



# WP.T3 - D.T3.2.5

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Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP)  
webinar training Implementation

Final Version  
10 2021

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Dissemination level	<i>PPs, JS and ETP followers</i>
Activity	<i>A.T3.2 - Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) to better connect peripheral areas</i>
Deliverable	<i>D.T3.2.5 - Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) webinar training Implementation</i>
Coordinating partner	<i>ITL</i>
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Due date of deliverable	<i>30.06.2021</i>
Actual date of deliverable	<i>29.10.2021</i>
Status (F: final, D: draft)	<i>Final</i>
File name	<i>086_SMACKER_D-T-3-2-5_2021-10-29_Final</i>



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## 1. Introduction

Remote regions in central Europe share the same risks and issues related to the fact that they are located at the periphery of main transport networks. Inadequate and under-used services, excessive costs, lack of last-mile services and proper intermodality, poor communication and information to users and car commuting are some of the challenges that many central European regions face.

The SMACKER project addresses these disparities and promotes public transport and mobility services that are demand-responsive and that connect local and regional systems to main corridors and transport nodes.

Within SMACKER mobility issues related to peripheral and rural areas, main barriers are assessed and addressed and solutions drawn on the best international know-how are provided. SMACKER promotes demand-responsive transport services to connect local and regional systems to the main transport corridors and nodes. Soft measures (e.g. behaviour change campaigns) and hard measures (e.g. mobility service pilots) are used to identify and promote eco-friendly solutions for public transport in rural and peripheral areas, with the aim of achieving more liveable and sustainable environments and better integration of population to the main corridors. SMACKER helps local communities to re-design their transport services according to user needs, through a coordinated co-design process between local/regional partners and stakeholders; SMACKER also encourages the use of new transport services through motivating and incentivizing campaigns. The direct beneficiaries of the actions are residents, commuters and tourists.

Participation reflects the overall integration of citizens and groups in planning processes and policy decision-making and consequently the sharing of power. In particular, transport planning and transport relevant measures are often the subject of controversial discussions within the urban community. The concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning has established the principle that the public should be included from the very beginning of the transport planning process and not only when the plans are largely completed and only minor amendments can be carried out. For that reason, public authorities need to open-up debate on this highly specialised and complex subject area and make participation a part of the planning process. In order to ensure participation throughout the process, the development of an engagement strategy would be necessary.

This deliverable gives a summary of the Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) webinar training event held online on 8 September 2021. It was the second SMACKER ETP public event and was intended to provide the SMACKER ETP followers with all the required information to correctly draft and present an Action Plan on how to develop/improve a DRT service in a peripheral/rural area. This includes a focus on some key technical topics considered as particularly relevant for developing effective and reliable Action Plans.

The deliverable also provides an easy access to the technical contents presented during the webinar.

Chapter 2 provides an overview on the general aspects related to the planned ETP SMACKER training events and presents the preparatory work for defining the ETP webinar training topics.

Chapter 3 provides the agenda of the webinar and an overview of the two sessions with brief descriptions of the contents and discussions.

Chapter 4 reports on the follow-up activities and summarizes the main takeaways that are useful for ETP followers and the ETP contracted technical experts for preparing their ETP Action Plans.

The annex at the end of the document contains the detailed list of participants to SMACKER ETP webinar, with details on the reached project's target groups.



## 2. General information on the SMACKER training events

The SMACKER ETP (Enlarged Transfer Programme) is conceived in order to share the experience and know-how of SMACKER project with non-partner institutions interested in the project results, thus expanding the cooperation between Central Europe policy makers and stakeholders in the Central European area. Through the ETP, SMACKER offers to 10 selected non-partner cities and territories the opportunity to develop/improve Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services in collaboration with the SMACKER partners.

The 10 follower institutions were selected in the second half of 2020 through an open call for expression of interest<sup>1</sup>: through the ETP, they are involved in training activities, meetings and scientific events centred on DRT topics, and are supported by technical experts selected by the SMACKER project partners; in particular, the technical experts support the ETP followers in depicting the state of the art of the mobility problems and challenges in their regions, and in preparing an Action Plan for improving sustainable mobility services in their area, based on demand-responsive transport solutions. This activity refers to the SMACKER Specific Objective 3 “To define a long-term strategy to promote sustainable mobility in regions that will complement and feed local planning tools”: it is pursued by promoting a professional growth of both partners and ETP members, and by expanding the audience of the project and its results.

The SMACKER ETP training details are introduced in D.T3.2.1 “Guidelines for Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) for Central Europe Policy Makers and stakeholders”, chapter 5. The ETP training curriculum is fully described in D.T3.2.4 “Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) Training Curriculum” and foresees three specific training events:

- ETP transnational event in Maribor (SI), held on 10 November 2020 in coincidence with the first SMACKER scientific event, the second SMACKER Quality Partnership for a seamless Mobility governance (SQPM) meeting, and the fourth SMACKER Consortium meeting with the project Steering Committee. It is fully reported in D.T3.2.6 “Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) transnational event in Maribor-SI”;
- ETP webinar training, held on 8 September 2021 and reported in this deliverable;
- ETP transnational event in Vienna (AT), planned at the end of the SMACKER life in May 2022, in coincidence with the second SMACKER scientific event, the third SQPM meeting, and the sixth and last SMACKER Consortium meeting with the project Steering Committee.

### 2.1. Preparatory activities for the ETP webinar training

Following the ETP training curriculum, the ETP webinar was focused on providing ETP followers with all the required information to correctly draft and present an Action Plan on how to develop/improve a DRT service in a peripheral/rural area. The focus was put on some key topics that were identified through a twofold approach including: (i) a dedicated survey that proposed by the ETP coordinator ITL to the ETP followers and (ii) an analysis of the State-of-the-Art-reports (D.T3.2.3) done by the SMACKER scientific partners (ITL, UM and BOKU) under the coordination of ITL that provided evidences on the topics that deserve a more in-depth discussion.

