URBACT IV Action Planning Network

Final IAP Report

Beyond the Urban Network

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INDEX

Executive Summary

Beyond the Urban is a transnational network of ten European cities working across urban and rural areas to address a shared challenge. Mobility systems designed around private car use have left many rural, peri-urban, and suburban communities with limited access to services, education, employment, and social life. These patterns also weaken climate action and territorial cohesion.

Over more than two years, partners from Treviso, Tartu, Machico, Hradec Králové, Santa Maria da Feira, Bram, Kocani, Osona, Szabolcs 05, and Bucharest–Ilfov collaborated to rethink mobility at the urban–rural interface. Despite differences in geography, scale, and governance, all ten partners recognised that improving rural–urban mobility requires more than infrastructure investment. It calls for integrated action combining spatial planning, governance coordination, behavioural change, and community engagement.

The network adopted an everyday-life approach. Rather than starting with large-scale projects, partners focused on daily routines, short trips, and the social realities of mobility. Through participatory processes, temporary pilots, and iterative learning, areas tested small-scale interventions that made sustainable mobility more visible, usable, and socially accepted. These experiments built evidence and confidence, enabling successful approaches to be embedded into longer-term strategies and planning frameworks, and consolidated in each partner's Integrated Action Plan.

A key outcome was a shift in how mobility is understood. Partners moved from treating mobility as a technical transport issue to recognising it as a social system linked to inclusion, safety, public space, education, and quality of life. Schools emerged as strategic entry points, regional cooperation proved essential for continuity, and storytelling became a powerful tool for building shared understanding and political support.

The network produced two collective outputs. The Rural Urban Connections Toolkit translates the network's learning into a practical guide with step-by-step guidance, real examples, and ready-to-use tools. A complementary network video captures the voices, places, and experiences of partners, highlighting the human dimension of rural–urban mobility transformation.

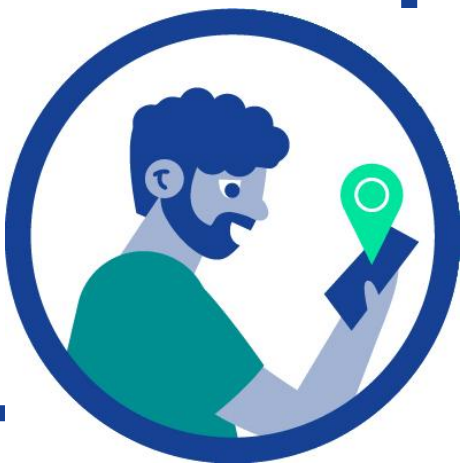
Beyond the Urban shows that meaningful change can begin with modest, well-designed actions. By engaging communities, testing ideas, and integrating learning into policy, cities can move toward more inclusive, sustainable, and connected mobility systems. This offers a transferable pathway for areas seeking to bridge the urban and rural divide.

Dr Clyde Hutchinson
Lead Expert

1.

Introduction

Beyond the Urban rationale



1.1. WELCOME TO BEYOND THE URBAN

Across Europe, the relationship between cities and their surrounding rural areas is becoming increasingly complex. Economic activity, access to services, education, healthcare, and leisure are no longer confined within administrative boundaries.

Residents of villages and small towns depend on nearby urban centres, while cities rely on rural areas for labour, resources, ecosystemic and social balance. Yet mobility systems have not evolved at the same pace as these interdependencies.

Beyond the Urban was created in response to this gap. The network recognises that mobility is one of the most critical factors shaping how urban and rural areas function together. When mobility systems fail to connect places in a reliable, safe, and inclusive way, the consequences are far-reaching: social exclusion increases, access to opportunity becomes uneven, and environmental impacts intensify.

In Beyond the Urban Network 10 cities joined to share their unique yet shared challenges and illustrate the diversity of rural and small towns in Europe.

Partners overview

Treviso in Italy is a historic city surrounded by a dense ring of villages and agricultural lands.

Tartu in Estonia serves a wide area of villages and small towns with long school commutes.

Szabolcs 05 in Hungary consists of small villages with limited transport options.

Santa Maria da Feira in Portugal manages mobility across twenty one parishes.

Osona in Spain must coordinate mobility across more than fivety municipalities.

Machico in Madeira faces steep topography and scattered settlements.

Kocani in North Macedonia relies heavily on children walking from hillside settlements.

Hradec Králové in Czechia connects multiple villages through a regional transport hub.

Bucharest-Ilfov in Romania spans metropolitan and rural contexts with regional mobility needs

Bram in France uses strong community networks to encourage active travel.

1.2. RURBAN AREAS AS A SHARED EUROPEAN REALITY

The network starts from the understanding that many European areas are neither fully urban nor fully rural; they are *rurban*.

> ***Rurban* areas are places where low-density settlements coexist with urban functions**, where daily life involves frequent movement between villages, towns, and cities, and where mobility needs are diverse and often poorly served.

In these areas, distances may be short, but alternatives to the car are limited or perceived as impractical. Walking and cycling routes are often fragmented at municipal boundaries. Public transport services may exist but lack frequency, coordination, or clear information. For children, older people, and those without access to a car, this results in restricted autonomy and reduced quality of life.

Beyond the Urban brings these rurban realities to the centre of policy discussion, addressing a gap that is often overlooked in urban-focused mobility initiatives or rural development programmes.

Why mobility is the entry point

Mobility was chosen as the network's core theme because it sits at the intersection of multiple policy objectives.

- It directly affects **climate and environmental** goals through emissions and energy use.
- It **shapes inclusion** by determining who can access education, healthcare, employment, and social life, with unequal impacts across gender, care responsibilities, and income.
- It influences **public space, safety, and wellbeing**, particularly for children and older people.
- It also reflects **governance quality**, as effective mobility requires coordination across sectors and jurisdictions.

The baseline analysis carried out at the start of the network confirmed that mobility challenges were both a cause and a symptom of wider territorial imbalance. Car dependency was not simply a transport issue, but a reflection of planning patterns, service distribution, and limited alternatives. Addressing mobility therefore offered a practical way to unlock broader change.

1.3. BEYOND THE URBAN APPROACH TO RURBAN OWN REALITIES

A different approach to action planning

Beyond the Urban differs from traditional mobility initiatives in its approach. Rather than starting with large infrastructure projects or technical optimisation, the network focuses on everyday life and incremental change.

Partners began by observing daily routines, short trips, and informal practices, such as school journeys, shopping trips, and access to public spaces. These everyday movements revealed where systems failed and where small interventions could have disproportionate impact.

The network emphasised experimentation over prescription. Temporary small-scale actions, low-cost interventions, and co-created solutions allowed partners to test ideas, gather feedback, and build evidence before committing to permanent change. This approach reduced risk, increased political confidence, and strengthened community ownership.

Shared challenges, diverse contexts

While the ten partner areas vary significantly in size, geography, and governance, their challenges show strong commonalities.

- Metropolitan areas face **complexity and fragmentation** across operators and municipalities.
- Smaller towns and rural areas struggle with **limited resources**, **ageing populations**, and declining **services**.
- Coastal and mountainous areas face **physical constraints** that affect walkability and accessibility.
- Historic centres must balance **heritage protection** with mobility needs.

The network created a space where these differences could be explored productively. Partners did not seek to replicate solutions, but to understand principles that could be adapted to local context. This peer-learning environment allowed cities to move beyond isolated problem-solving and toward shared strategic thinking.

Building capacity for long-term change

Beyond the Urban was **not only about defining actions, but about strengthening local capacity**. Through structured exchange, facilitated reflection, and collective learning, partners developed new skills in participation, piloting, monitoring, and storytelling. These capacities are essential for sustaining change beyond the lifetime of a single project.

The network's rationale is therefore twofold. It responds to urgent mobility challenges in rurban areas, and it equips cities with the methods and confidence to address these challenges in an integrated and participatory way.

2.

Territorial Challenges and Baseline Analysis

How everyday mobility falls short and where change can begin.

2.1. TERRITORIAL CHALLENGES

The starting point for Beyond the Urban was a shared diagnostic exercise aimed at understanding how mobility functions in rurban areas and why existing systems often fail to meet everyday needs.

While each partner territory has its own geographic, social, and institutional context, the baseline analysis revealed a set of structural challenges that recur across very different European regions:

- Car dependency
- Space and governance fragmentation
- Unequal access to services
- Social inequalities
- Perception barriers
- Cultural lack of confidence
- Low experimentation
- Untapped local knowledge
- Undetected social capital

Car dependency as a systemic condition

Across all partner areas, private car use dominates daily mobility. This is particularly evident for short trips, including journeys to school, local shopping, and access to services. In many cases, **distances are not long, but the conditions for walking, cycling, or using public transport are perceived as unsafe, inconvenient, or unreliable**. As a result, the car becomes the default option, even where alternatives technically exist.

The baseline analysis showed that this dependency is not driven solely by personal preference. It is the outcome of long-term planning patterns that prioritised road access, dispersed land use, and functional separation. In rurban contexts, these patterns are amplified by low density, limited service frequency, and infrastructure gaps at municipal boundaries.

Space and governance fragmentation

A second major challenge identified in the baseline is fragmentation. **Mobility networks often stop at administrative borders, even though daily life does not.** Cycling routes end abruptly when moving from one municipality to another. Public transport services are planned separately by different authorities, leading to poor coordination of timetables, ticketing, and information. In metropolitan areas, this fragmentation occurs at scale, while in rural areas it manifests as isolated services that fail to form a usable network.

