

THEMATIC IMPACT PAPER - TRANSPORT

CENTRAL EUROPE – CENTRAL TO EUROPE – CENTRAL TO EUROPEAN TRANSPORT

Located at the core of the EU, Central Europe is a key transport hub in the EU. Its territory is crossed by eight out of the nine TEN-T corridors. Three of the most important trans-European road and railway axes (Baltic-Adriatic, Rhine-Danube and Orient/East-Med) cross through at least five countries in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) Programme area.

Evidence suggests that cross-border accessibility is still considered a barrier, particularly in the case of rail transport, as most investments in infrastructure are focused on improving connectivity at national level. Multimodal passenger transport is confined to local, regional, or national levels and services are highly fragmented. Their integration faces numerous challenges, including legal and commercial barriers, taxes and charges or proprietary software.

Across the Programme area, outside the TEN-T network, access to quality transport services is low, leaving communities, particularly in rural, coastal or remote areas, sometimes disconnected from the rest of the country. The so-called ‘first and last miles’ are often a problem for those who live far from urban centres, emphasizing the social role of the public transport services, besides contributing to effective mobility.

Freight transport has continued to grow and is expected to do so by as much as 80% until 2050, much of it by road, hindering EU-level efforts to gradually shift to rail transport, which would help to combat climate change and would cause fewer negative externalities (accidents, pollution, congestions etc.). Multimodal transport has however increased during 2014-2020, but important challenges remain in terms multimodal accessibility, with Western countries being better endowed.

Cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders in the transport sector have remained challenging, due to the large number of operators and service providers, lack of trust and high

competition, lack of experience or expertise, different legal framework. Different legal or governance obstacles, technical (such as power systems, signalling) further prevent the effective cooperation in the field of transport.

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) Programme 2014-2020, a European Union funding programme that supports transnational cooperation in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, several regions in Germany, Hungary, Northern Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, produced positive effects for the transport sector in the CE region. It contributed to increasing the capacity of the stakeholders, building trust beyond national borders, and delivering new and high-quality services to improve transport and mobility in the central Europe area, while also helping to make it environmentally more sustainable.

THE PROGRAMME’S FOCUS ON TRANSPORT

From 2014 to 2020, the Interreg CE Programme addressed the transport related challenges of Central Europe through its dedicated Specific Objective 4.1 “To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks” and Specific Objective 4.2 “To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions”.

Under Specific Objective 4.1, the supported projects focused on improving planning and coordination for regional passenger transport systems, taking into consideration the specificities of the different territories, particularly peripheral and rural regions, and the needs of particular target groups, such as the youth. Other topics included smart regional mobility and intelligent transport systems, transport management around secondary nodes and transport links within and across border regions. The programme interventions responded to the various challenges and contextual developments in the CE region, such as those related to rapid urbanization, demographic shifts,

including an ageing population and changing transport demand patterns and mobility needs,





persistent economic disparities, and differences in regulatory frameworks and technical standards.

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE – TRANSPORT

16 projects to focus on CE transport

9 countries connected by transnational activities

The programme's contribution to CE connectivity

-  **146 strategies and action plans** to improve transport connection within CE
-  **43 tools** to better coordinate transport activities
-  **142 pilot actions** to demonstrate the benefits of connecting the CE regions
-  **86 trainings** to enhance skills for improving the management of CE transport

118 project partners engaging in transport cooperation

28 million Euro from the ERDF to support CE connectivity

The programme's impact on the CE transport

-  **116 million Euro of additional investment** in the transport sector
-  **388 CE institutions** adopted the new or improved strategies, tools or services
-  **387 CE institutions** applied the **new tools**
-  **1,200 persons** received training to improve transport related skills
-  **105 new jobs** were created

Under Specific Objective 4.2, the projects focused on improving capacities and coordination for intermodal transport across borders, including multimodal freight transport systems. The financed projects also delivered solutions to environmental challenges, such as climate change and the need for sustainable transport options, have explored new opportunities for innovation and demonstrated the effectiveness of different approaches to the design of networks and business models.

THE PROGRAMME HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON TRANSPORT IN THE REGION, IMPROVING MOBILITY, CONNECTIVITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY, AND PROMOTING CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND HARMONIZATION

The Interreg CE Programme 2014-2020 produced significant and a wide variety of positive results to address the transport related needs of the Central European regions and cities.

