

2.5 RezoPouce Hitchhiking (FR)

RezoPouce is an organised **hitch-hiking service** implemented in France and currently active in more than 1800 French municipalities, covering between 10 and 20% of rural France. The service is organised at Municipal level with the support of the RezoPouce association through an **IT platform for subscription** and focuses on short distances trips (75% less than 10 km)



2.5.1 About Hérault Region, France

| Country | Region | Target Area | Population | Population density | Visitors/year |
|---------|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| | | | | | |
| France | Hérault | 6.101 km ²¹¹ | 1.175.623 ¹² | 192,7 inhab./km ² | 52 million tourist-overnight stays in 2019 ¹³ |

Hérault has been deemed the second most attractive region in France by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), with a net migration that has reached +1% between 2014 and 2020¹⁴. This was accompanied by the largest increase in population, in France, within the same timeframe, with 82.000 additional people.

The region is recognized as an attractive tourist destination due to its variation of different landscapes, like the 87km of coastline and the mountainous area in the north, and the presence of the largest vineyard in France.

In 2019, the region registered around 52 million overnight stays, with foreign tourists accounting for 18.3 million, the seasonal distribution being 50% in summer, 26% in spring, 14% in autumn and 10% in winter.

It can be noted that 70% of those stays are distributed along the coastal locations. During 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region saw a drastic reduction in overnight stays between April-May and November – December (period of confinement); while activity during the summer months only saw a slight decline.



Figure 48 – Hérault Region

¹¹ Map of France, [Hérault Department](#)

¹² Insee, [Département de l'Hérault](#) (2019).

¹³ Tourisme Hérault, [Fréquentation annuelle](#) (2019).

¹⁴ Net migration is the difference between the number of people entering and leaving the department Thomas Pinaroli, "Démographie : l'Hérault deuxième département le plus attractif de France" (France bleu, December 2022) (accessed 01.03.2023).

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2.5.2 Description of the Mobility Solution

RezoPouce is a hitch-hiking service implemented in France that covers between 10 and 20% of rural France. The area considered by this overview is Hérault, a region in the southern territory that is known for its varied landscape: beaches in the south, along the Mediterranean coast, and hills of the Cévennes in the north.

The added value of the mobility solution is that it allows users to travel in a rapid, convenient, and extremely cheap way without having their own car. The registration process for both drivers and users eliminates some of the discomfort and safety concerns associated with traditional hitchhiking. The service is organised by the municipalities with the support of the RezoPouce Association upon which it relies for the technological and operational knowhow. Local stakeholders are often involved to reach potential drivers and users in a more efficient manner.

Innovation comes in the form of the partnerships arranged between the providing Association, the municipalities and the regular public transport providers. Noteworthy also is the governance of the RezoPouce Association that does not look for a profit maximizing business model, but instead prioritizes the value for local communities and the needs for people and society.

The mobility solution is mentioned in the “Departmental scheme for improving the accessibility of public services to the public in Hérault” (2021) as an example for the region’s objective of supporting the deployment of alternative carpooling schemes and promoting, and facilitating, the development of carpooling¹⁵.

Main objective of the Mobility Solution

The mobility solution aims to address the lack of mobility for people without a car, and the high cost of public transport, that are characteristic of rural areas. It also aids rural municipalities, which lack knowledge about this modern technology, in setting up this service. Furthermore, it aims at changing the bad view that people have about hitchhiking by introducing a safe registration procedure, with identification of drivers and users, and clear pick-up points.

Target user groups and needs

Originally, in 2009, the mobility solution was created for young people and journeys under 20 km, as a substitute for carpooling. Over the years, the user pool has expanded to comprise all people not having a car at their disposal, between the ages of 16 and 74, with men and women represented equally. The service offers, on their website, a special registration for Senior users.

RezoPouce is mainly used for daily activities, with some people using it as part of their commuting trip to reach a bus stop or railway station.

Involved Bodies

The service is organised by the municipality with assistance from the RezoPouce Association for the technological and operational part. Local stakeholders are in most cases involved to help reach potential users and drivers. Other bodies are involved in the financing aspect, in fact the money derives from: municipalities, the central State, Europe (European Structural funds, Leader, etc.), foundations and companies (e.g. TransDev, who sponsors RezoPouce).

¹⁵ Département de l’Hérault, “[Schéma Départemental d’Amélioration de l’Accessibilité des Services Au Public de l’Hérault](#)” (2021).

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Mobility services provided/addressed

Rezo Pouce is a carpooling service that focuses on short trips and is aimed at those over 16 years old. The shared journey is structured as if it were an organized hitchhiking: there are marked stops where those who need a lift can indicate their presence via the app; the request will be visible to the drivers who pick it up to be part of the journey. To use the service, it is necessary to register on the platform and obtain an identification badge. Those who apply to become drivers will be given a badge to place on the windshield.