Governance fragmentation reinforces these spatial breaks. Responsibilities for roads, public transport, schools, and public space are frequently divided between institutions with different mandates and priorities. This makes integrated solutions harder to design and implement, particularly in areas with limited administrative capacity.

Unequal access and social impact

The baseline highlighted that mobility constraints have uneven social impacts. **Children, young people, older residents, people with disabilities,and, generally, all those without access to a car, as well as their caregivers, are disproportionately affected.** In several areas, school journeys emerged as a critical pressure point. Parents rely heavily on car trips because walking and cycling routes are unsafe or discontinuous, creating congestion and reinforcing car dependency across generations.

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For older residents and people with reduced mobility, unclear information, inaccessible stops, and long transfer times further restrict autonomy. In rural areas, this can lead to isolation and reduced access to essential services. These issues link mobility directly to inclusion, health, and quality of life.

Perception and confidence as barriers

Beyond physical infrastructure, the baseline revealed the importance of perception. **Even where walking, cycling, or public transport options exist, residents often lack confidence in using them**. This is due to poor wayfinding, inconsistent service information, safety concerns, and a lack of visible role models. In many partner areas, sustainable mobility is not part of everyday culture, particularly outside urban centres.

This lack of confidence creates a feedback loop. **Low usage leads to limited political support** for investment, which in turn reinforces the perception that alternatives to the car are not viable.

Limited space for experimentation

Another recurring issue identified in the baseline is the **limited use of experimentation in mobility planning**. Many areas rely on long-term plans and fixed designs, leaving little room to test ideas, learn from failure, or adapt solutions to local conditions. This increases risk aversion and slows down innovation, particularly in smaller municipalities with constrained budgets.

Partners recognised that without opportunities to test solutions and demonstrate change, it is difficult to build support among residents, elected officials, and technical departments.

Untapped local knowledge and social capital

Despite these challenges, the baseline also identified significant assets. **Local communities possess deep knowledge of daily routes, informal practices, and seasonal patterns**. Schools, associations, and local events offer existing networks that can support engagement and co-creation. In several areas, there is strong willingness among residents to improve safety, accessibility, and quality of life, provided they are involved in shaping solutions.

However, this social capital is often underused in traditional planning processes, which tend to rely on formal consultations rather than ongoing collaboration.

2.2. FROM DIAGNOSE TO OPPORTUNITY

The baseline analysis did not only describe problems. It also revealed opportunities for change. Short trip distances, strong community ties, and growing awareness of climate and health issues create favourable conditions for a shift toward more sustainable mobility.

The challenge lies in translating these opportunities into **practical, coordinated action that respects local context**. This analysis set the foundation for the network's strategic response. It highlighted the need for an approach that addresses **infrastructure, governance, behaviour, and culture together,** and that allows cities to move from diagnosis to action through learning, testing, and adaptation.

3.

Network Vision and Strategic Objectives

A common direction for transforming everyday movement across urban rural areas.

3.1. NETWORK VISION

The vision of Beyond the Urban responds directly to the structural challenges identified through the baseline analysis. Partners recognised that rurban mobility cannot be improved through isolated projects or single-sector solutions. Instead, it requires a long-term shift in how mobility is understood, planned, and experienced across urban and rural interfaces.

A shared vision grounded in everyday life

The network's vision is to create rurban mobility systems that support everyday life rather than constrain it. This means enabling people to access education, services, work, and social activities without being forced to rely on private cars. It also means ensuring that children, older people, and those without access to a car can move safely and independently within and between settlements.

> **A successful rurban mobility system is one where short trips feel safe and comfortable on foot or by bicycle, where public transport is understandable and reliable, and where transfers between modes are easy.**

Rather than aiming for abstract performance targets alone, the vision is grounded in lived experience. It is based on a mobility system that **reflects local identity and geography**, whether in a dense historic centre, a mountainous coastal town, or a dispersed rural area.

3.2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Emerging from shared territorial challenges

From this vision, the network defined a set of strategic objectives that translate ambition into action. The objectives set out are as follows:

First objective:

Reduce structural car dependency by making sustainable mobility options more practical for daily trips. This does not imply eliminating car use, but rather ensuring that alternatives are viable, especially for short distances and routine journeys such as school trips or access to local services.

Second objective:

Improve connectivity across urban–rural boundaries. The aim is to ensure that administrative boundaries do not disrupt functional mobility. This involves:

- Strengthening continuity of walking and cycling routes
- Improving coordination of public transport services
- Developing multimodal hubs that allow seamless transitions between modes.

Third objective:

Increase safety, accessibility, and inclusion. Particular attention is given to children, young people, older residents, and those with limited mobility. Safe routes to schools, accessible public spaces, and clear information are seen as essential components of an inclusive mobility system.

Fourth objective:

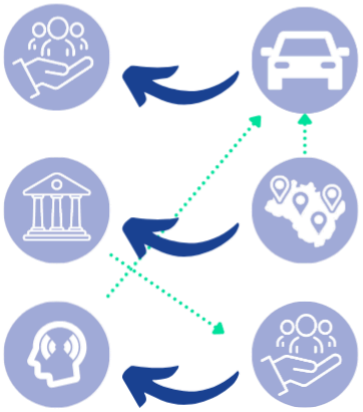
Build a culture of sustainable mobility. Partners recognised that infrastructure alone is insufficient to change habits. Education, community-led initiatives, temporary testing actions, and visible role models are needed to build confidence and normalise walking, cycling, and shared transport.

Fifth objective:

Strengthen governance and coordination. Effective rurban mobility requires collaboration across departments, municipalities, and sectors. The network therefore prioritised mechanisms that improve cooperation, clarify responsibilities, and align local actions with regional and national frameworks.

From vision to action

These strategic objectives are deliberately interconnected. Reducing car dependency depends on safer infrastructure and better information. Improving connectivity requires governance coordination. Building a mobility culture relies on participation and experimentation. Inclusion depends on both physical design and social processes.



Together, the vision and objectives provide a framework that guided partners throughout the action planning process.

They informed the selection of testing actions, the design of participatory activities, and the development of long-term implementation pathways. Most importantly, they ensured that local actions contributed to a shared European understanding of how rurban mobility can evolve.

4.

Integrated Action Planning Framework and Thematic Focus Axes

From co-creation to action through testing and learning.

4.1. PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The Beyond the Urban network adopted an integrated action planning framework that combines participation, experimentation, and strategic alignment. Rather than following a linear planning process, partners worked through iterative cycles of analysis, co-creation, testing, and refinement. This approach enabled territories to respond to complex rurban mobility challenges while remaining flexible and sensitive to local context.

A shared framework with local adaptation

All partners followed a common methodological framework, while adapting tools and processes to their local conditions. This ensured comparability across the network without imposing uniform solutions. The framework emphasised three core principles:

- Understanding everyday mobility patterns
- Involving stakeholders as co-creators
- Using testing actions to generate evidence for decision-making

At the outset, partners revisited their local context through a mobility lens. This involved **mapping daily routes, identifying barriers, and analysing how people move between rural and urban areas**. Baseline findings were discussed collectively, allowing partners to situate

their own challenges within a wider European pattern and to identify potential areas for shared learning.

Participation as a continuous process

Participation was not treated as a one-off consultation, but as an ongoing process embedded throughout the action planning cycle. Each territory established **a local stakeholder group (ULG)** bringing together public authorities, schools, residents, civil society organisations, transport providers, and in some cases private actors. These groups functioned as working platforms where problems were explored, priorities set, and solutions refined.

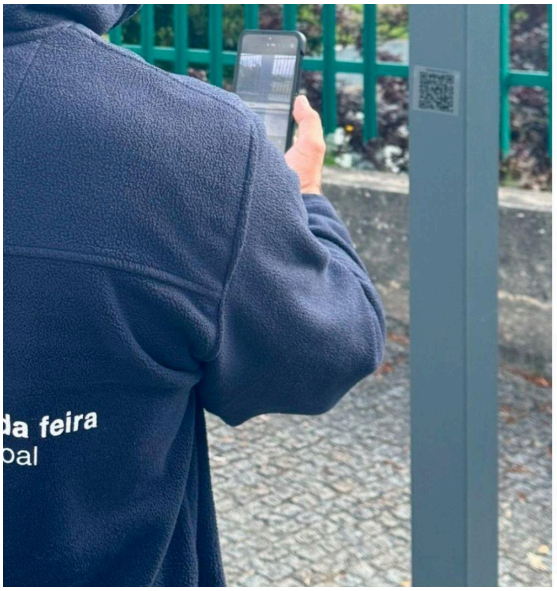
Engagement methods varied according to local context. In several areas, **schools became key entry points**, enabling partners to reach children and families and to ground discussions in real daily journeys. **Community events, workshops, walkabouts, and informal meetings** were used to involve residents who are often underrepresented in formal planning processes.