The identification of the key topics was conducted as follows:

- i. The dedicated survey was conducted with a specific email sent to all the SMACKER ETP followers three weeks before the ETP webinar training. The email contained an open request for sending doubts and or clarification request on DRT services as to allow each ETP follower to present their doubts; this was done before the webinar in order to allow the technical speakers to reflect on the responses. The main results from such a survey could be summarized in two specific questions: a)

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<sup>1</sup> Full details are available in SMACKER D.3.2.1 “Guidelines for Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) for Central Europe Policy Makers and stakeholders”, released in April 2020



Are there best practices related to the availability of DRT service in mountainous areas with very low level of population density (e.g. less than 9.5 inhabitants/sqkm) as well as with a high share of elderly?; b) Which is the real cost of the DRT service, given the general perception of such kind of services to be more expensive than the traditional ones, and which are the potential methodologies that can be applied to analyse and compare DRT costs and benefits? These questions were notified to the speakers asking to address the related topics in their presentations. Moreover, the two questions were presented also during the final Questions&Answers slot in Session 2 of the webinar, and the speakers were called to provide more data and experiences related to these two specific DRT topics;

- ii. The analysis of the State-of-the-Art-reports was done by ITL and its technical external support staff. At the time of the analysis, some of the ten reports were not yet in their final version but anyway in advanced phase of completion. This allowed to get a clear vision of all the various DRT topics of interest for all the 10 ETP followers regions. The main results from such an analysis were presented and summarized in a specific presentation provided by Andrea Ballarin titled “Summarising key results from the SMACKER ETP State-of-the-Art reports” (see paragraph 3.1.2).

Based on such a preparatory activity, the ETP was calibrated focusing on understanding innovation and technical solutions, ICT opportunities for public transport policy and measures, case studies and practice of flexible solutions for the sustainable mobility of passengers in rural/low density areas, exchange of best practices among public administrations, public transport operators, relevant stakeholders (national and transnational). To properly treat all the emerging topics and provide the ETP followers with the needed technical information and skills, experts with an EU outstanding knowledge on DRT topics were involved as speakers.



### 3. SMACKER ETP webinar training

The Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) webinar training event took place on 8 September 2021 on the GoToMeeting platform.

The webinar was delivered in two sessions: the first one more related to the ETP activities in the framework of the SMACKER project, the second one more related to technical aspects and experiences related to the development/improvement of DRT services in rural/peripheral areas. This can be appreciated in the agenda of the training event reported here below.

**Table 1: SMACKER ETP webinar training agenda**

SMACKER ETP webinar training		
Session 1. SMACKER ETP. Overview on ETP activities		
10:00-10:05	Introduction to the ETP Training Event	Institute for Transport and Logistics (ITL)
10:05-10:20	Summarising key results from the SMACKER ETP State-of-the-Art reports	Andrea Ballarin, Studio Dott. Ballarin
10:20-10:40	Milton Keynes Council DRT experience: an inspiration from a successful initiative	Adele Wearing, Milton Keynes Council
10:40-10:55	ETP next step. Action Plan template presentation and expected results	Denis Grasso, Institute for Transport and Logistics (ITL)
10:55-11:10	Questions and Answers on the next SMACKER activities	All
Session 2. DRT Technical aspects for the Action Planning phase		
11:20-11:35	From the State-of-the-Art to the Action Plan: issues, tools and data	Riccardo Maratini, Studio Ing. Riccardo Maratini
11:35-11:55	Lessons learned and best practices from the SharePlace Project	Gabriele Grea, SHAREPLACE
11:55-12:15	Developing a DRT service in a peripheral area: an example from a concrete implementation	Michele Scozzai, TPL FVG
12:15-12:30	Round table with ETP followers and their technical experts on their technical needs for the Action Plan development	All

The registration of the event is available on YouTube at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXartQyDy0&t=5831s>

All the speakers' presentations are available at this link:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMACKER/SMACKER-ETP-training-webinar.html>



### 3.1. Session 1. SMACKER ETP. Overview on the SMACKER ETP activities

#### 3.1.1. Introduction to ETP Training Event

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [0:00:00]*

Mr Grasso (ITL) introduced the SMACKER training event by presenting the aim of the meeting and the project in general terms, including its objectives, partnership and foreseen results. Among the expected deliverables there are the ETP followers' Action Plans that must be built with the objective of initiating new Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, on which project partners and ETP follower regions are already working.

After a brief summary of main results of ETP State-of-the-Art reports, the training event provided the participants with some inputs and inspiration on how ETP Action Plans should support the proposal of new/innovative DRT services. Moreover, the presentation included also a first outline of the table of contents of the ETP Action Plans.

#### 3.1.2. ITL Summarising key results from the SMACKER ETP State-of-the-Art reports

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [0:10:00]*

Mr Ballarin (ITL consultant for ETP) presented the key results of ETP regions State-of-the-Art reports, which are meant to pave the way for the drafting of the final Action Plans, in line with the overall objectives of the SMACKER project.

An important concept is that of CORE and SURROUNDING areas: while the first is the territory that will have to benefit from DRT services, the latter is the catchment area containing relevant destinations and attractor poles that are linked to a wider connectivity.

After visualizing the areas on the map, some main data linked to surface and population (including average population density) were presented, thus allowing to identify areas as rural and peri-urban territories. Beside more general points of interest and attractor poles - such as educational and health facilities or services - most of the areas have also a high turistic relevance.

As regards accessibility and transport, all the analysed areas are provided with bus lines and, in most cases, with a railway connection, whereas only a small part of ETP regions already offers alternative mobility facilities such as e-cars and e-bikes rentals. As regards DRT services, some existing examples to be strengthened and complemented by new services are already available in some of the areas.

The stakeholders that have been identified as significant by ETP follower regions include mainly local and regional public authorities, as well as public transport operators, whereas the involvement of SMEs and sectoral agencies could definitely be improved.

