union of 3 Verbandsgemeinde ("collective municipalities"), and includes 98 rural municipalities and villages dispersed in the countryside. Every municipality has 2 buses running 2 days a week.Users can book a route by phone or email, and the service is free of charge. Bürgerbus is entirely organised and managed by volunteers (35-45 volunteers). They make use of a software to fix the team, the work shift and to organise the users' reservations. The first rideof Bürgerbus took place in July 2017.

The service was interrupted during the COVID-19 period; despite that, Bürgerbus offered rides for the vaccination centre and operated a test centre for many months. Nevertheless, the number of users increases again after the COVID-19 period, with an average of 80 passengers per day. Moreover, some smart photovoltaic bus stations with tourist information are installed to increase tourism in rural areas.

Declan Rice (Kilkenny/ Kilkenny LEADER Partnership/ Ireland)

Title of presentation: *Kilkenny Integrated Transport Evolution (KITE), An Integrated Public Transport Partnership*

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KITE is a mobility public transport partnership pilot project in Kilkenny which seeks to link the conventional licensed fixed route commercial bus services with the flexible 'Demand Responsive Transport' (DRT) services of the community-based Local Link services. The partners of this project are: *Ring a Link* (the Local Link service covering Kilkenny, Carlow, Wicklow and Fingal), *JJ Kavanagh & Sons*, *Kilkenny LEADER Partnership, Kilkenny County Council*.
KITE offers a sustainable mobility option for Kilkenny residents and visitors. It provides increased access to the rural areas of Kilkenny. It joins the fixed corridor bus operators, JJ Kavanagh, and the flexible Ring a Link service. Ring a Link was established in 2002, it has 40 weekly services with 100 'travel options' (linkages, connections, etc.), and is part of the national Local Link network. It uses *real time passenger information* (RTPI) technology and digital equipment and structures as 'Smart Stop'. These digital tools facilitate the integrationbetween the DRT and the JJ Kavanagh scheduled service.

Martin Courtz (Groningen Drenthe, Groningen Drenthe Province, Netherland)Title of presentation: *Hub Groningen Drenthe*

The Mobility Hub in Groningen Drenthe is the solution presented from the Dutch territory. The integration of public transport and door-to-door service, joined with the creation of a mobility hub, allows to create a more efficient transport system. In the mobility hub are presents a lot of services- car parking, bike storage and bus stations, and facilities – health care, education and government offices... For this reason, it's better to talk about "*Inclusive Hub Network*" due to the improved accessibility to the facilities for everyone, promotion of suitable transport options for all users, and a capillar transport network. In this way, the hub is seen as a connecting link between people and facilities.

The Hub improves the quality of services offered to the inhabitants of the territories, to tourists and to the vulnerable population as elderly and disabled people. It becomes a meeting and reference point for people, as Village hub Grolloo. It improves social inclusion,the environmental conditions, decreasing the use of private cars and increasing the utilization of shared/public mobility services.

Short summary of key findings from workshop

Operating a car sharing service in low density areas

With the support from different EU-funded projects, RMO is aiming to implement new e-carsharing stations and manage the cooperation between the public transport provider andthe carsharing one to get a more integrated mobility information system.

The e-carsharing gives the possibilities to explore the remote areas and to promote a ''*green house friendly tourism offers*" in the region. This goal is particularly relevant for Alpine Space regions, where car dependency is a major problem for visitors.

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The Flugs E-carsharing is managed by a private energy company, which provides regional heating plants. At the beginning, the cars were bought from the city of Lienz; after, the Regionsmanagement Osttirol had the chance to transform the Flug service as a commercialoffer, and decided to rent the e-cars in leasing (vehicles change every 3 years).

Regarding the cost of the service, a car could cost €8,000 per year for the municipality, so €24,000 per year for 3 cars for 3 municipality. Other municipalities can adopt a similar approach: start from a small-scale project, evaluate target KPI, and then scale up with additional vehicles and stations.

Setting up a community-based transport service

Bürgerbus is a mobility initiative but the most important things is the social aspect and the communication process with the population, users and municipalities. It can be considered as a "Communication project", in which transport is only one part.