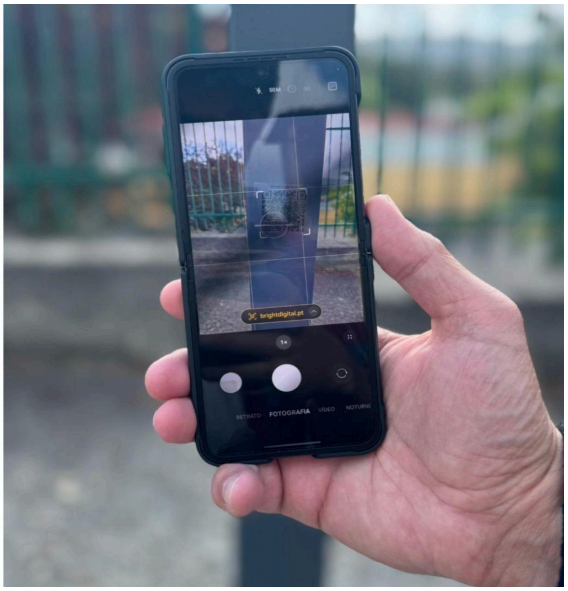
Digital tools supported transparency and communication, particularly in areas with dispersed settlements.

This continuous engagement helped build trust, improve the relevance of actions, and ensure that proposed measures responded to actual needs rather than assumptions.

Experimentation through testing actions

A defining feature of the methodology was the systematic use of experimentation. Partners were encouraged to treat ideas as hypotheses to be tested rather than fixed solutions. Temporary interventions, such as **pop-up pedestrian areas, painted crossings, pilot cycling routes, or trial information systems, were used to explore feasibility, collect feedback, and observe behavioural change.**



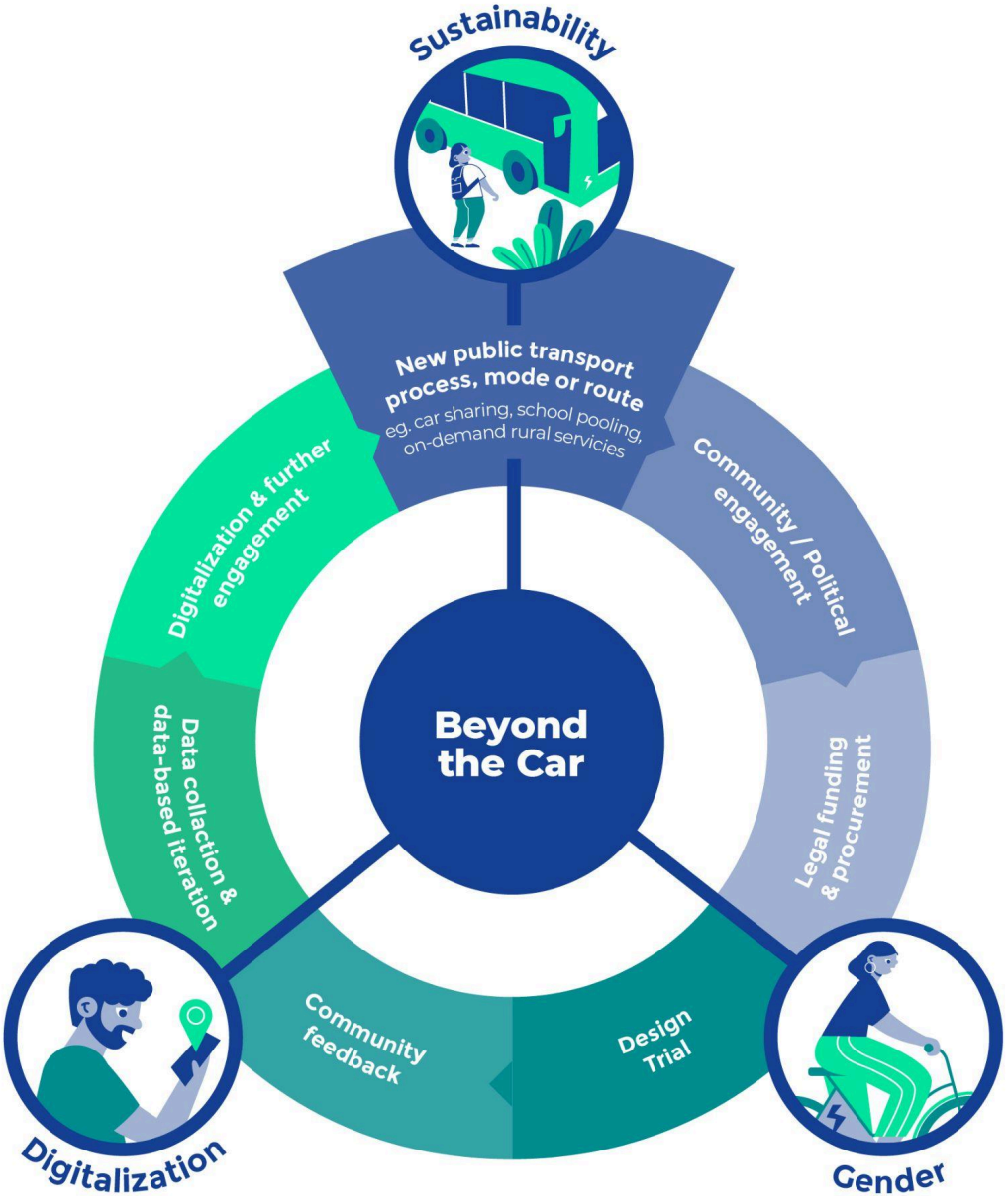


Testing actions served multiple purposes. They **reduced the perceived risk of change, made proposals visible and tangible, and created opportunities for learning by doing.** They also helped partners generate concrete evidence, including usage data, observations, and resident feedback, which could be used to support longer-term decisions and investment.

Importantly, experimentation was not limited to physical interventions. B**ehavioural initiatives, educational programmes, and community-led activities were also tested and refined** using the same iterative logic.

Integration across sectors and levels

The action planning methodology explicitly promoted integration. Mobility actions were developed in connection with education, public space management, climate objectives, and social inclusion. This **cross-sectoral approach helped avoid isolated interventions** and strengthened the overall coherence of local strategies.



Vertical integration was also a key consideration. Partners worked **to align local actions with existing regional and national frameworks**, ensuring that pilots and initiatives could be scaled or embedded within formal planning and funding mechanisms. **In functional areas with multiple municipalities, coordination structures were strengthened to support continuity across boundaries for territorial integration.**

Learning and reflection as part of planning

Reflection and learning were built into the methodology. **Partners regularly reviewed progress, shared challenges, and exchanged experiences within the network**. This collective learning helped refine local approaches and encouraged adaptation rather than replication. By comparing different contexts and responses, partners deepened their understanding of what makes rurban mobility interventions effective.

The methodology adopted by Beyond the Urban thus combines structure with flexibility.

It offers a clear process while leaving space for local creativity and adaptation. **This approach enabled partners to move from analysis to action in a way that is robust, participatory, and transferable.**

4.2. FOCUS AXES

The Beyond the Urban network translated its shared vision and objectives into a set of thematic axes that structure the action planning process.

These axes do not represent isolated topics. Instead, **they reflect interconnected dimensions of rurban mobility** that must be addressed together in order to achieve lasting change. Each partner engaged with all axes to some extent, while placing stronger emphasis on those most relevant to local context.

The focus axes in detail

Axis 1: Safe and Inclusive Everyday Mobility

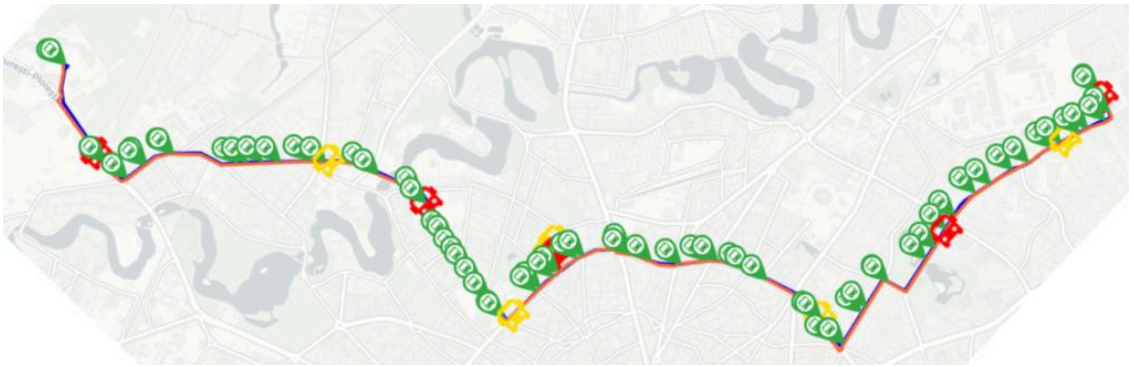
The first thematic axis focuses on **making everyday mobility safer and more inclusive**, **particularly for short trips and vulnerable users**. Across the network, school journeys emerged as a critical entry point. Unsafe crossings, high traffic speeds, and discontinuous sidewalks or paths push families toward car use, reinforcing congestion and exclusion.

Partners addressed this axis by prioritising **safe routes to schools, traffic calming, improved crossings, lighting, and clearer pedestrian environments**. These actions were often combined with educational activities and direct engagement with children and parents. By centering everyday needs rather than peak-hour efficiency, partners reframed mobility as a matter of care, safety, and independence.

This axis also includes accessibility for older people and residents with reduced mobility, recognising that **inclusive design improves conditions for all users**.