The main findings resulting from the SWOT presented by ETP regions in their reports are the following:

- as a matter of fact, a limited number of transport networks and sustainable mobility options are already in place, mainly thanks to local and regional bus lines and through the existing synergies between neighbouring municipalities/regions;
- however, the potential mobility demand is much wider and has not been fully addressed yet, especially due to the difficulty for traditional public transport to match the need of users, with particular reference to non-urbanised areas and off-peak hours;
- at the same time, the appeal and accessibility of private cars matches with the lack of willingness to change traditional behaviors, leading to a low attractiveness of public transport, which is even decreasing since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- for the above reasons, it is necessary to develop new mobility solutions that are flexible, sustainable and efficient, in order to cater for the needs of all kinds of users, including elders, youngsters and people with reduced mobility.





The final ETP Action Plans will have to take into account these considerations to present solutions that are accessible, harmonized and feasible, according to the view of stakeholders involved during the drafting process, and able to exploit the opportunities coming from EU projects.

### 3.1.3. Milton Keynes Council Demand Responsive Transport

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [0:25:50]*

Mrs Wearing (Milton Keynes Council) presented the experience of Milton Keynes Council (UK), where the entire network of subsidised bus service has been converted into a demand-responsive one called “MK-Connect” and starting from last April 2021. MK-Connect is a borough-wide service (encompassing both urban and rural area), which is also synergically integrated with other public transport services as to efficiently provide users with end-to-end journeys anywhere in Milton Keynes. The fleet is mainly made-up of electric vehicles and several diesel-powered wheelchair accessible ones. Concerning dimension and capacity, they are under 10-seats vehicles (mostly around eight-seater mini-vans) and the service is running on private hire licenses (minicab). The expected user’s waiting time for the pick-up is within 30 minutes in urban areas and up to an hour in rural areas. In October 2021 this set-up will be revised as to decide whether to have the same service parameters in all the areas or not. Nonetheless, it is to point out that current parameters represent an improvement with respect to the previous service. The MK-Connect service is running from 6 AM to 11 PM (on Sunday from 9 AM to 6 PM) and it is based on a real-time reactive allocation platform and the booking can be made either through an app (which is the most commonly used way) or by phoning the call-center.

Previously the (traditional) subsidised services were covering about half of Milton Keynes network corresponding to at most 14% of all trips given the low loading factor (i.e. with very few people travelling on them). They were carrying about 1 million trips in the pre-COVID period, with a cost for the MK Council of about 3.3 million euros, which was likely to further increase. Moreover, the COVID-19 period, especially during lockdowns, further impacted on the economic sustainability of the service, thus stimulating the search for a new solution and then leading to the new DRT based and cost-effective MK-Connect service (which implied about 1 million pounds a year of savings, i.e. around 1.170.000 euros/year).

Currently, the Milton Keynes area registers about 24.000 trips per month on the DRT services (and about 12.000 trips per month on the other public transport services). In this purpose, the demand is growing (also due to the reduction of COVID-19 related limitations) and, thanks to the scalable approach adopted, the service is keeping up also by increasing the number of vehicles (after starting with 18 vehicles, the number increased to the current 24). In this purpose, the usage of smaller vehicles is facilitating the scalability with low commercial risk for the operator. Moreover, it is to underline that the contract is based on a flat fee and the operator is then directly interested in increasing the usage. Another key aspect is the availability and sharing of transparent information and data, which provide remarkable basis for planning the future transport network.

Concerning long-service viability, it is recalled that MK-Connect is a subsidised service (though cheaper of the previous one), which is supposed to be kept accordingly also taking into account its social and environmental benefits as well as its key role for the city development (as it allows connecting with lower costs areas being built-up that are characterised by low levels of mobility demand especially at the early stages of development). Moreover, further improvement of the overall transport network would be possible according to a comprehensive vision fostering synergies between the DRT and the core network of the main public transport services.

Among the key lessons learned, along with positive aspect of the benefits of the data availability, they are to be underlined the perception problem (where the impact of a shortcoming is far higher than the one of improvements) and the difficulty in getting people aware and informed about the new services in spite of the high commitment to online communication activities (also due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the possibility of having physical communication events). Moreover, some operational challenges



must be considered, such as the limited driver availability which implied further efforts for recruiting personnel. When asked about a possible before-and-after comparison about the usage of the service by the passengers, Mrs Wearing responded that - apart from some uncertainties due to the contingent situation and developments related to COVID limitation - it is already possible to ascertain an increased share of young users.

### 3.1.4. ETP next steps. Action Plan template presentation and expected results

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [0:46:00]*

Mr Grasso (ITL) presented the template prepared to guide ETP regions in the drafting of their Action Plans, which will be documents providing guidance on overcoming identified problems and challenges, also involving all the key local stakeholders. As a matter of fact, DRT services generally require a large number of technical actors to be designed and implemented.

The proposed index of the ETP Action Plans is the following, each section being maximum 2-page long:

1. **Introduction;**
2. **Aims:** presenting objectives and priorities of the identified DRT development and improvement actions, including their relevance;
3. **Stakeholders involved:** identifying stakeholders already involved and their actual roles and commitments;
4. **Key actions:** describing the main steps to solve the problems underlined in the respective State-of-the-Art-report, in order to reach the proposed objectives;
5. **Implementation time plan:** linking the steps and actions presented to a specific time frame;
6. **Risk analysis:** listing all the possible negative issues that may affect the implementation of actions proposed, including both direct risks and disruptive trends, as well as a list of potential solutions that can be adopted to deal with such risks;
7. **Funding resources:** specifying the available budget and/or an estimation of the needed budget, in order to make the Action Plan as concrete as possible; funding sources can include national and regional subsidies, as well as EU grants. In this sense, examples of DRT services already implemented in the respective country can provide a clear idea of the economic resources needed;
8. **Key action monitoring schemes:** defining the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) useful in order to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan even beyond the end of the SMACKER project. There are some must-have categories of KPIs (quality of service and usage of the supply in the course of the pilot action), while others are optional (quantity of public transport lines, quantity of DRT services, visibility of the service, complaint management, online booking tool, etc.);
9. **Key stakeholders' involvement strategies:** defining the key strategies and tools (such as roundtables, discussions, signature of MoU, etc.) to involve local stakeholders towards reaching the objectives of the Action Plan;
10. **Conclusions:** identifying some conclusions based on the analysis conducted in the previous chapters. However, no implementation of the Action Plan is foreseen within the SMACKER project itself.