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 effectively contributed to **increasing the knowledge and implementation** of the public sector and related entities and other transport stakeholders. This improved the **coordinated**

planning capacities of these institutions for regional passenger transport systems and the coordination among freight transport stakeholders to promote multimodal environmentally friendly freight solutions. In turn, this improvement in the coordinated planning capacities of the respective institutions contributed to **enhancing the transport connections** in Central Europe, in particular for rural and peripheral areas.

The Programme increased the **stakeholders' capacity and built trust beyond national borders** in the transport and mobility sector. This led to an increase in **cooperation across borders** in Central Europe, aligning practices and achieving positive outcomes (lower costs, lower emissions). The cooperation also gave the entities participating in the Programme access to **networks** of relevant stakeholders. Many times, this led to **continuous forms of collaboration**. Partnerships from projects such as RUMOBIL were continued in other initiatives, such as Youmobil. The RegiaMobil project, built on the results of four Interreg CE projects (RUMOBIL, SubNodes, Shareplace, Connect2CE), as well as HORIZON 2020 initiatives related to smart public transport (MaaS4EU, MoTiV, SIADe) and implemented a downstream approach that demonstrated the transferability and added

value of smart public transport approaches for better mobility services in rural areas.

The Interreg CE transport projects supported sustainable transport and mobility and developing **multimodal transport solutions**. They also **supported urban and regional planning**, and rural and peripheral development through improved transport connections. Projects such as ChemMultimodal, Peripheral Access, and RegiaMobil contributed to the development of efficient, sustainable, and multimodal transport systems that integrate different modes of transport and promote intermodal connectivity.

Interreg CE 2014-2020 programme effects to connect Central Europe

- 1 Increased knowledge of the public sector and related entities and other transport stakeholders
- 2 Improved coordinated urban and regional planning capacities
- 3 Improved stakeholders' capacity and trust beyond national borders
- 4 Increased cooperation across borders in Central Europe
- 5 Improved cross-border transport links
- 6 Access to networks of relevant stakeholders
- 7 Better prospects for sustainable transport and mobility
- 8 New solutions for multimodal transport
- 9 Increase in the attractiveness of alternative modes of transport
- 10 Improved quality and availability of transport services

The Interreg CE projects' outputs helped improving **cross-border transport links**, for example by reducing bottlenecks and improving the accessibility and efficiency of transport services in Central. In this respect, the TRANS-BORDERS project supported the development of new bus connections between Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland, improving the accessibility of remote areas and enhancing cross-border cooperation.

The Programme also supported the use of **alternative modes of transport** such as cycling, walking, ride-sharing services or through the creation of demand-responsive public transport solutions in peripheral/rural areas. This reduced the reliance on private cars and promoting sustainable mobility choices.

The Interreg CE projects' activities helped improving the **harmonisation of regulatory frameworks** and technical standards across borders. For example, projects such as TalkNET.

Overall, for the communities participating in one of the Interreg CE transport projects their engagement led to an **improvement in the quality and availability of transport services**, including better connections, safer and more attractive bus stops, improved timetables, easier and faster ticketing, easy identification of routes. It also helped local and regional authorities to improve their capacities for planning and implementing efficient and attractive public transport services.

THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSED IMPORTANT EU TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES, IMPROVED TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE AND MORE

While focussing on their originally intended tasks the Programme and the projects produced a significant value added.

Interreg CE transport projects created **several synergies and multiplication effects**, through using the outputs and results in European national and regional initiatives and policies. These include, for example, the EU Horizon Programme, the Oder Partnership, several EU Macro-Regional Strategies, in particular for the Alpine region, the Danube region and the Adriatic and Ionian region. Synergies were also created with other Interreg Programmes (e.g. Interreg Adrion, Interreg Italy-Slovenia) or with mainstream projects funded through the EU Cohesion Policy (for example the Szczecin Metropolitan Railway, in Poland).

Consequently, through their activities the Interreg CE transport projects addressed **strategically important issues at the European, national and regional level**. This includes enabling the implementation of the EU Macro-Regional Strategies, by addressing key challenges related to transport, mobility, and accessibility, and promoting sustainable and integrated transport solutions and services.