Axis 2: Regional Connectivity and Continuity

The second axis **addresses fragmentation across space and governance**. In rurban areas, mobility networks often function as disconnected segments rather than coherent systems. Walking and cycling routes stop at municipal borders, and public transport services lack coordination across operators and jurisdictions.



Partners working under this axis focused on continuity. Actions included the development of regional cycling corridors, coordinated planning frameworks, and multimodal hubs that link buses, trains, cycling, and walking. Rather than treating mobility as a local issue, this axis **promotes a territorial perspective** where villages, towns, and cities are connected through shared infrastructure and services. This approach is **particularly relevant in functional areas** with multiple municipalities, where collaboration is essential to achieve functional mobility.

Axis 3: Proximity and Public Space as Mobility Infrastructure

Beyond the Urban partners recognised that **mobility is closely tied to public space and land use**. The third axis therefore focuses on proximity and the **quality of spaces people move through**. Even in compact settlements, walking and cycling are discouraged when public space feels unsafe, uncomfortable, or car-dominated.

Under this axis, partners explored how **small-scale public space improvements can support mobility goals**. Temporary pedestrianisation, reallocation of street space, improved sidewalks, and better access to key destinations such as schools, shops, and transport stops were used to make sustainable mobility more attractive.

By treating public space as mobility infrastructure, partners highlighted the importance of comfort, perception, and experience alongside technical standards.

Axis 4: Behavioural Change and Mobility Culture

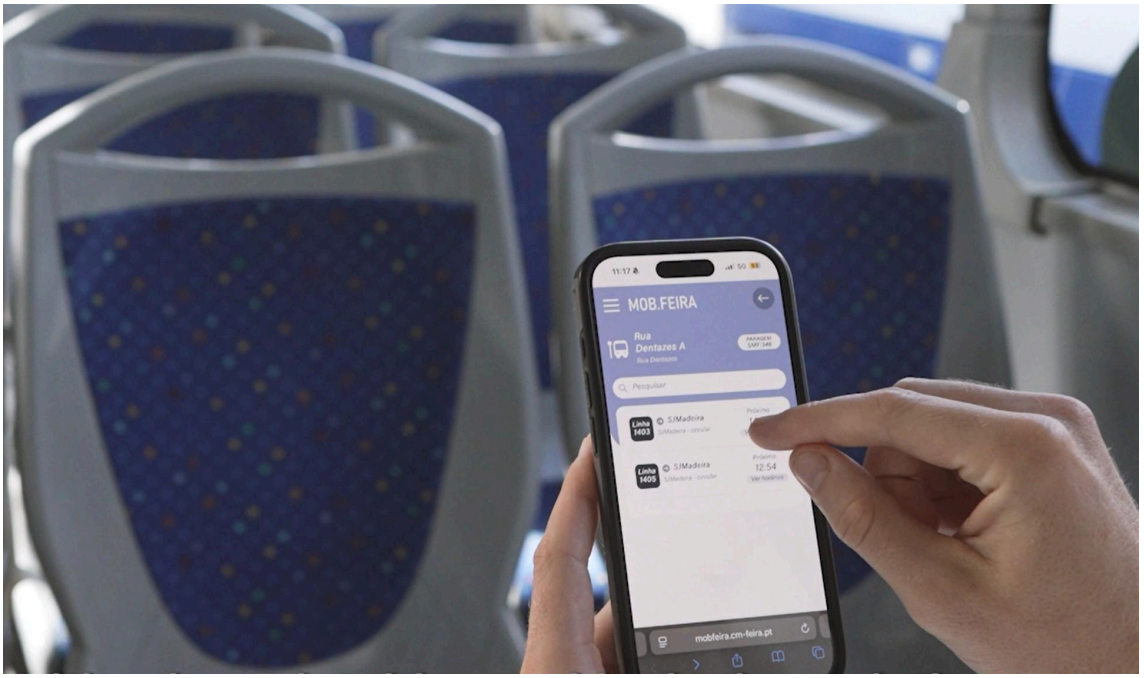
The fourth axis recognises that **infrastructure alone does not change habits**. In many rurban contexts, walking, cycling, and public transport are not part of everyday culture, particularly outside urban cores. Building confidence and acceptance therefore became a central concern.

Partners addressed this axis through **education, gamification, community-led activities, and visible testing action.** School-based programmes, cycling convoys, public events, and temporary trials helped residents experience alternative mobility practices in a supportive environment. These actions aimed to normalise sustainable mobility and reduce the perceived risk of change.

Behavioural change initiatives were often closely linked to other axes, reinforcing physical improvements and governance measures.

Axis 5: Information, Digital Tools, and Usability

Access to **clear and reliable information emerged as a significant barrier** to sustainable mobility. In rural and peri-urban areas, uncertainty about routes, schedules, and connections often discourages people from using alternatives to the car.



The fifth axis focuses on **improving usability through better information and digital tools**. Partners worked on clearer signage, centralised mobility platforms, real-time information, and user-friendly interfaces. The goal was not digitalisation for its own sake, but increased confidence and ease of use, particularly for infrequent users and those unfamiliar with public transport. This axis supports inclusion by lowering cognitive barriers to mobility.

Axis 6: Governance, Coordination, and Scaling

The final axis addresses the **institutional conditions required for change**. Rurban mobility spans multiple policy areas and administrative levels, making coordination essential. Without clear governance arrangements, even successful testing or temporary actions risk remaining isolated.

Partners working under this axis **strengthened cooperation between municipalities, departments, and stakeholders.** They also focused on embedding tested actions into longer-term strategies, funding mechanisms, and planning frameworks. This ensured that **experimentation could lead to structural change** rather than temporary success.

Interconnections between axes

The thematic axes are **interconnected at the level of implementation** rather than ambition. **Each axis represents a different lever for action, and progress** under one often conditions the effectiveness of others during delivery. For example, safety interventions such as school routes rely on public space design and coordinated responsibilities to be implemented consistently. Regional connectivity measures only function as intended when users understand and trust available services, making information and behavioural initiatives essential. Proximity-based improvements generate sustained impact when supported by governance arrangements that allow pilots to be scaled and maintained. **These operational interdependencies explain how tested actions evolve into integrated strategies**, ensuring that individual measures reinforce each other in practice.

4.3. KEY SHIFTS ALONG THE PROCESS

The Beyond the Urban network was shaped by a clear evolution from diagnosis to action. At the outset, partners shared a common understanding of mobility challenges, but their capacity to address these challenges was uneven.

The baseline analysis provided a snapshot of existing conditions, revealing not only structural problems but also limitations in how mobility was discussed, tested, and governed. Over the course of the network, a series of shifts took place that fundamentally changed how partners approached rurban mobility.

From static planning to iterative action

At the beginning of the process, mobility planning in many partner areas was characterised by long-term strategies with limited opportunities for experimentation. **Change was often perceived as risky, particularly in smaller municipalities with constrained resources.** The network encouraged a different mindset, one where actions could be tested temporarily, observed, and adjusted.

As a result, partners began to use small-scale actions as a core planning tool. Temporary pedestrian areas, trial cycling routes, school mobility initiatives, and test information systems allowed cities to move from abstract discussion to concrete experience. These **testing actions reduced uncertainty, generated local evidence, and created space for dialogue with residents and decision-makers**. Planning became more iterative and responsive, grounded in observation rather than assumption.

From infrastructure focus to everyday experience

The baseline showed a strong emphasis on physical infrastructure as the primary solution to mobility challenges. **While infrastructure remains essential, partners increasingly recognised that everyday experience matters just as much.** Safety perception, comfort, clarity of information, and social acceptance all influence whether people choose sustainable mobility options.

Through engagement and testing, partners shifted their focus toward the quality of daily journeys. School routes, short trips to services, and access to public spaces became priority areas. Small-scale interventions, such as improved crossings, lighting, clearer signage, or reallocated street space, demonstrated that **meaningful improvements do not always require large investments**. This shift helped align mobility planning with inclusion, wellbeing, and quality of life.

From consultation to co-creation

Initially, participation in several areas was limited to formal consultation processes. The network process expanded this approach, positioning **residents and local actors as co-creators rather than consultees**. Local stakeholder groups evolved into **active working platforms where ideas were shaped, tested, and refined collaboratively.**

Schools played a particularly important role in this transition. By **engaging children, parents, and teachers,** partners accessed detailed knowledge of daily routes and safety concerns while also building broader community support. Community events, shared activities, and informal engagement formats complemented workshops and meetings, helping reach groups that are often excluded from planning processes.

This shift **strengthened ownership and trust, making implementation smoother and more resilient.**

From isolated actions to integrated strategies

At the baseline stage, many mobility initiatives were isolated within specific departments or municipalities. Through the network, partners **increasingly adopted an integrated perspective. Mobility actions were connected to public space management, education, climate objectives, and regional development.**

Coordination across municipal boundaries **improved in areas facing fragmentation**, while metropolitan partners **strengthened cooperation between operators and authorities.** Importantly, tested actions began to inform longer-term strategies and investment priorities. Pilots were no longer seen as temporary exceptions, but as steps toward structural change.

From limited evidence to informed decision-making

Finally, the network supported a shift toward **evidence-informed planning**. While data collection varied across areas, **partners increasingly combined quantitative indicators with qualitative insights**. Usage **counts, observations, surveys, and feedback from residents** were used to evaluate testing actions and refine them.