Mr Grasso highlights that a first draft of the 10 ETP followers' Action Plans shall be provided by December 2021, while the final versions must be delivered by the end of January 2022. The presentation of all the ETP Action Plans will take place during the ETP final event that will be embedded in the final SMACKER event taking place in Vienna in May 2022.



### 3.1.5. Q&A Session

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [1:06:25]*

With reference to SMACKER ETP Action Plan template, two questions were asked by the ETP follower working on the case of the city of Szombathely (Hungary).

The first question regarded the stakeholders involved. The ETP follower asked about the possibility to insert into the ETP Action Plan report the outcomes of a workshop they held in June 2021, which saw the participation of relevant stakeholders, including for instance some local committees. Mr Grasso confirmed that such outcomes can be included in the SMACKER ETP Action Plan and underlined the importance to actively involve the identified stakeholders in the Action planning phase.

The second question was about the event that ETP followers must organize in order to involve the key stakeholders in the SMACKER Action planning process. In this regards, Mr Grasso explained that in principle it is up to the ETP follower to decide on the best suitable approach/tools/kind of event to involve the local key stakeholders (round tables, one to one calls, etc.) on the basis of the specific aspects and needs of each ETP case. Mr Grasso remarked that it is important that at least one event is organized and reported in the framework of the SMACKER Action planning activities.

## 3.2. Session 2. DRT Technical aspects for the Action Planning phase

### 3.2.1. From the state of the art to the Action Plan: issues, tools and data

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [1:13:00]*

Mr Maratini (ITL consultant for ETP) recalled some key aspects and challenges implied by the development of the Action Plan.

Also, during the presentation, an online poll administered via the Mentimeter tool containing was launched as to stimulate participants in making-up their mind about some key aspects: the comments on the Mentimeter poll results are reported in chapter 3.3.

The first question of the Mentimeter poll focused on which are the expected issues (at this stage) to be treated in the ETP Action Plan for the DRT development. Participants were asked to rank some topics from the most challenging/critical one to the (expected to be) less problematic. Then, Mr Maratini highlighted how the establishment of a DRT does request for a complex and multifaceted set-up encompassing:

- Understanding the key drivers of demand;
- Choosing the operational model;
- Deciding the amount of service flexibility;
- Providing a smooth and easily accessible service through booking systems and ICT tools;
- Involving stakeholders and informing (potential) users;
- Ensuring adequate resources (funding vs costs).

The first point “Understanding the key drivers of demand” is a particularly relevant one: it has already been the objective of some ETP activities, starting from the development of the State-of-the-Art reports. These analyses are needed in order to elaborate a functional solution well-tailored on the actual needs of the target users. In this purpose, it must be emphasized the very profound difference that could exist among the various typologies of target users (e.g. between “choice” and “captive” users, i.e. between those who have or not other alternatives to the proposed DRT), that must be consequently reflected in the appropriate service to provide them with. This could imply very different approaches ranging from the set-up of a commercial service instead of a service with a stronger social value (e.g. dedicated to people who cannot use the car and/or do live in a territory with reduced accessibility). Hence, in order to pave the way to an effective and successful DRT implementation, a thorough understanding not only of the demand volumes



but also of the key needs and perceptions of the users is required. On the other hand, an analysis of how to frame and integrate the new DRT in the overall public transport supply is fundamental as well.

The other three questions of Mentimeter poll were related to the approach most likely to be envisaged in defining the DRT solutions that should be developed as an outcome of ETP followers Action Plan. The three investigated DRT features were:

- Operating model;
- Level of flexibility;
- Booking system.

Subsequently, the presentation focused on the importance of the availability of ICT innovative and flexible tools and of adequately developing the data integration, sharing and analyses that are fundamental for a DRT service establishment. Mr Maratini showed an example of the possibility of assessing accessibility through isochrone maps with an open tool; the example was based on the usage of road network open data (OpenStreetMap) and of public transport service data available in the GTFS standard. Also, the importance of ensuring adequate resources (further discussed in the following of the event) was recalled, together with some potential factors that could hamper a successful DRT service implementation. Among the hampering factors, it is worth mentioning the following ones (Enoch et al., 2006):

- Unrealistic expectations about costs;
- High dependence on the fundings activated for the start-up activities;
- Lack of understanding of the targeted demand;
- Attempt to provide very flexible services with small fleets;
- Insufficient marketing and lack of awareness among potential users and probably insufficient engagement of the required actors;
- Competition from alternative transport modes (e.g. taxi).

In order to have more information on the above topics, the ETP followers were also invited to refer to the presentation and the materials provided during the first ETP training event held on 10 November 2020<sup>2</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Lessons learned and best practices from the SHAREPLACE project

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [1:35:00]*

Mr Grea (SHAREPLACE project) presented the lessons learned and the best practices from the SHAREPLACE project, which was also co-funded by the Interreg Central Europe Programme and ended in November 2020. In order to develop an innovative approach for improving connectivity of existing multimodal network, SHAREPLACE fostered the integration of flexible and shared mobility solutions with traditional transport systems. Five different approaches were tested through pilots in local contexts within the project area, which was somehow quite overlapping with the SMACKER one. In particular, two pilots focusing on DRT services according to a common approach were developed in Crema (Italy) and Zalaegerszeg (Hungary). For this purpose, four challenges were addressed:

1. Participation, living labs and stakeholder engagement (summarised in an engagement and co-design guideline);
2. Implementation, tests, organisational aspect and constraints;
3. Digitalisation, data sharing;
4. Economic sustainability, extracting value from innovation, collaboration and efficient use of resources.