The success of the service is the trust from the community and the municipality and the financial support received. Bürgerbus is a free service based-on volunteers, with a local simple organisation; there isn't a structured chain of command, the team is self-organised. The biggest challenge is the continuous engagement of volunteers. Several efforts need tobe spent in order to keep the interest from locals alive and to stimulate interest for potential

drivers (e.g., people getting into retirement).

Establishing private-private partnerships for new integrated mobility initiatives

The integration between Ring a Link and JJ Kavanagh in terms of organisation and operation aspects, digital and physical (smart stop) connection is a mainstay of the service; Ring a Link and JJ Kavanagh are two different operators, with different characteristics and goals. Nevertheless, the KITE project builds on common interests. The collaboration of these two different operators facilitates the integration of long-range transport with last-mile connections, and cover a larger area of the territory. In this way, the enhanced integration ofthe services resulted in an increase of the number of users, that in turn led to the rise of thecommercial revenues.

The use of technology and real-time passenger information is an opportunity to connect different areas and extend the services to different categories of users, as young people. So,the increase on the use of the services will lead to a major transport supply for them, to a greater coverage of the territory, better integration on destinations, and environmental improvement, due to the reduction of private transport.

The KITE Pilot project is very promising. KLP is looking to replicate the project in three additional areas for a 12-18 month period, seeking support from the National Transport Authority. Despite an opposing view of NTA, KLP will include a Local Objective and StrategicAction on the expansion of KITE in its LEADER Local Development Strategy 2023- '27. KLP is committed to lobby local and

national politicians to impress on them the value of bottom-up mobility/ transport solutions, cooperating with SMARTA-NET and other partners on how toestablish rural mobility as a priority for EU and national policy makers

Seamless and multimodal integration in the rural areas of Groningen Drenthe

In Groningen-Drenthe, the public transport services are managed by the 2 local provinces (Groningen-Drenthe). Each Province is responsible for the planning and organisation of the transport services in: i) the urban areas including relevant cities; ii) the additional transport for suburban and rural areas. These two entities were not used to work together, but beside each other. The partnership developed for the delivery of the Mobility Hubs, addressed thegovernance level, and also the local organisations - as library, sport centre, etc.., more and more involved in the hub projects. The organisation asks directly to them what are the specific needs of the population living in the village to deliver a right demand of transportation and facilities.

Any specific good practices / examples that is worth following up on?

The four local shared mobility solutions presented during the workshop are already good examples of good practices. They represent four different types of mobility solutions – carsharing, community-based service with volunteer drivers, Demand Responsive Transportand Mobility Hub. Each of them suits to the considered area and its specific context conditions.

The order followed for the presentations and related discussions resulted to be a good practice in itself. Participants had the opportunity to join a learning journey starting from small scale local implementations (i.e., the e-car sharing in Austria and the Bürgerbus OberesGlantal community-based transport service) to more complex and mature solution, i.e., theintegration of long-range fixed route transport and the on-demand solution in Kilkenny, andthe issues around the integration of user information, and the set up and large scale implementation of mobility hubs, integrating transport and other services.

Suggested next steps to address needs identified through SMARTA-NET/ Recommendations

- Awareness raising-campaign and advertisement. Organise workshops/meetings/events with community and municipality to raise the interestson the challenges in rural mobility.
- Cross-border cooperation: engaging the municipalities near the administrative area where the solution is implemented to extend the service.
- Creation of Mobility Hubs in rural municipalities (after a feasibility study and costs- benefits analysis) to reduce the distance covered by private transport and incentivize public transport.
- Involve local/regional/national authorities for a large scale of sharing and activated engagement process of community.

3.1.2 Workshop 2 on Sustainable tourism mobility in rural regions

The workshop on sustainable tourism mobility in rural regions led by NIT aimed to address the challenges faced by such areas and present potential solutions to encourage sustainable mobility. The workshop showcased inspiring examples of environmentally and socially compatible mobility in different holiday regions, allowing participants from across Europe to share their views, needs, and ideas. The outcomes of the workshop will be utilized to develop SMARTA-NET guidance on sustainable mobility in rural regions. Key findings emphasized the importance of promoting environmentally friendly modes of transportation, encouraging longer stays to reduce environmental impact, prioritizing effective communication and networking, considering the needs of different target groups, gathering data on tourist mobility, and following specific good practices. The suggested next steps include creating attractive sustainable mobility offers, combining arrival mobility and on-site mobility, shifting to environmentally friendly transport options, extending visitor stays, improving communication and cooperation, and integrating aspects such as urban-rural connections, better route connections, and on-demand services into the guideline.