This combination of evidence helped justify continuation or scaling of initiatives and **improved communication with political leaders and funders**. It also contributed to a more reflective planning culture, where learning is valued alongside delivery.

A shared transformation

Taken together, these changes represent a significant evolution in how partners approach rurban mobility. The network did not eliminate structural constraints or resource limitations. However, it equipped cities with new ways of working that are more adaptive, inclusive, and grounded in everyday life. This transformation provides a strong foundation for the next phase of implementation.

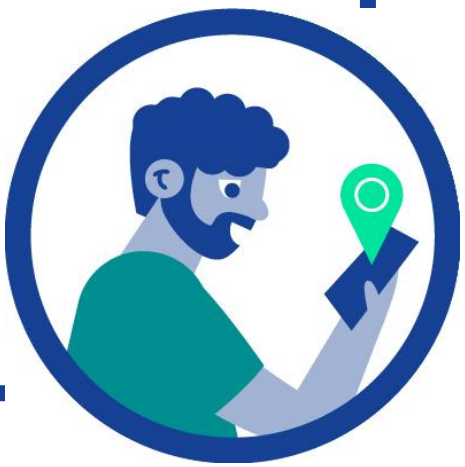
The real transformation and the foundation for what's next:

The network didn't remove all structural or resource barriers—but it changed how we approach them. It gave cities new ways of working: more adaptive, more inclusive, and more grounded in real life.

5.

Partner Actions and Local Transformation

How shared principles drove local change.



5.1. HOW DOES CHANGE LOOK LIKE?

This section describes how each partner translated the network's shared vision and methodology into locally grounded action. While contexts differ significantly, all partners demonstrate how rurban mobility challenges can be addressed through integrated, participatory, and test-driven approaches.

Treviso: tactical intervention

Treviso's local challenge lies in the dominance of private car traffic within its historic centre, despite short distances and high potential for walking and cycling. **The city faced increasing pressure on public space quality, safety, and liveability, particularly in emblematic areas such as Piazza Duomo.**

Through the network, Treviso adopted an approach based on **temporary experimentation**. Rather than proposing immediate permanent changes, the city tested a **one-day pedestrianisation of the central square**. This pilot allowed residents, businesses, and decision-makers to experience a different use of space and observe behavioural changes in real time. The trial provided concrete evidence on footfall, dwell time, and user perception, shifting the debate from abstract concerns to shared experience.

The action demonstrated that reduced car access could coexist with vibrant urban life. Following the testing action, Treviso strengthened its capacity to use temporary interventions as part of decision-making and positioned public space trials as legitimate tools within its mobility and urban development processes.

Tartu: active mobility stands out

Tartu's challenge is closely linked to **behavioural patterns** rather than infrastructure deficits alone. In its wider territory, many trips are technically short but still made by car, particularly for school journeys and routine activities.

Tartu **focused on educational and behaviour-oriented actions, working closely with schools to explore how habits are formed and how they can be influenced**. By engaging children and families through structured activities, the city gathered insight into daily mobility choices while also encouraging reflection and experimentation.

These actions helped Tartu **strengthen the link between education, mobility planning, and data-informed decision-making**. The approach benefited students and families directly, while also providing planners with better understanding of behavioural drivers. The work contributed to a broader shift toward considering soft measures as essential components of mobility policy.

Machico: proximity pedestrian experience

Machico is a compact coastal municipality characterised by steep topography. Although distances are short, walking is often perceived as difficult or uncomfortable, leading to high car dependency even for local trips.

Machico addressed this challenge by focusing on proximity and pedestrian experience. The municipality examined how small, targeted improvements could reduce effort and improve comfort around key destinations such as schools, services, and transport stops. Attention was given to gradients, rest points, safety, and clarity of routes.

Rather than attempting comprehensive redesign, Machico prioritised incremental changes informed by local knowledge. These actions aimed to make walking a more realistic option for everyday trips, particularly for older residents and families. The process strengthened the municipality's understanding of how geography and perception interact, and how modest interventions can unlock behavioural change.

Hradec Králové: mobility management

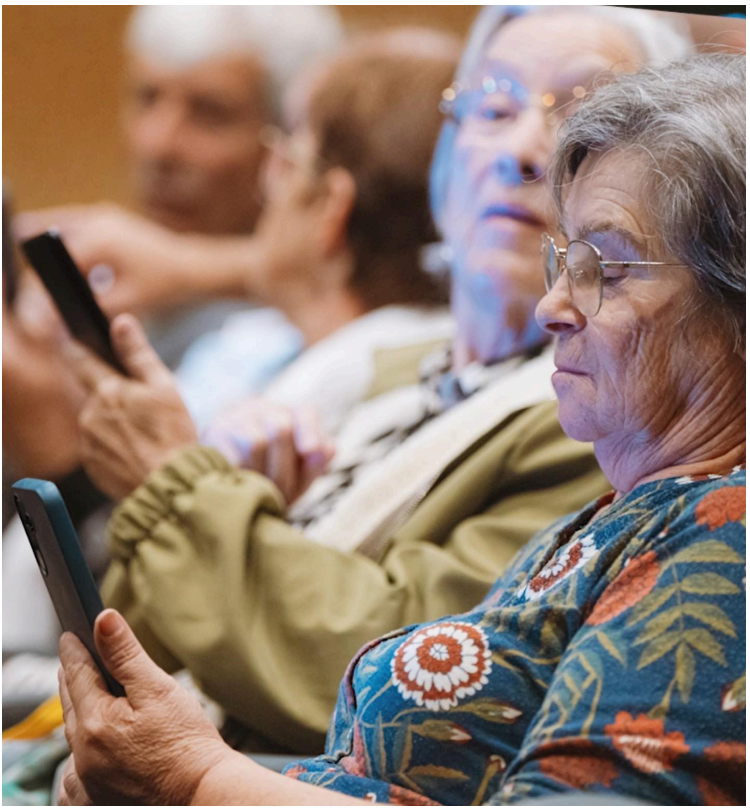
Hradec Králové functions as a regional hub, serving both urban residents and commuters from surrounding areas. A key challenge is ensuring smooth transitions between modes, particularly during peak periods and large events that place additional strain on the system.

The city focused on **strengthening multimodal hubs that integrate buses, trains, cycling, and walking**. By improving coordination and infrastructure at interchange points, Hradec Králové tested how better integration can improve reliability and user experience. **Event-related mobility management** provided additional insight into handling high demand while maintaining safety and accessibility.

These actions primarily benefited commuters and visitors, while also supporting regional connectivity.

The work **reinforced the city's role as a coordinator rather than just a service provider,** and highlighted the importance of intermodality in rurban contexts.

Santa Maria da Feira: digitizing information



Santa Maria da Feira includes a large number of parishes with diverse mobility needs. One of the main barriers identified was not the absence of services, but limited awareness and trust in existing options.

The municipality focused on improving usability through clearer, centralised mobility information. By developing a **digital platform that brings together transport options and practical guidance, Feira aimed to reduce uncertainty and make sustainable choices easier to navigate.**

This action benefited residents across urban and rural areas, particularly those who use public transport infrequently. It also helped the municipality better **understand how information access influences behaviour**. The initiative strengthened Feira's capacity to combine digital tools with broader mobility objectives.

Bram: community based initiatives

Bram is a small town where distances are short but everyday cycling had declined over time. The challenge was less about infrastructure gaps and more about confidence, culture, and habit.

Bram responded by **building on strong local networks to promote community-led cycling initiatives, particularly for school travel**. The Vélobus, in which volunteers accompany children cycling to school, became a focal point for change. This initiative demonstrated that cycling could be safe, social, and practical, especially when supported collectively.

The action benefited children, families, and schools, while also **strengthening community ties**. More broadly, it helped **reposition cycling as a normal part of daily life**. Bram's experience shows how cultural change can be initiated through social organisation rather than large-scale investment.

Kočani: safe routes to school

In Kocani, mobility challenges are closely tied to safety concerns, especially for children. **School journeys were identified as a major source of congestion and risk, reinforcing car dependency**.

Kocani prioritised **safer routes to schools, combining physical improvements with mapping and education.** Children and parents were directly involved in identifying preferred routes and danger points. This participatory approach ensured that interventions responded to real conditions rather than assumptions.

The actions **improved safety and confidence for families** and contributed to a broader shift toward **child-friendly urban design**. They also helped integrate mobility considerations into education and public space planning.

Osona: building up cooperative governance

Osona is a county with many municipalities, where mobility systems historically developed in a fragmented way. The main challenge was **achieving continuity and coherence across local boundaries.**

Osona addressed this by establishing a coordinated approach to **regional cycling corridors, bus routes and mobility governance**. Municipalities worked together to identify priority routes and shared standards, transforming isolated local projects into a connected network.

This action benefited residents across the county by improving access between settlements and services. It also **marked a significant governance shift, strengthening intermunicipal cooperation as well as vertical integration**, and providing a foundation for long-term implementation.

Szabolcs 05: where the youth takes the lead

Szabolcs 05 includes small towns and rural settlements with limited mobility options, particularly for young people. Engagement and ownership were therefore central concerns.

The partner focused on **youth-led and school-based mobility initiatives that combined education, experimentation, and co-creation.**

These actions **gave young people a voice in shaping local mobility** solutions and helped identify **low-cost improvements with immediate impact**.