The analyses and tests carried-out within SHAREPLACE resulted in the following main outcomes:

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<sup>2</sup> Material available on the SMACKER website at [https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMACKER/SMACKER-\(ex\)-Maribor-scientific-event--.html](https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMACKER/SMACKER-(ex)-Maribor-scientific-event--.html)



- a. Opportunity for developing a “technology service hub”, which can provide an open-source IT solution supporting the integration of different services and can be made accessible to everyone through a repository with all the codes and the support of an active community of developers;
- b. Need for drafting sustainable business models, which must accompany the pilot projects in all their phases towards their potential scale-up;
- c. Maintenance of the services developed through the pilot activities, which could be also further developed by the transport operators.

Overall, three level of experiences on the DRT theme were developed in SHAREPLACE with particular reference to the following territorial areas:

1. Osijek (Croatia), where the feasibility of a DRT service was analysed through a co-design process including the aspects related to the regulatory framework, which is currently hampering the development of DRT services in Croatia;
2. Zalaegerszeg (Hungary), where a DRT pilot service was activated in some hilly areas in the outskirts of the city not covered by the public transport service. Hence, this implied starting from scratch and developing a DRT service well-integrated in the overall public transport network: this was obtained through a co-design approach (involving stakeholders and users) and by a test consisting of several phases;
3. Crema and Pavia (Italy), where a relevant attention was put in the co-design steps too (this was particularly true in Crema, which was the first addressed case then relevant from the methodological point-of-view). The pilot addressed the improvement of an existing DRT service by optimising and enhancing it, also through the adoption of a smart ICT platform enabling a higher service flexibility. Concerning the pilot implementation, it is noted that it took place during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, also in a context particularly impacted. Nonetheless, the test was very successful and paved the way to the service further implementation and replicability.

A particular commitment was reserved to the analysis of different business models and to answer the key issue of the economic sustainability. In general, digitalisation and integration emerged as key drivers for a successful DRT implementation. In particular, the role of digitalisation was underlined with reference to front-end user interfaces and, above all, to the background of data integration and analysis allowing to better integrate services. Another important aspect emerging in SHAREPLACE was the regulatory and funding framework that in some cases should be innovated as to allow the actual implementation of the data integration process. Other relevant possibilities are the development of P2P solutions<sup>3</sup> on a community basis and the provision of incentives to citizens (monetary and non-monetary) using DRT services.

Finally, Mr Grea recalled specific aspects of the business model for the DRT experience scaling up that emerged in the Italian and Hungarian pilot areas. In the case of Crema (IT), key points are to identify and diversify the DRT services for the various target users and to scale them up through a unifying platform that should include different pricing strategies. In the case of Zalaegerszeg (HU), it emerged the possibility for involving in the DRT service co-funding also private operators, especially firms and others business activities benefitted by the DRT services themselves.

### 3.2.3. Best practices from the DRT service of Trieste Trasporti

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [2:04:40]*

Mr Scozzai (TPL FVG) presented the experience of the first demand responsive transport in the Trieste area (as well as in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region), which lasted from July 2019 to March 2020. It was activated as a pilot of the project PERIPHERAL ACCESS, co-financed by the Interreg Central Europe Programme. The service, called SmartBus, was carried out in the outskirts of the city of Trieste, along a strip (between Basovizza and Borgo San Mauro) of about 150 sqkm of mainly rural areas in the Karst Plateau (within the

<sup>3</sup> A P2P solution is a decentralized platform/solution whereby two individuals interact directly with each other, without intermediation by a third party.



former province of Trieste). However, the relevance of this experience is not merely local since it represented a first testing for a wider adoption of DRT services envisaged by the Friuli Venezia Giulia regional plan for local public transport. For this purpose, TPL FVG as concessionaire operator for the whole Region is activating similar services in other regional mountainous contexts in the next months.

SmartBus was operated every day of the week (including holidays) from h 8.30 AM to 9 PM. The service was running only along the routes of the regular public transport service, but it was accessed solely upon reservation. The fleet consisted of two 10-meter buses (one operating in the Eastern part of the Trieste province and the other in the Western part). They were linking the more peripheral towns of the province with two nodes (Prosecco and Villa Opicina) from which it is easy to make interchanges with other public transport services linking to the Trieste city centre. The reservation and booking could be made either via app or through the call center. In particular, the user could book a ride by choosing the departure and arrival stop as well as the trip time slot. Moreover, the users could ask to leave after a certain time or to arrive at destination within a certain time. Hence, the IT software searched for solutions within 30-minute intervals (respectively) from/to the requested time; the identified solution was sent to the user (via text message or email), while in case of no service availability the user was suggested to contact the call center as to find a different solution. The booking was possible up to 2 hours prior to the ride and the bus stops served by the DRT were about 300 (out of a total of about 1500 in the whole province of Trieste). In the first phase the service was free, while in the second phase charged to users 2 euros per ride (apart for people with disabilities or with bus pass for whom it remained always free). The total cost of the initiative (including start-up, technological platform, call centre, website, advertising and communication) during the eight months was about 250.000 euros. As in many other experiences throughout the EU, the revenues covered only a very small part of the costs.

Among the issues to be highlighted there is from one side the legislative aspects that hampered the extension of the service across the (close) border with Slovenia, and from another side the structural limitations in the number of the users due to the need to get people acquainted with such a new approach (especially for the elderly). Out of about 2.000 requests a total number of 1.800 travellers was transported (which corresponds to an average of 2 passengers per trip), since in 22% of the cases there was not an available service matching with the request made by the user.