The service is free for citizens because the costs are covered by the municipal administrations and the fee that each municipality must pay is calculated based on the number of registered users in its territory.

The implementing entity is the municipality who organises the service with assistance from the RezoPouce Association for the technological and operational part. Together, they decide where to locate the hitchhiking spots (ca. 1 spot every 400 metres in town). Furthermore, RezoPouce trains local municipal employees in organising the registrations and communications. Other bodies are involved in the financing aspect, in fact the money derives from: municipalities, the central State, Europe (European Structural funds, Leader, etc.), foundations and companies (e.g. TransDev, who sponsors RezoPouce).

RezoPouce itself is organised as a cooperative society with a collective interest (SCIC) representing other Associations, (groupings of) municipalities, companies, RezoPouce employees and users. The Association has a General Assembly where these groups are represented. Municipalities are asked whether they want to become a member when they start implementing the service. RezoPouce is a kind of facilitator for a community-based system. Hitchhiking is community based, but the framework, the communication and animation strategy, is offered by the Association.

Ridership and other key metrics/results

In 2018 there were 3.043 stops on a combined territory of 1.305 municipalities with 2 million inhabitants. The number of registered users consist of 50% drivers and passengers, 25% only drivers, 25% only passengers. The average waiting time is of 6 minutes, with 50% being less than 5 minutes, 90% being less than 10 minutes. The registration process is simple, with an effective website and pages dedicated to senior users. Upon signing up, they receive a mobility kit containing destination cards with a list of hitchhiking points, a sticker to put on their car window and a manual.

Supporting technologies

The supporting technologies perform different operations, such as:

- Enable the identification of all drivers and users when subscribing (through requiring a valid ID);
- Provide an APP and a travel information system which allows: to view all hitchhiking spots; register all journey demands and offers and make those visible to drivers and users; visualize the driver's position once a journey is accepted; and provide statistics about the journeys.

The app was subsequently introduced to attract young users and collect data.

Engagement aspects

Engagement is of utmost importance because the service is first organised by the municipality, but then the real drivers are members of the community; therefore, the practical service is offered by local community members. Partnerships between regular PT services and RezoPouce are organised at several places to improve PT performance (e.g. Mas in "les Landes").

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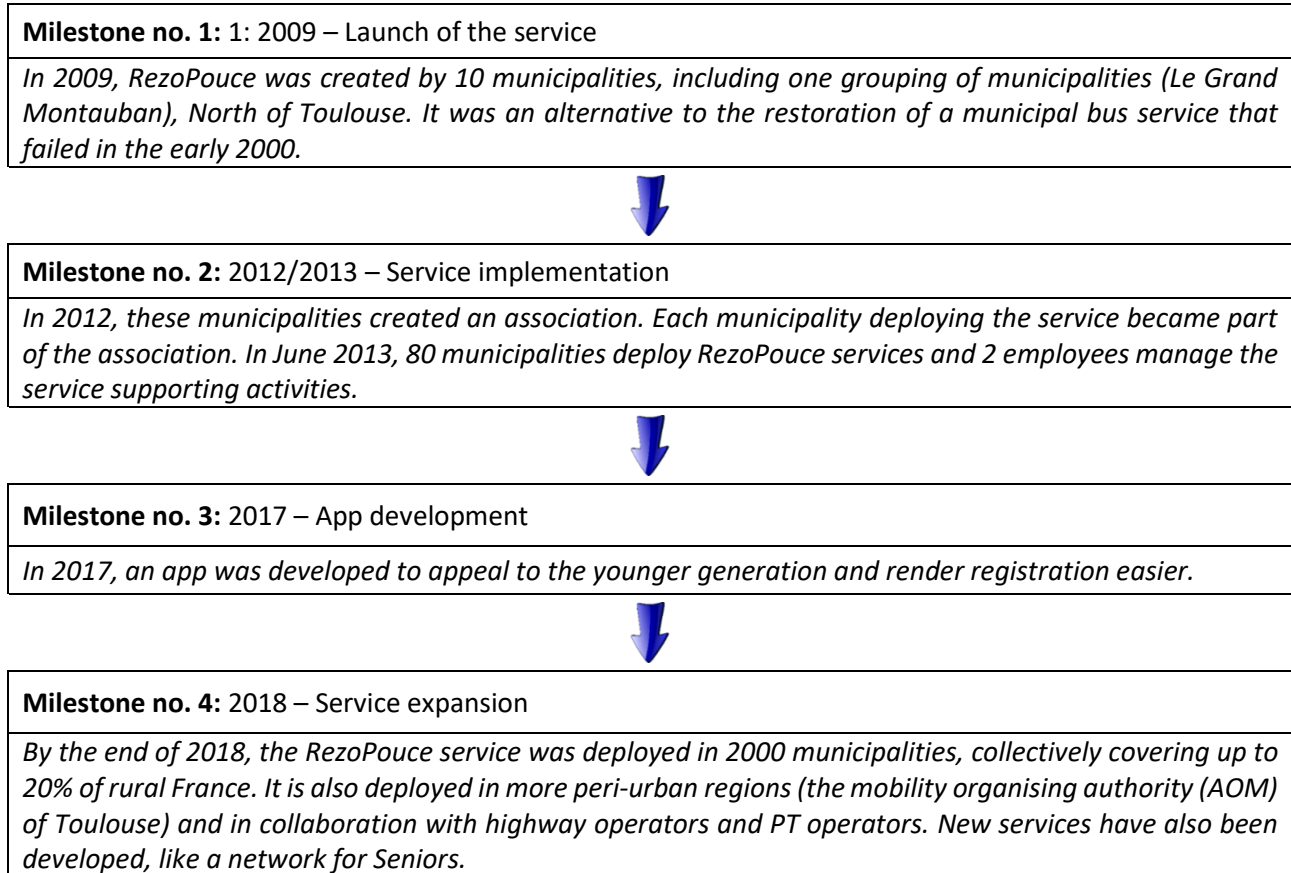
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2.5.3 Timelines and Milestones