Beyond the specific actions, the process **strengthened participation** culture and influenced how mobility is discussed locally. Youth engagement moved from being symbolic to being operational, contributing to more inclusive planning.

Bucharest–Ilfov: integrating rural mobility

Bucharest–Ilfov operates at metropolitan scale, where mobility challenges include congestion, emissions, and fragmented systems across a large and diverse territory.

The functional area focused on **integrating public transport through cleaner fleets and coordinated ticketing.** These actions aimed to improve reliability and usability for commuters moving **between urban and peri-urban areas**. While large in scale, the approach reflects the same principles as smaller areas: **integration, usability, and alignment across actors.**

The actions benefit a wide range of users and support longer-term climate and accessibility goals. They also demonstrate how **rurban principles apply at metropolitan scale**.

5.2. COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Taken together, these partner actions illustrate how a shared methodology can generate diverse yet coherent responses to rurban mobility challenges. Each territory worked within its constraints, but all moved toward more inclusive, integrated, and people-centred mobility systems. The local transformations described here form the foundation for the network's long-term legacy.

> Partners developed diverse yet coherent responses, **moving together toward more inclusive, integrated, and people-centred mobility**.

6.

Governance, Participation, and Co-creation

How collaboration and co-creation enabled lasting mobility change.

Governance and participation were not treated as parallel themes in Beyond the Urban, but as mutually reinforcing foundations of action.

The network demonstrated that rurban mobility challenges cannot be addressed through technical solutions alone. They require governance arrangements that support cooperation across sectors and areas, and participatory processes that anchor decisions in everyday reality.

6.1. PARTICIPATION

Participation as a structural component of action

Across all partner areas, **participation moved beyond formal consultation toward co-creation**. Local stakeholder groups brought together municipal departments, schools, residents, associations, transport operators, and, in some cases, private actors. These groups did not simply comment on pre-defined proposals. **They helped identify problems, shape priorities, and refine actions over time.**

Participation was embedded throughout the process. Stakeholders were involved during diagnosis, design, piloting, and evaluation. This continuity allowed **trust to develop and reduced resistance to change**. In many areas, this approach represented a significant shift from previous planning practices, where engagement was limited to late-stage feedback.

Informal spaces and trusted intermediaries

Partners also recognised that **formal meetings alone are insufficient** in rurban contexts. Participation was therefore extended into **informal spaces such as village halls, community events, markets, cycling activities, and public space** testing actions. These settings allowed for more inclusive dialogue and helped reach residents who rarely engage with institutional processes.

Local associations, volunteers, and community leaders played a key intermediary role. By working through trusted people and networks, partners **increased legitimacy and participation** while reducing the perception that mobility change was imposed from above.

Co-creation through experimentation

Small-scale and **testing actions played an important governance role** as well as a technical one. Temporary interventions provided a neutral space where different actors could observe, discuss, and evaluate change together. Rather than debating hypothetical scenarios, stakeholders could base discussions on shared experience.

This approach helped **depoliticise sensitive issues such as parking reduction or street reallocation**. It also allowed decision-makers to engage with uncertainty in a constructive way, using evidence and feedback to guide next steps.

Building institutional capacity

Beyond individual actions, the network contributed to **longer-term capacity building**. Municipal teams developed **skills in facilitation, participatory design, and cross-departmental coordination**. Relationships between institutions were strengthened, making future collaboration more feasible.

In several areas, **participation and co-creation are now seen as standard** components of mobility work rather than optional add-ons. This cultural shift within institutions is **one of the network's most significant outcomes.**

6.2. GOVERNANCE

Schools as governance anchors

One of the most notable **governance innovations** across the network was the **central role of schools**. In several areas, schools acted as stable, trusted institutions linking families, local authorities, and the wider community. **School-based engagement provided detailed insight into daily mobility patterns** while also enabling practical action on safety and accessibility.

By positioning **school mobility as a shared responsibility**, partners created **new forms of cooperation** between education departments, transport planners, and public space managers. This cross-sectoral collaboration strengthened both governance capacity and implementation effectiveness.

Political engagement and commitment at network level

In addition to local governance arrangements, the network placed strong emphasis on political engagement at transnational level. **Each partner was encouraged to involve elected representatives throughout the process** and, critically, to ensure political presence at the network's final event in Treviso, Italy.

Politicians from partner cities and regions were invited to attend the final meeting, present their Integrated Action Plans, and engage directly with peers and practitioners. This was a deliberate governance choice. Rather than limiting political involvement to formal endorsement, the network created space for **elected officials to read and understand the content of the IAPs**, the evidence generated through testing actions, and the reasoning behind proposed measures.

This collective final moment helped build shared commitment and political confidence. By seeing comparable challenges and solutions across territories, decision-makers were able to situate their local actions within a wider European context. **Governance proved more robust where political actors were not only informed, but actively engaged** and invested in the process. This emphasis on political belief and ownership was a distinguishing feature of the network's approach.

Governance across boundaries

Rurban mobility challenges often **span multiple municipalities and jurisdictions**. Several partners faced governance fragmentation that made coordinated action difficult. Through the network, partners strengthened **territorial integration and cooperation between neighbouring municipalities and vertical alignment with regional authorities**.

In county and metropolitan contexts, this involved creating or **reinforcing coordination mechanisms that support shared priorities, common standards, and joint implementation**. These governance arrangements enabled continuity of routes, services, and information beyond administrative borders, addressing one of the key barriers identified in the baseline analysis.

Governance as change enabler

The experience of Beyond the Urban shows that **governance and participation are not constraints, but enablers**. When residents are involved as partners and institutions cooperate across boundaries, **and political leaders are actively engaged in both local and transnational moments**, mobility solutions become more relevant, resilient, and scalable. These governance practices **provide the foundation for the monitoring, learning, and policy integration** explored in the following sections.

7.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Learning what works through testing and evidence.

Monitoring and evaluation in Beyond the Urban were approached as tools for learning and improvement rather than as compliance exercises. Given the experimental nature of many actions, partners needed ways to understand what worked, what did not, and why. This required flexible methods that could capture both measurable change and lived experience.

7.1. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA BALANCE

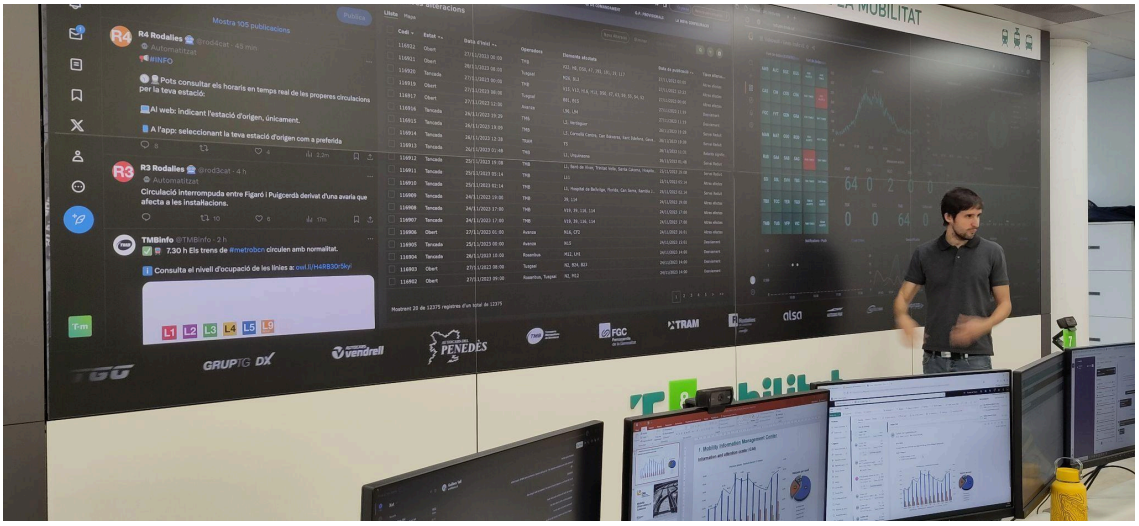
Moving beyond indicators alone

At the start of the network, monitoring practices varied widely across areas. Some partners relied mainly on infrastructure delivery indicators, while others collected limited data on usage or perception. Through the network process, **partners developed a more holistic understanding of evaluation that combines quantitative and qualitative insight**.

Rather than focusing only on outputs, such as kilometres of infrastructure or number of interventions, partners increasingly asked how people experienced change. Questions of safety, comfort, confidence, and usability became central. **This shift aligned evaluation more closely with the network's people-centred vision** of mobility.

Combining data and lived experience

Quantitative data remained important, particularly for building credibility with decision-makers and funders. Partners monitored indicators such as **usage levels, modal shifts, footfall, and service performance** where feasible. In some areas, digital tools supported data collection and visualisation, helping teams track patterns over time.



However, partners also recognised the **limits of data alone**. Resident stories, school feedback, and stakeholder discussions provided context that numbers could not capture. By combining these perspectives, partners gained a richer understanding of impact and were better equipped to explain results to diverse audiences.

7.2. LEARNING WHAT WORKS THROUGH DATA AND EVIDENCE

Learning through comparison and reflection

Transnational exchange strengthened **learning by allowing partners to compare approaches and outcomes** across different contexts. Regular network meetings provided space to **reflect on progress, share challenges, and discuss adaptations.** Seeing how similar issues were addressed elsewhere helped partners reassess their own assumptions and refine their methods.