A key lesson learned is that DRT can be a response to the low profitability of some lines. On the other hand, relevant efforts and time are needed to have a DRT service properly exploited, mainly due to the need of a cultural change in the approach of the user to the public transport service.

Mr Scozzai finally clarified that as the critical phase of COVID-19 pandemic is finished, probably TPL FVG will re-start similar DRT service in the Trieste area, possibly with 2 different kinds of services: a night DRT bus linking the city centre to the outskirts (especially for students) and a connection between the suburbs and the coastal strip, the latter complementing the traditional bus services especially during off-peak hours.

### 3.2.4. Q&A Session

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [2:20:45]*

In this session, the SMACKER ETP team provided the answers to two questions received in the previous days.

The first question was related to the availability of DRT service in mountainous areas with very low level of population density (e.g. less than 9.5 inhabitants/sqkm) as well as with a high share of elderly: Mr Grasso explained that a SMACKER toolbox containing different cases is being developed and will be released in the next months, as to share lessons learned and experiences from the different SMACKER pilot cases, other EU projects, etc.

The second question was related to the cost of the DRT service, given the general perception of such kind of services to be more expensive than the traditional ones, and to the potential methodologies that can be applied to analyse and compare DRT costs and benefits. In this regard, Mr Maratini briefly recalled that



usually DRT services address particularly challenging situations per se (especially in term of economic viability): indeed, DRT services themselves are often introduced as more cost-effective solutions in comparison to traditional ones: a remarkable example of this was provided by the case of Milton Keynes presented in the first session of this webinar training. As regards the theoretical possibility of carrying out some kind of cost-benefit analysis - which can be an interesting exercise - also because it could allow to underline the environmental benefits - it must be emphasised that it implies an high level of uncertainties especially in early stages (before testing and monitoring the service) and also a general lack of data that would be needed for obtaining well-grounded estimation and forecasts on such complicated dynamic phenomena to be modelled.

Moreover, from an economic point of view it is very difficult to clearly quantify the cost of a DRT service as it is related to several elements that could be different for each specific context. For this reason, it is important to elaborate and check different elements supporting an iterative planning, testing, monitoring and fine-tuning process (as being done in Milton Keynes). An element to be considered when assessing a DRT service is the often quite long process for getting users acquainted with this new approach, which could result in a further level of uncertainty as well as more time needed for reaching the stationary condition that would allow to elaborate reliable forecasts. It is noted that apart from commercially appealing services (typically related to context different from those on which SMACKER is focusing on), DRT service are mostly services that inevitably need to be subsidised.

Finally, Mr Grea also underlined the importance of the fine-tuning and monitoring process towards the establishment of a successful well-tailored DRT service, and also the need for taking into account that all the evaluated solutions must be compared with other possible alternatives (which could be even more costly).

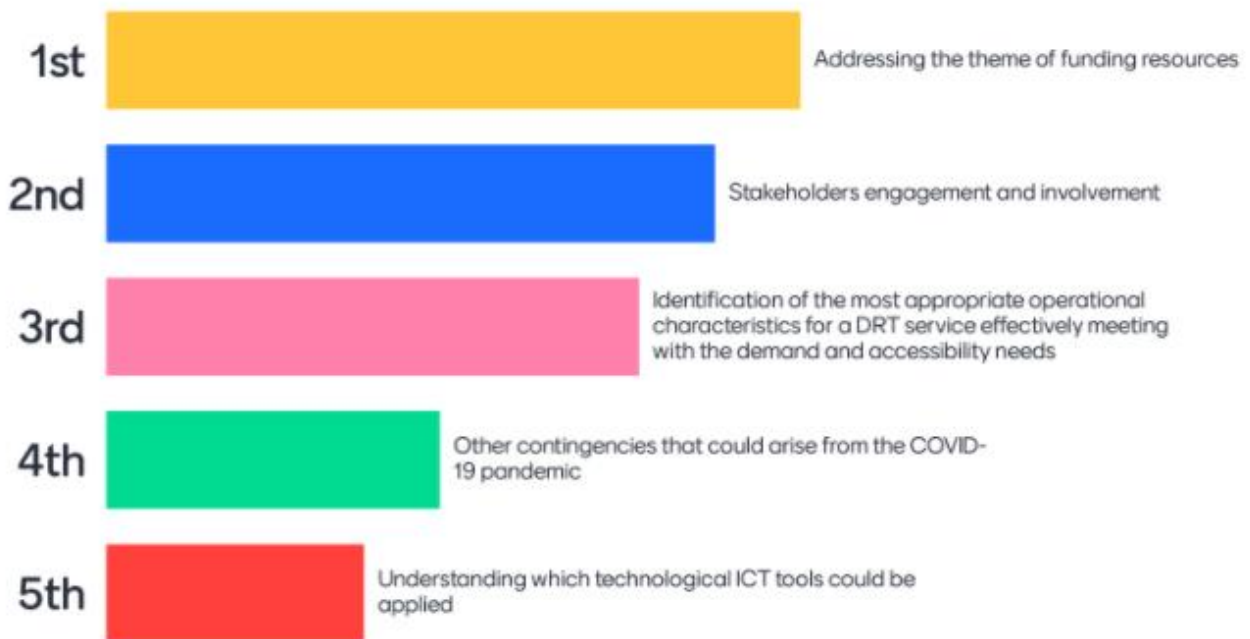
### 3.3. Results from the Mentimeter survey

*Time reference in the video available on YouTube [2:39:20]*

In the end of the webinar training, Mr Grasso (ITL) took the floor to present the results of the Mentimeter poll filled in by participants during the event.