2.5.4 Long-term assessment

Success, Durability and Expansion

The service is still operating, and it only seems to be growing. It is now present in over 2000 municipalities across France, covering between 10 and 20% of rural France. The service is not about generating revenue and maximizing profits; it is about providing a service for people who need it and therefore heavily relies on a sense of community and users wanting to help other members of the community.

Drivers do not get paid for the service; it is a service that is truly meant to help the community.

By allowing municipalities to be the main body responsible for the implementation, it allows tailoring the service to the specific territorial context and maximizing its usefulness for the community.

Funding and financing

- Capital costs: The main capital cost incurred is that of developing the service, and designing the website and app.

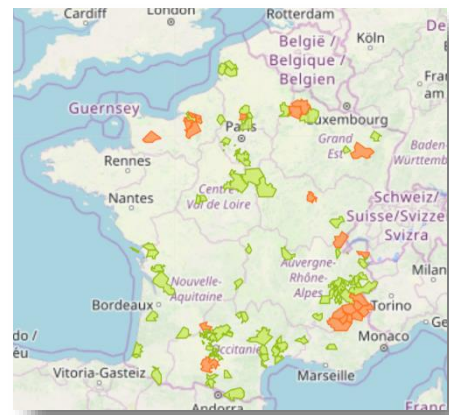


Figure 49 – Areas of service implementation

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- Operating costs: The operational association budget is 400.000 EUR. The money comes from the municipalities, the central State, Europe (European Structural funds, Leader, etc.), foundations and companies (e.g. TransDev who is a sponsor of RezoPouce). The service is provided for free for its users and drivers do not get paid.

Why is it considered a Good Practice?

The pilot is well integrated in a broader vision of sustainable mobility as well at local as at departmental level. The aim of the broader vision is to reduce individual car use for different types of trips. Setting up the RezoPouce service has the aim to reduce car use on the short distances and for the trips to Montpellier. It also seeks to contribute to greater cohesion in the local communities and provide mobility solutions to people that have no mobility solution now

2.5.5 Transferability considerations

| CONTEXT PECULIARITIES | TRANSFERABILITY CONDITIONS |
|---|--|
| <p>For the service to work, there need to be at least a significant number of people willing to act as drivers; therefore, a location inhabited by an older population, without a driver’s license/car, might not benefit as much from this service.</p> | <p>Municipalities need to have the resources to organise this type of service and be able to cooperate with the association (RezoPouce). There needs to be strong communication and awareness campaigns within the community to render this service a success.</p> |
| DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED/WEAKNESS | LESSONS LEARNT |
| <p>The main difficulty is dealing with the bad reputation surrounding hitchhiking. Furthermore, currently RezoPouce is facing difficulties in its expansion with regards to financial support, due to the lack of staff, time, and difficulty of access to funding which require a strong expertise which a small organisation cannot always have. This is something that must be kept in mind.</p> | <p>The main lesson to be learnt is that if you give people the possibility to provide a service for others, with the right publicity and communication, this might be a success. Furthermore, it shows how technology might be useful in removing barriers if developed properly (e.g. specific networks for Seniors).</p> |

References for further details

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Main data sources

SMARTA, [RezoPouce Good practice](#)

EUROMONTANA, [Rezo Pouce, hitch-hiking to improve rural mobility.](#)

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