Learning was **not limited to success stories. Partners openly discussed difficulties**, such as low initial uptake, resistance to change, or coordination challenges. This openness helped **normalise experimentation** and reinforced the idea that learning from setbacks is an essential part of innovation.

Using testing actions as learning tools

Temporary testing actions played a central role in evaluation. Because interventions were designed to be reversible and time-bound, they created opportunities for observation and feedback.

Partners used simple but effective methods, including manual counts, short surveys, interviews, and on-site observation, to assess how spaces and services were used during trials.

Testing actions allowed partners **to test assumptions in real conditions**. In several areas, results challenged initial expectations, leading to **adjustments in design or scope**. This iterative approach helped reduce risk and improved the quality of longer-term decisions.

Using evaluation to support scaling and integration

Evaluation findings were used not only to assess testing actions, but to inform next steps. Evidence gathered through trials and monitoring helped partners **prioritise actions, justify continued investment, and integrate successful measures into broader strategies**.

In several areas, evaluation **strengthened dialogue with political leaders** by providing concrete insights into what residents value and how change affects daily life. This helped **bridge the gap between experimentation and long-term planning**.

7.3. BUILDING A LEARNING CULTURE

The most significant outcome of the network's approach to monitoring and evaluation is the emergence of a learning culture.

Partners **developed confidence in testing ideas, reflecting on outcomes, and adapting accordingly**. Evaluation became part of everyday practice rather than a final reporting step.

This **culture of learning supports resilience and adaptability**, qualities that are particularly important in rurban contexts where conditions and needs can change quickly. It also prepares partners to continue improving mobility systems beyond the lifetime of the network.

8.

Transnational Cooperation and Transfer

Learning and confidence built through cross border exchange.

Transnational cooperation was a central driver of learning and innovation in Beyond the Urban. While each partner worked within its own territorial and institutional context, the network created a shared space where challenges could be discussed openly and solutions explored collectively.

This cooperation did not aim to produce identical actions, but to support understanding, adaptation, and confidence in tackling complex rurban mobility issues.

8.1. FROM COMPARISON TO SHARED UNDERSTANDING

At the outset, partners approached the network with differing assumptions shaped by their local realities. **Through structured exchange, site visits, and peer discussions, these perspectives were gradually contextualised within a broader European picture**. Partners came to recognise that many of their challenges were not isolated or exceptional, but part of wider patterns affecting rural–urban areas across Europe.

This shared understanding reduced the tendency to view local constraints as insurmountable and **helped partners see alternative pathways for action**. Metropolitan functional areas, smaller towns, and rural counties learned from one another by comparing how similar problems manifested at different scales.

Learning through concrete examples

Transnational learning was most effective when grounded in concrete practice. **Rather than focusing on abstract models, partners exchanged experiences around specific actions** such as school mobility initiatives, community-led cycling activities, regional corridor planning, multimodal hubs, and digital information tools.

These examples **helped partners understand not only what was done, but how and why**.

Discussions focused on governance arrangements, stakeholder involvement, sequencing of actions, and the role of testing actions and participation. **This practical orientation made learning more transferable** and reduced the risk of superficial replication.

Adaptation rather than replication

A key principle of transfer within Beyond the Urban was adaptation. **Partners did not attempt to copy solutions directly. Instead, they identified underlying principles and adjusted them to local conditions.**

For example, approaches to school mobility varied depending on settlement size and governance structure, but shared a focus on safety, participation, and everyday routines. Regional coordination models differed across areas, but all emphasised continuity and cooperation beyond municipal boundaries. **This emphasis on adaptation respected local identity and capacity** while still benefiting from shared learning.

8.2. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Building confidence to experiment

Seeing peers successfully test small-scale interventions played an important role in building confidence. For many partners, **experimentation had previously been perceived as risky or politically sensitive**. Observing how others used pilots to reduce uncertainty and build evidence helped legitimise this approach locally.

Transnational exchange thus functioned as a form of risk-sharing. **Partners felt supported in trying new methods** because they were part of a collective effort rather than acting alone.

Strengthening long-term relationships

Beyond immediate learning, the network fostered relationships that extend beyond individual actions. **Trust built through repeated exchange enabled honest discussion of challenges and failures as well as successes**. These relationships form the basis for continued cooperation, informal advice, and potential future collaboration.

Transnational cooperation in **Beyond the Urban** therefore **added value not only through knowledge transfer, but by strengthening the capacity of cities to act with confidence, openness, and adaptability** in addressing rurban mobility challenges.

9.

Final Outputs and Legacy

Practical tools, and stories to extend impact beyond the network to the future.

The Beyond the Urban network places strong emphasis on capitalisation, ensuring that learning generated through local action and transnational exchange can be used by other cities facing similar rurban mobility challenges. The network's final outputs are designed to translate experience into accessible, practical resources that support both inspiration and implementation.

9.1. FINAL OUTPUTS

A toolkit for rurban mobility transformation

The primary output of the network is the **Rurban Mobility Integration Toolkit**. This toolkit is intended as a practical guide for cities working across urban–rural contexts. It responds directly to the challenges identified through the baseline analysis and the solutions tested by partners during the action planning process.

Read the the Toolkit online: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/0661b26b2d.html

The toolkit is structured as a **step-by-step pathway that guides users from understanding local context to implementing and scaling action**. It begins with tools for mapping everyday mobility patterns and identifying stakeholders, recognising that effective action must be grounded in how people actually move and interact with their territory. It then provides guidance on co-creation, participatory design, and engagement methods that have proven effective in rurban settings.

A central feature of the toolkit is its focus on experimentation. It offers practical advice on designing and delivering pilot actions, including temporary interventions, behavioural initiatives, and small-scale improvements. Evaluation tools help users assess impact using both quantitative indicators and qualitative feedback, supporting learning and adaptation.

The final sections of the toolkit address policy integration and scaling. They explain how lessons from testing actions can inform longer-term strategies, funding decisions, and governance arrangements. By combining methods, examples, and templates, the toolkit supports cities in moving from experimentation to lasting change.

A video capturing the human dimension of change

Complementing the toolkit, the network produced **a short video that captures the voices, places, and experiences of partner areas**. The video does not aim to provide technical instruction. Instead, **it communicates the human side of rurban mobility transformation**, highlighting why everyday mobility matters and how change is experienced on the ground.

Through images and testimonies, **the video illustrates shared challenges** such as car dependency, safety concerns, and fragmented services, **while also showing how small actions and community involvement can make a difference**. It reflects the diversity of the network while reinforcing a common narrative about collaboration, experimentation, and learning.

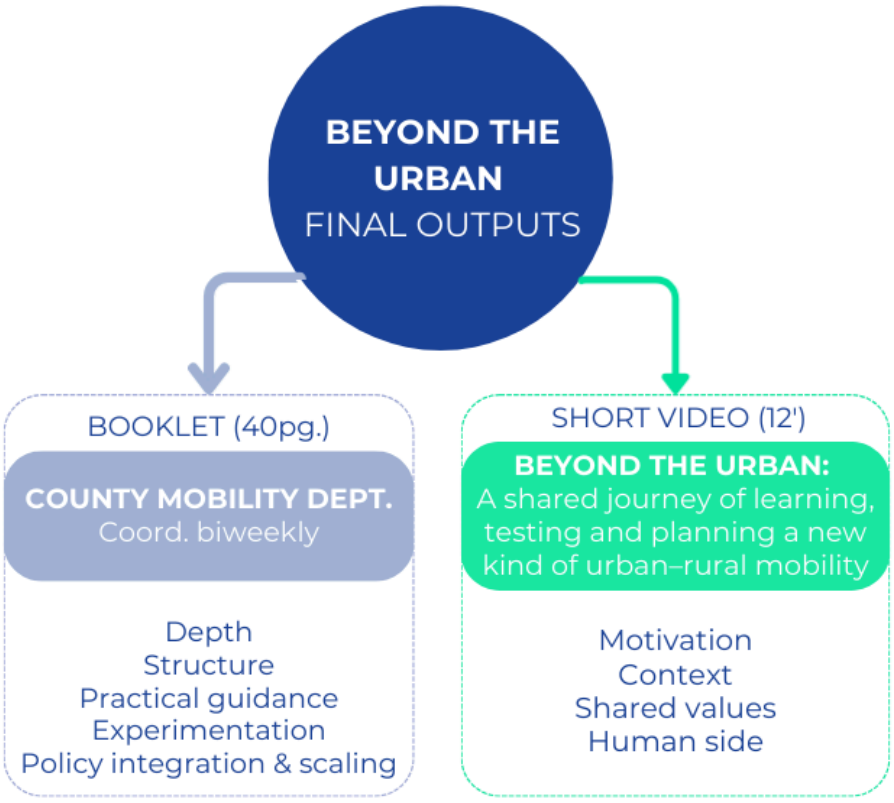
The video serves as an entry point for audiences who may not engage immediately with detailed written material. It supports dissemination, advocacy, and awareness-raising, and can be used alongside the toolkit to reach a wider range of stakeholders.

Watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYMxrz9vBLQ

9.2. BEYOND THE URBAN NETWORK CAPITALIZATION

Supporting transfer and reuse

Together, **the toolkit and the video form a complementary set of resources**. The toolkit provides depth, structure, and practical guidance, while the video conveys motivation, context, and shared values. This combination supports different learning styles and communication needs, increasing the likelihood that the network's experience will be reused.