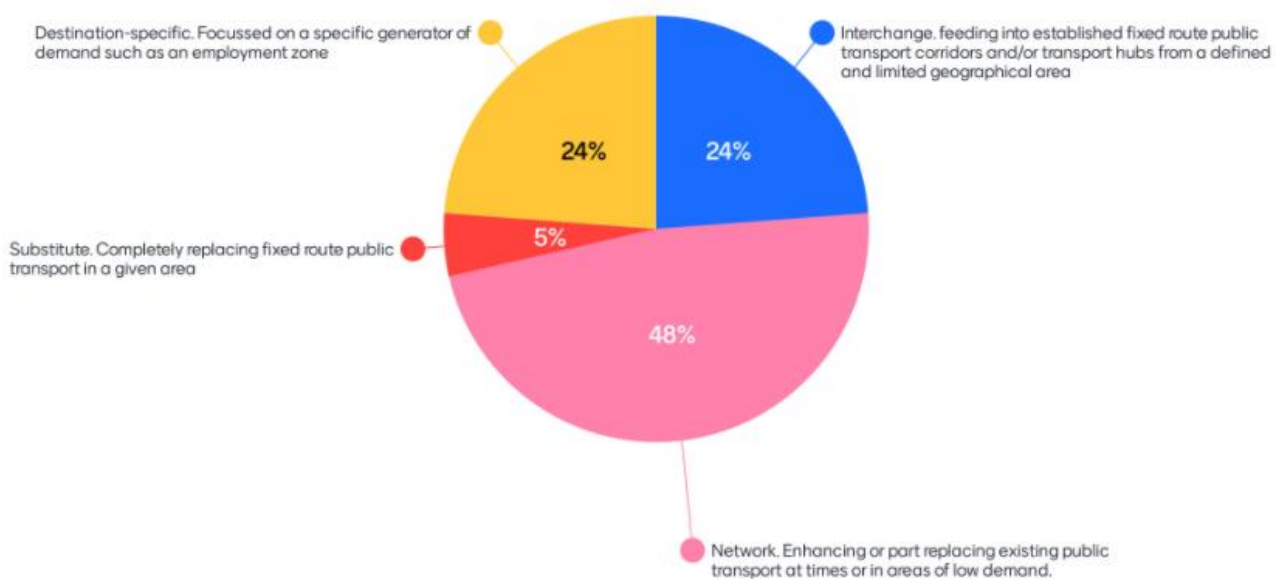
Twelve participants on the total thirty-three ones (full details in chapter 3.4) answered the poll. As the webinar was designed for the ETP partners, especially the follower regions were invited to fill the questionnaire. This explains the gap among participants and contributors to the survey.

The first question asked to rank five issues that must be faced for establishing a DRT service from the most critical (rank 5) to the less problematic (rank 1). According to the poll results, which are presented in the figure below, the issue of funding resources is perceived as the most challenging one, closely followed by the stakeholders' engagement and the identification of the appropriate operational features of the service: all these aspects are foreseen to be treated in the ETP Action plan. By contrast, participants identified contingencies related to COVID-19 and development of ICT technologies as less problematic.



**Figure 1: Most critical issues for establishing a DRT service (results from Mentimeter poll)**

The second question was related to the operating model perceived as the more adapt for a DRT service. As can be appreciated in the figure below, according to the 45% of respondents, the better approach would be to develop a network model, enhancing or partially replacing existing transport services in the targeted area and/or in hours of low demand. Another 50% of responses were equally divided between a destination-specific scheme and an interchange model, departing from a defined and limited geographical area. Only 5% of respondents preferred a substitutive model completely replacing the public transport services available.



**Figure 2: Preferred DRT service operating model (results from Mentimeter poll)**





The third question of the poll was related to the preferred level of flexibility of a DRT service. As shown in the figure below, 50% of respondents expressed a preference for a semi-flexible system, with a combination of DRT and fixed routes, while 33% preferred a fixed route, with flexibility only for specific areas and times of the day. Lastly, a fully flexible system was the first choice in the 17% of answers.