Workshop Lead: Wolfgang Günther (NIT)
Short description of the workshop (purpose):
The intention of the workshop was to provide an overview of the challenges that rural regions are facing with regard to sustainable tourism mobility and to show possible solutions that encourage to follow suit. Inspiring examples that ensure more environmentally and socially compatible mobility in different types of holiday regions should be shown and participants from all over Europe should have the possibility to share their views, needs andideas. The results will be used for the development of a guideline on sustainable mobility inrural regions. 
Short summary of presentations
Bente Grimm (NIT), Mobility challenges for rural tourism regions and first steps to overcome them: Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the proportion of guests who arrive byplane or car and move around by car, must be reduced. Although car and plane are dominating modes of transport on most holiday trips, every region has specific mobility patterns that have to be

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taken into account by anybody who wants to change the situation.The NIT developed a self-check (available online and as pdf) and a typology which can be used to classify rural regions and their mobility situation. General traffic problems of rural tourist destinations are volume of motor vehicle traffic, lack of public transport, unattractive bike and walking paths and conflicts between users of different vehicles or pedestrians. Themain mobility challenges that can be seen: Raising the awareness of sustainable tourism mobility, developing specific touristic mobility offers and promoting active mobility and multimodality. As a starting point, reliable data, a lively network and a common vision is needed.

Rieka Oldsen (NIT), Good practice examples of sustainable tourist mobility offers:

Bus Alpin is a mobility offer in 20 regions in Switzerland. The customer needs are met with large postbuses, minibuses, bus operations on fixed routes, call buses and they work together with various providers. Alpine Bus services serve rural areas with small villages under 100 inhabitants where the conventional Public Transport services is not provided connecting them to the main tourist destinations in the Jura, the Pre-Alps and the Alps. https://busalpin.ch/

The Texelhopper is implemented on the Isle of Texel, in the Netherlands. It is

a combination of a regular bus line and the flexible use of smaller busses. The Texelhopper offers stop-to-stop flexible transport on the entire island.

Texelhopper has been created to make the public transport system on Texel cheaper and more flexible. https://www.texelhopper.nl/de/

The tourism mobility center in Carinthia in Austria is based on a full service strategy including arrival by public transport, last mile offers, local mobility and marketing and communication with stakeholders. https://tmz-kaernten.at/en/

Short summary of key findings from workshop
Encourage tourists to use more environmentally friendly means of transport!
• There is a strong dependency between mode of transport of arrival and mobilityon-site • Tourists shall be encouraged to use active forms of mobility and to use bus andtrain • Infrastructure needs to work, add new mobility solutions and use all the potentialof the area. • There are already many solutions like pick-ups of hotels, shuttles, minibuses carrying workers, …
Keep tourists for a longer time and/or make them come back!
• Visitors who stay longer in the area, cause less environmental damages (summedup in a year, because there are less arrivals/departures) • Being familiar with the mobility situation at the site, repeat visitors often chooseother means of transport.
Communication and networking is key!
• Example of Carinthia shows that it is a success factor to include good communication and information into the strategy • Important is information on how to arrive with alternative modes of transport and to promote railways and public transport • Giving information on the website is cheap and easy and little effort • Indication of nearest bus stops and line numbers instead of parking spaces • Find commercial partner or high-level constitution to help/support
Take benefits and needs of different target groups into account
• Mobility on site is also important for locals. Maintenance of infrastructure, on- demand service helps locals (including tourism workers) and tourists • The last mile is important in rural areas, as there are no big streets or airports close. • Sustainable mobility offers have to be perceived as better than unsustainable offers.If you want people to change their habits, you must offer a real benefit! (e.g. round trip with different vehicles, getting closer to the hot spot, health, special experience)

Coordinate In cooperation Supported

Gather data on (tourist) mobility!