Both outputs are **designed to be adaptable.** Cities and functional rural-urban areas can apply the methods and principles regardless of scale or governance context, adjusting tools and examples to local conditions. By **focusing on processes rather than fixed solutions**, the network ensures that its learning remains relevant beyond the specific partner areas.

Capitalisation beyond the network

The final outputs also support **capitalisation within partner areas**. They provide a reference for continued implementation, training of new staff, and communication with decision-makers and stakeholders. More broadly, they contribute to **European knowledge on rurban mobility by offering a coherent framework grounded in practice**.

Through these outputs, Beyond the Urban extends its impact beyond the lifetime of the network, supporting ongoing experimentation, collaboration, and learning in cities across Europe.

9.3. LEGACY AND NEXT STEPS

Beyond the Urban was conceived not as a one-off project, but as a catalyst for longer-term change in how cities address mobility across urban–rural areas. As the network reaches the end of its formal cooperation period, its most important legacy lies not only in the actions delivered, but in the ways of working that have been established and the capacities that have been strengthened.

A lasting shift in practice

Across the partner areas, **the network has contributed to a shift in how mobility is understood and addressed.** Partners moved from treating mobility primarily as a technical transport issue toward recognising it as a social system that shapes everyday life, inclusion, safety, and opportunity. This shift is reflected in the increased attention given to short trips, school journeys, public space quality, and user experience.

Equally significant is the **change in planning practice.** Participation, experimentation, and iterative learning are now embedded more deeply in local approaches.

Temporary **small-scale actions, co-created solutions, and evidence-informed decision-making have gained legitimacy** as standard tools rather than exceptional measures. This represents a durable change that will influence future projects beyond those initiated during the network.

Strengthened local and regional capacity

The network has **strengthened institutional capacity within partner areas**. Municipal teams developed skills in facilitation, cross-sectoral collaboration, and evaluation. Relationships between departments, municipalities, schools, and civil society have been reinforced, creating a stronger foundation for coordinated action.

In functional areas with fragmented governance, **cooperation mechanisms established or strengthened through the network** will continue to support joint planning and implementation. In smaller municipalities, increased confidence to test ideas and engage residents provides a pathway for continued innovation despite limited resources.

Continuation of actions and partnerships

Many of the actions initiated through Beyond the Urban are designed to continue and evolve. **Testing actions that demonstrated positive outcomes are being extended, refined, or integrated into longer-term programmes**. Educational initiatives and community-led activities are being maintained through local partnerships. Digital tools and coordination structures are being further developed to improve usability and reach.

Beyond individual actions, partners have expressed **a strong interest in maintaining informal cooperation.** Relationships built through the network enable continued exchange of experience, peer support, and potential collaboration in future initiatives at regional, national, or European level.

Contribution to European debate

Beyond the Urban contributes to broader European discussions on territorial cohesion, sustainable mobility, and inclusive development. By focusing on rurban contexts, the network addresses a gap between urban-focused mobility strategies and rural development policies. Its experience demonstrates that **small-scale, people-centred actions can play a critical role in achieving climate and inclusion objectives, particularly outside major cities.**

The network also shows how European cooperation can support local change by providing space for reflection, experimentation, and shared learning. Its methods and outputs offer a transferable framework for other areas navigating similar challenges.

Looking ahead

The legacy of Beyond the Urban lies in its emphasis on starting from everyday life, working across boundaries, and learning through action.

The legacy of Beyond the Urban lies in its **emphasis on starting from everyday life, working across boundaries, and learning through action.**

These principles remain relevant as cities continue to face evolving mobility, climate, and social challenges. By building on the foundations laid through the network, partner areas are well positioned to continue shaping more inclusive, sustainable, and connected rurban mobility systems in the years to come.

Appendix:

Rurban Mobility Integration Toolkit and Supporting Tools

This appendix presents the Rurban Mobility Integration Toolkit and its associated tools as a unified resource supporting the integrated action planning approach developed through the Beyond the Urban network. It explains the purpose of the toolkit, how it reflects the network's learning, and how its tools can be used by cities working at the interface between urban and rural areas.

Purpose of the Toolkit

The Rurban Mobility Integration Toolkit is a practical resource designed to support cities facing rurban mobility challenges such as car dependency, fragmented services, and limited accessibility for non-drivers. It consolidates the methods, principles, and experience developed by the ten partner areas into an adaptable framework that can be applied in diverse contexts.

The toolkit is structured around a Why–What–How logic. It begins by helping users understand the specific characteristics of rurban areas, including dispersed settlement patterns, reliance on informal networks, and everyday routines such as school journeys or access to local services. It then presents approaches and examples that treat mobility as social infrastructure and public space as a shared resource. Finally, it provides practical tools that support implementation, evaluation, and integration into longer-term strategies.

Rather than offering fixed solutions, the toolkit focuses on process. It encourages cities to start from local identity and daily life, test small-scale actions, and scale what works using evidence and policy alignment. This process-oriented approach reflects one of the core lessons of the Beyond the Urban network: meaningful change in rurban mobility emerges through experimentation, participation, and learning.

Role of the Toolkit in Integrated Action Planning

The toolkit supports integrated action planning by linking participation, piloting, evaluation, and governance into a single workflow. It is intended to be used flexibly, allowing cities to select tools according to their level of readiness, institutional capacity, and local priorities.

In the Beyond the Urban network, similar tools were used to:

- understand everyday mobility patterns and barriers
- engage residents, schools, and stakeholders as co-creators
- test ideas through temporary pilots and low-cost interventions
- evaluate impact using both data and lived experience
- translate successful actions into longer-term policies and investments

The appendix below describes the main tools included in the toolkit and explains their purpose within this integrated approach.

Overview of Toolkit Tools

Ecosystem Mapping Tool

The ecosystem mapping tool helps cities identify the full range of actors involved in rurban mobility. It moves beyond formal institutional structures to include community actors, informal networks, and intermediaries such as schools, associations, and local leaders.

By visualising direct partners, indirect stakeholders, and community actors around a shared challenge or initiative, the tool supports a more inclusive and realistic understanding of governance. It is particularly useful in early stages of action planning, when defining who should be involved and how collaboration can be structured.

Stakeholder Influence and Interest Analysis

This tool supports strategic engagement by assessing stakeholders according to their level of influence and interest. In rurban contexts, where resources are often limited, this analysis helps teams prioritise engagement efforts while maintaining transparency and inclusion.

The tool enables cities to identify which actors require close involvement, which should be kept informed, and which may become relevant at later stages. It supports clearer communication and more effective collaboration throughout implementation.

Persona Development Tool

Persona sheets are used to represent typical residents affected by mobility challenges, such as children travelling to school, older residents accessing services, or commuters moving between settlements. Personas are developed using real observations, interviews, and local knowledge rather than abstract assumptions.

This tool helps shift discussions from generalised users to concrete lived experience. It is especially effective in workshops and co-creation sessions, where it supports empathy and shared understanding across departments and stakeholder groups.

Journey Mapping Tool

Journey mapping focuses on the user experience of mobility. By breaking down a typical trip into steps, it highlights barriers, stress points, and opportunities for improvement along the way.

In the Beyond the Urban network, this tool was frequently applied to school journeys and access to essential services. It helped identify where small interventions, such as improved crossings, clearer signage, or better connections, could have a significant impact on safety and usability.

Accessibility Audit Tool

The accessibility audit provides a structured framework for assessing walking, cycling, and public transport environments. It covers elements such as surface quality, gradients, crossings, lighting, sidewalk width, wayfinding, and access to public transport.

Used during walkabouts and site visits, the audit supports joint observation by technical staff, residents, and stakeholders. It ensures that accessibility is considered as a core dimension of mobility planning and helps translate observation into concrete improvement actions.

Pilot Planning and Risk Assessment Tool

This tool supports the design and delivery of pilot actions. It helps teams define objectives, select appropriate locations, plan materials and logistics, anticipate risks, and organise observation and feedback.

The inclusion of risk assessment reflects the network's emphasis on responsible experimentation. It allows cities to test ideas safely while maintaining flexibility and openness to learning.

Evaluation and Learning Tool

The evaluation tool guides cities in assessing pilot actions using both quantitative and qualitative methods. It supports before-and-after comparison, documentation of observations, and reflection on outcomes, including unexpected effects.

Rather than treating evaluation as a reporting requirement, this tool positions it as a learning mechanism that informs adaptation, scaling, and communication with decision-makers.

Policy Integration Tool

The policy integration tool helps translate tested actions into longer-term strategies, programmes, and investment plans. It supports alignment with existing mobility frameworks, regional strategies, and funding mechanisms, while clarifying responsibilities and timelines.

This tool reflects a central lesson of the Beyond the Urban network: pilots achieve lasting impact only when they are embedded within governance and policy structures.

Using the Toolkit as a Living Resource

The tools described in this appendix are designed to be used iteratively and in combination. cities may begin with ecosystem mapping and journey analysis, move directly to piloting, or focus on evaluation depending on their context and priorities.

What unites all tools is a shared logic that mirrors the network's experience: start from everyday life, involve people early and continuously, test ideas at small scale, learn from evidence, and integrate successful approaches into policy. This logic ensures that the toolkit remains relevant across different areas and over time.

Access the tools here: