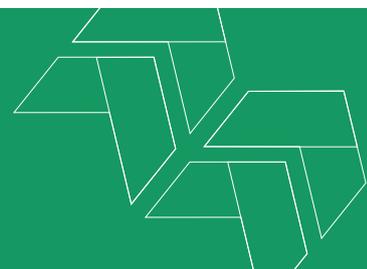


INTERREGIONAL SUMMARY FACTSHEET ON EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON FTS IN LAST MILE PROJECT



The Last Mile project aimed at finding sustainable, flexible transport systems (FTS) for the last mile in the transport chain in tourism. The COVID-19 pandemic and the prescribed measures to curb its spread had an impact on activities outside the home and, accordingly, on mobility, causing a decrease in the use of transport systems in general and in FTS in particular.

In addition, **the effects of the pandemic on mobility are closely related to its strong impact on tourism**, since, in most cases, the project's FTS are implemented in tourist spots of the participant regions, e.g., national parks. In this sense, in many regions and especially at the beginning of the pandemic, tourism came to a standstill, aggravating the lack of passengers for FTS: 2020 marked an absolute minimum of visitors to all sites (-34% on average), especially of foreign visitors. In 2021, most regions recorded a year-on-year improvement in visitor numbers although without recovering their pre-pandemic figures (-29% on average). In addition, all regions noted a significant rise in local tourism, at least in percentage terms, creating new and different challenges for them. In most cases, some of the transformations in tourism that the pandemic has entailed are still visible today, such as the trend towards shorter trips, smaller groups of tourists, or the reduction in the number of organised trips.

GENERAL MEANS OF TRANSPORT

PRIVATE MOTORIZED TRANSPORT

During lockdown there was significantly less mobility and this affected all transport systems, including car traffic (-25.6% on average¹), however, we have observed that, in general, **when mobility did occur, it was more often undertaken by private cars**; this is especially true when referring to longer trips.

WALKING AND CYCLING

People seem to have **switched to active modes for shorter trips** and, compared to other modes of transport, partners have witnessed an increase in the use of bicycles. However, we do not have precise figures for this increase. Accordingly, most regions have taken advantage of the situation to promote active modes: opening of new bike rental companies, improvement of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and encouragement of multimodality.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The decline in the demand has been more severe than in other transport modes as people preferred not to use collective modes to minimize the risk of infection: on average, from 2019 to 2020, there was a 28% decrease² in the use of PT in the project regions and the decrease is predicted to be even higher in 2021. As for PT supply, in general, it has been maintained, although, service frequencies have decreased. In a few cases, services have stopped operating for a while due to restrictions and/or low demand.

FLEXIBLE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS (FTS)

The loss of confidence in PT has resulted in a **general loss of customers also for the last mile solutions**, especially during the hard phase of the pandemic (beginning and mid 2020). However, the situation varies from region to region in the more relaxed periods.

DEMAND

- **In East Tyrol, Austria**, demand responsive transport has suffered a severe decrease [even more significant than that of conventional PT], while demand of e-carsharing has increased during the pandemic.
- **In Slovakia** there has been a decrease in the use of seasonal trains, but it has been less severe than in general PT due to an increase in domestic tourism.
- **Varna, Bulgaria**, has also registered a significant decline in the use of their FTS, but they cannot compare it to conventional PT as there is no separate monitoring of the seasonal bus lines, which are part of the municipal bus fleet.

¹ 3 regions provided data

² 4 regions provided data

LAST MILE – Let's travel the last mile together! 

DEMAND

- **In Catalonia**, the train line from Lleida to La Pobla de Segur has suffered a significant decrease in demand, while the decrease has been milder for the taxi associations and especially the buses of the National Park, which have even recorded some peaks in passenger flow during the pandemic due to the rise in local tourism.
- **Upper Sûre Nature Park** has received less tourists per day due to COVID-19 restrictions, so the demand for FTS has also been lower than expected, however, there are no statistics as the FTS were introduced in the last two years.

SUPPLY

Some of the FTS **stopped operating completely during the hard lockdown** (e.g., DRT in East Tyrol in April 2020; seasonal trains in the Slovak Paradise in winter 2021); in other cases, services **reduced their frequencies and/or capacity** to adapt to service demand and COVID-19 restrictions (e.g., seasonal bus lines in Varna; specific train line and taxi associations in Catalonia); other services **remained stable and did not undergo any changes** in supply at all (e.g., Upper Sûre Nature Park shuttle services in Luxemburg); finally, some services even **increased the number of vehicles, their frequencies and/or capacity and implemented new routes** to adapt to occasional increases in tourism (especially domestic) and demand for their services (e.g., e-carsharing in Austria, the seasonal tourist trains in Slovakia in 2020, the buses in the NP in Catalonia).

To keep the spread of the virus as low as possible, different have been implemented. There has been a **tendency to incorporate digitization measures**, with the aim of reducing personal contact as much as possible. For example, real-time information systems, online booking systems, e-ticketing sale and other payment systems, etc. In general, these measures have received positive feedback from end-users and operators of transport systems intend to keep them once the pandemic is over. On the other hand, **all regions have implemented safety measures** in transport systems, such as regular disinfection of vehicles, reduction of allowed capacity, closure of the first row of seats, etc. Most operators do not expect to maintain all these measures once the COVID-19 situation ends.

Finally, feedback from stakeholders on their **experiences and impressions of how the pandemic was managed** varied widely across regions:

- Approximately equal number of regions represented by their stakeholders believe that:
 - # there was / was not a coordinated strategy in place for the management of transport systems in the region during the pandemic;
 - # this strategy helped / helped not maintain PT systems;
 - # collaboration among stakeholders increased / decreased during the crisis.
- On average, regions represented by their stakeholders did not increase the dissemination of transport options during the crisis (79%).
- On average, regions represented by stakeholders did receive feedback from end-users regarding the operation of transport systems in their region during the crisis (60%) and this feedback was predominantly positive (75%).

THE PROJECT PARTNERS



ALL ABOUT LAST MILE AT:
www.interregeurope.eu/lastmile

THE FULL ANALYSIS IS FREELY AVAILABLE AT THE PROJECT WEBSITE

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