- The first thing is to measure how tourists come to you, then to develop a strategy.
- The participants agreed that it is important to gather data on tourist mobility in order to find out where it is necessary to act and which needs differenttarget groups have

Any specific good practices / examples that is worth following up on?

- Ireland: Visit the Dingle Peninsula without the car https://www.locallinkkerry.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Dingle-Brochure-FINAL-1.pdf
- Tequila is a Smart Destination and they became one mainly to control the mobility of visitors

  https://tequilainteligente.com/

Suggested next steps to address needs identified through SMARTA-NET/Recommendations

- The Workshop "Sustainable Mobility in Tourism" provided an overview of mobility challenges that rural areas are facing and informed about several good practice examples of sustainable mobility offers. The goal is that people travel to and move around in rural areas in a more sustainable way (less flights and less car usage). Therefore, destinations need attractive offers. They can get inspired by good practice examples of sustainable tourism mobility offers.
- The findings from the discussion with the participants are that the challenges lie in combining arrival mobility and mobility on site, shifting the choice of transport to environmentally friendly means of transport and keeping tourists in the destination for as long as possible. Also, communication is key! It is crucial to improve cooperation and networks and to communicate offers for arrival and on-site before the guests even book their travel.
- Participants wish to integrate the following aspects into the guideline on sustainable tourism mobility which will be developed within the next months: connection between urban and rural places, better connections of routes/cities,on-demand services.

3.1.3 Workshop 3: Rural sensitive SUMPs - a focus on the analyse of current mobility situation – (TIS and Panteia)

The workshop focused on integrating the rural dimension into the design of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and on the analysis of current mobility situation. Presentations highlighted various approaches and case studies. The challenges of incorporating rural mobility into an urban mobility plan were discussed, emphasizing stakeholder engagement and community involvement. The Aveiro Region case study showcased efforts to improve active modes and intermodality, with a focus on rural areas. The importance of analysing the current mobility situation, data collection, and citizen science initiatives was emphasized. Key findings included the need for better public transport services, connectivity between urban centres and greenways, and promoting active mobility options. Examples worth following up on included citizen science data collection, designing cycling routes for rural areas, and involving local and national stakeholders in SUMPs. The workshop highlighted the significance of considering the rural dimension in mobility planning and engaging stakeholders and communities in the process.

TIS & Panteia	
Short description of the workshop (purpose):	
1 - Caitriona Corr (Kilkenny County Council / Ireland), Rural Connections to Kilkenny City. The Challenges of Incorporating Rural Mobility into an Urban Mobility Plan: • One of the SUMP objectives is to facilitate transport for people living in the Kilkenny surrounding rural areas to access the city, which represents 70% of the population • Strong stakeholders and community involvement in the planning process • Barriers identification • Assessment of community concerns, stressing out the fact that the population fearedthe consequences of the plan in terms of limitations to the private car (especially the retailers). *2 – Tiago Pina (TIS/ Portugal), SUMP in Polycentric regions – Aveiro Region case study*: • Mobility and transport plan, designed before the SUMP process guidelines, and updated in 2020 with a focus on the active modes and intermodality, according to the SUMP process • Objective of improving the accessibility, safety and comfort of active modes – to induce a modal shift to active modes • Region with important rural surroundings, predominantly flat (good condition for the active travel) and with a strong cycling tradition, motivated by an important bicycle manufacturing industry However, the region is highly dependent on the private car	

3 – Geert Koops (Panteia/ The Netherlands), Introducing rural sensitive SUMPs. A focus on the analysis of current mobility situation:

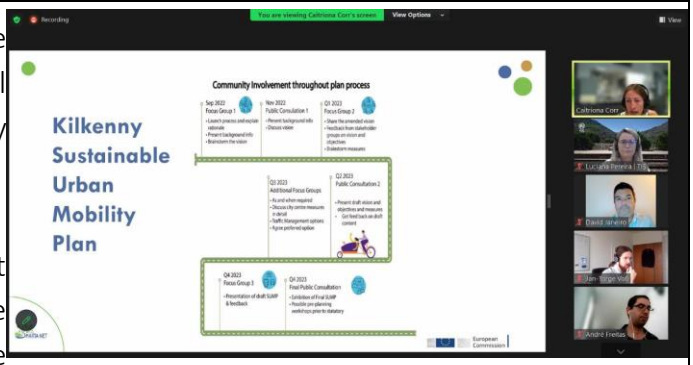
- SUMP guidelines for developing and implementing a sustainable urban mobility plan
- Identification of information sources and cooperation with data owners
- Analyse problems and opportunities

4 – Huib Huyse (KU Leuven University / Belgium), Mobilising the power of citizen science to support the transition to sustainable mobility. The experience of Straarvinken and Straat-O- Sfeer:

- Citizens' mobilisation for traffic counts on a voluntary basis, to support the analysis of current situation
- Storytelling about citizens perceptions on the city liveability

Short summary of key findings from workshop

Rural Connections to Kilkenny City. The Challenges of Incorporating Rural Mobility into an Urban Mobility Plan



One of the SUMP objectives is to facilitate transport for people living in the Kilkenny rural areas to access the city and enhance the city connectivity with its surrounding areas.

However, given the fact that rural mobility is not within the remit of the local authority, the council has very limited authority to manage the public transport.

The SUMP process undertaken involves strong stakeholders and community engagement.

During this process the community has expressed their concerns, such as: the lack of publictransport, as well as the unreliable and infrequent PT services; the difficulties for older people and persons with reduced mobility; from the trader point of view, the business will be devastated if people cannot access them by car.

Kilkenny is an important employment centre in Ireland and 80% of its workforce travels fromoutside their residential area (electoral area).

However, a lack of PT service is perceived in the region, as well as across all Ireland.

Coordinate In cooperation Supported

Housing is disconnected for the main cities, which makes it hard to plan PT services. Some areas are low-income areas, which are forced to car ownership due to low transportaccessibility – leads to social exclusion situations.

Some underlying barriers were identified: large employment centre with long distance commuters, dispersed population, PT is a centralised function, lower level of investment.

Given the fact that Kilkenny is a hub for regional services, retail and recreation, generates several trips from its surrounding rural areas.

Also, there is a large agricultural and agrifood industry, with huge vehicles circulating on theroads – hard for active travel on these roads.

Background: the decision came from a peer review and a group of stakeholders to promoteactive travel. The municipality wanted to engage the community towards an increase on theactive travel and reduce car dependency.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) was one of the stakeholders.

The Cycling Network (city and for the county) stressed out the lack of available funding for the county cycle network.

Key lessons: Better PT services, connect greenways to urban centres, mobility options (e.g. shared mobility) for the commuters on their arrival in the city, interurban services, etc.

SUMP in Polycentric regions – Aveiro Region case study

The Sustainable Mobility Plan for the Aveiro Region was updated in 2020- focused on theactive modes and intermodality components – in accordance with the SUMP guidelines.
The objective of the plan was to improve the accessibility, safety and comfort of active modesand induce a modal shift from car to the active modes and PT.
The region is composed of a mix of urban areas and rural areas, with an important ruralcomponent.

The region is predominantly flat – good condition for active travel and is home for a relevantbicycle manufacturing industry. Its tradition to use the bicycle as a transportation mode leadsto the highest cycling modal split in Portugal (4% in the whole region and 17% in the Murtosamunicipality – Census 2011). However, car dependency is still very high in the region.

The stakeholders were involved in the planning process and a public consultation was held at the end of the project.
The rural dimension was not a requirement, but it was demanded to be integrated indirectly:

- The proposals for cycling routes were developed considering principles for rural areasand a set of proposals were developed integrating solutions from good practices examples in France, in The Netherlands, etc.
- A set of proposals were developed for safety promotion
- And other measures with direct impact, such as push and pull measures to finance active mobility solutions

Introducing rural sensitive SUMPs. A focus on the analysis of current mobility situation

The presentation was focused on the SUMP guidance for the analysis of the mobility situation(step 3), stressing out:

- The importance of the data collection though the identification of the informationsources and establishing good communication with the data owners
- The analysis of problems and opportunities for all transport modes

Identification of the information sources and cooperation with the data owners – establishrelations with those organisations- and collect all data available.

Good examples for data collection from Poland and Germany were shared, as well as goodexamples related to the analysis of problems and opportunities from Sweden and Belgium.