Projects also supported EU policies such as the EU Green Deal. For instance, projects like RegiaMobil, Peripheral Access, and COMODALCE developed innovative and sustainable transport solutions, such as multimodal transport systems, intelligent transport systems, and sustainable urban mobility plans. These contribute to achieving the objectives of the **EU Green Deal**. Several projects promoted digitalisation and innovation, while others promoted social inclusion and cohesion, all of which are key policy priorities for the EU. Many Interreg CE transport projects promoted the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular regarding the goals of “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, “Climate Action” and “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure” – the latter through supporting the modal shift from road to rail transport in Central Europe region, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

The Interreg CE 2014-2020 transport value added

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Synergetic and multiplication effects
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Addressed strategically important issues at the EU, national and regional level
- 
Secured additional funding
- 
Generated new partnerships and cooperations
- 
Improved transport governance in Central Europe
- 
Learning and exchanging solutions across borders
- 
Supported a wide range of authorities
- 
Improved transport and mobility in urban and rural peripheral areas

Most projects succeeded in securing **additional funding**; this ensured the continuation of their activities. Projects have also been successful in **generating other partnerships** or cooperations with and outside the context of the Interreg CE programme. This is illustrated by the Interreg CE RUMOBIL project, where some former partners came back together to implement projects in the Baltic Sea Region Programme (MAMBA and MARA).

The Interreg CE projects were important factors in **improving** the transport **governance** in Central Europe, by strengthening coordination, both horizontally (e.g. between regions within and across national borders) and vertically (e.g. between regional and national authorities) and among multiple types of actors.

The coordination and cooperation in the Interreg CE programme allowed partners to **learn, and exchange transport related ideas and solutions**. Adding to this, interpersonal relationships and lasting cooperation structures were established and are main benefits of transnational cooperation that could not be generated elsewhere.

The gain of experience and knowledge effectively contributed to the **change of practices** at the organisational level, for example concerning freight transport or at the individual level, for example through improved public transport services. Through this, the end-users’ **attitudes towards public transport** services were changed in a positive direction.

The Interreg CE transport projects produced a **significant value added** for local and regional public authorities, transport operators and freight transport stakeholders. Many additional target groups were engaged or benefited directly from the project activities, such as business support organisations, infrastructure and (public) service providers, sectoral agencies, and enterprises, educational institutions, as well as the commuters and citizens.

Likewise, from a geographic perspective, the projects focused on improving transport and mobility in **urban nodes**, as cities are often the epicentre of economic activity and transportation demand. Other projects addressed specific issues related to **rural areas**, such as improving connectivity by better connecting sparsely populated peripheral areas to the primary, secondary or tertiary transport networks or enhancing the sustainability of agricultural practices. Another set of projects focussed on promoting cooperation and coordination across borders, particularly in areas where cross-border mobility and transport is a key issue.

SUMMARY

The Interreg CE Programme 2014-2020 **responded well to the various transport related challenges** in the CE region. The Programme implemented projects that addressed key issues in the Central Europe, related to rapid urbanization, demographic shifts, including an ageing population and changing transport demand patterns and mobility needs, persistent economic disparities, and differences in regulatory frameworks and technical standards. The projects also delivered solutions to environmental challenges, such as climate change and the need for sustainable transport options.

Overall, the Interreg CE projects were successful in developing smart mobility solutions and services to connect regions to transport nodes through improved standards and interoperability. Also, the Programme helped increasing the knowledge and implementation/ planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for linking regional passenger transport systems to national and TEN-T networks. By enabling international cooperation, the Programme contributed to improving the coordination among stakeholders to increasing the share of multimodal environmentally-friendly freight transport.

Moreover, the transnational exchange in CE was vital for increasing the knowledge and implementation capacities of freight transport stakeholders for multimodal environmentally friendly freight transport systems and logistics. At the same time, CE cooperation also helped improving policy and decision-making for developing regional passenger transport systems, enhancing transport links for passengers and freight, promoting smart mobility systems, and increasing accessibility for more vulnerable target groups.

Thus, overall, the Programme's support of connectivity was important for consolidating the enabling factors of territorial cohesion, such as cooperation, coordination, and governance in Central Europe.