Mobilising the power of citizen science to support the transition to sustainable mobility. The experience of Straarvinken and Straat-O-Sfeer

It is a project involving citizen science, where the citizens were mobilised to do traffic countson an annual basis, for analysing the current situation. Citizens are also invited to tell their story about their streets. The way they perceive the cityand the streets, and to express their emotions about it. They have been asked about how they perceived noise, air quality, climate related questions, etc.

As an example, the storytelling shows that people appreciate the streets more during the lockdown.
A street liveability score has been developed (based on the London example, and adapted tolocal circumstances), using 20 indicators related with traffic, safety, public space quality, pollution, resilience to climate change, among others.
The data is collected by the citizens on paper and sent by post mail or directly uploaded on the platform.
The promotion of these volunteer-based initiatives is carried out by the communitiesthemselves, but they are also broadcasted in the country tv channels and radio.

The traffic counts are communicated by means of a digital map which enables citizens to consult the results by clicking on a street (http://straatvinken.datylon.com/).

Any specific good practices / examples that is worth following up on?

- The analysis of current situation involving citizen science, in which the citizens are mobilised for data collection (traffic counts) and to express their emotions on thelife quality of their streets and cities
- The design of cycling routes in the Aveiro Region, considering principles for ruralareas to connect rural areas and to promote intermodality
- The involvement of local and national stakeholders in the Kilkenny SUMP

Suggested next steps to address needs identified through SMARTA-NET/ Recommendations

- The WS audience referred the importance of experiences exchange

3.2 Feedback on workshops and panel session

The Panel Session was facilitated by Edina Ocsko (E40) and aimed to reflect on the workshop outcomes, at the same time bringing in various perspectives of mobility professionals in rural areas. Panel members included:

- Antonio López De Ávila (UNWTO)
- Mercedes Muñoz (European Greenways Association)
- Alexandra Correia (Alentejo Regional Development Agency)
- Brendan Finn (MemEx)

During the session each workshop facilitator briefly presented the main highlights of the discussion, and panellists were asked to reflect on these from their own perspectives, bringing in their own experience in the following structure:

Feedback from Workshop 1 & 2 mobility challenges & solutions (incl. tourism)

- *What do you see as main mobility & tourism challenges of rural areas from your organisation's perspective?*
- *What inspiring solutions are out there (from workshops or elsewhere)?*

Feedback from Workshop 3 on planning mobility

- *What do you think would be needed for effective mobility planning in and for rural areas?*

Feedback on European networking support

What support is needed from a European level (ERMN and SMARTA-NET)? What's your experience with European networking (synergies with other networks)?

The key points that emerged from the panel discussion are presented in the slide below and can be summarised as follows:

- Clear communication and provision of information is the basis of effective mobility solutions in rural areas. In this context the role of digital tools has been stressed. This includes communication both to local inhabitants and tourists.
- Rural areas are faced by the 'last mile' problem. In order to provide effective services,there is a need for integrated transport systems that harmonise the use of various transport means. For instance, it is important to connect 'greenways' to other transport systems (buses, bike routes, etc.) to reach the final destination.
- The social and local dimensions are critical in rural areas. Mobility is "always about thepeople". It is key to an inclusive society that leaves no one behind. The local dimensionis also critical, solutions need to be found at the very local level, and the contribution
- of local people is crucial. The local dimension should consider both the local people'sneeds but this should be harmonised with eventual tourism needs.
- The cooperation between different levels, from local, through regional to national is very important for providing effective services at the local level; especially the connection between urban and rural areas need to be strengthened.
- Effective mobility planning should be based on evidence and data. Therefore, effectivedata collection is important.
- The maintenance of services is a key question (as many services cease once funding of the projects is no longer provided). Therefore, effective business models should beidentified and shared.

During the closing session the website and its functionalities were briefly presented including the section on the ERMN – encouraging participants to complete the ERMN questionnaire, the section on events – highlighting where to find key information on past and upcoming events, and section that are currently under development and will contain useful practical information – such as the solutions, resources and tools & guidance.

In conclusion, Andrea Lorenzini from MemEx concluded the session by providing an overview of the upcoming ERMN events, with a specific focus on the in-person event scheduled to take place from 10th to 12th October 2023 in Bingen am Rhein, Germany.