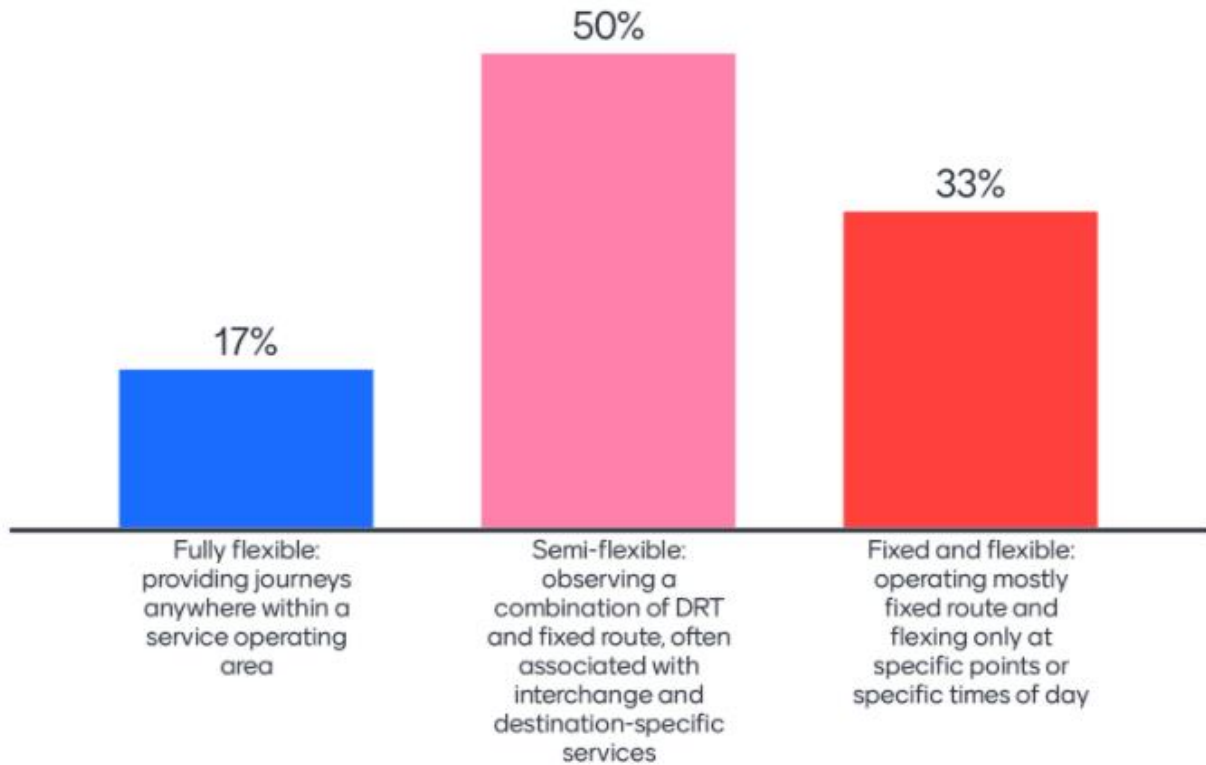


Figure 3: Preferred DRT service level of flexibility (results from Mentimeter poll)

The last question posed through the Mentimeter poll concerned the preferred DRT service booking system. The results are summarized in the figure below. 79% of respondents perceived a double-booking modality as the most optimal choice, i.e. through a phone center and through an online mobile app. By contrast, 14% selected the sole online digital app, while a phone center booking system was chosen in the 7% of answers.

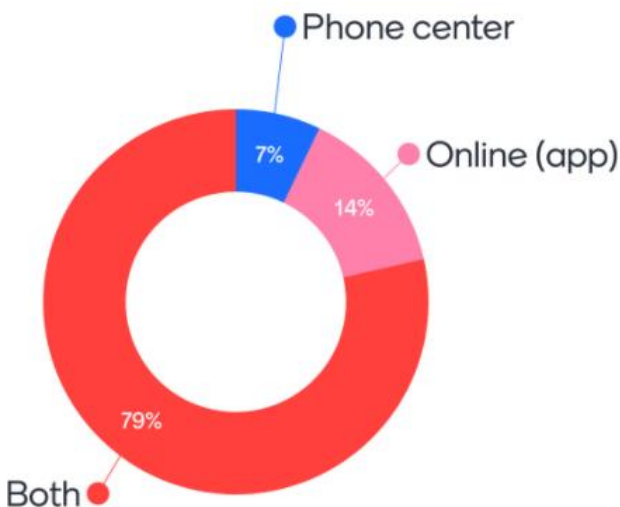


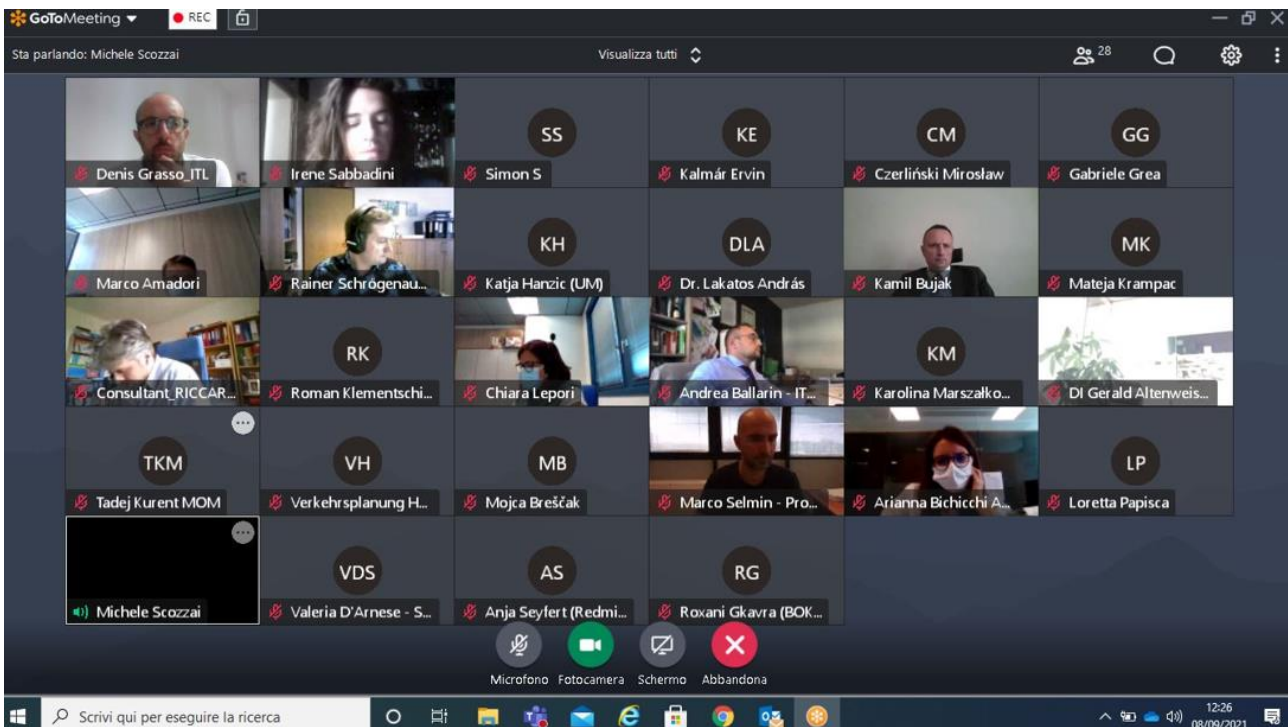
Figure 4: Preferred DRT service booking system (Mentimeter poll results)



### 3.4. Attendees

The SMACKER ETP webinar was attended by 31 unique participants logged into the webinar. Of those 31 unique loggings, 6 were presenters, 2 were moderators, and 24 were attendees from 25 organizations. Of the 25 organizations, 7 were ETP followers, while the other 3 ETP followers were represented by their technical experts contracted within SMACKER (Monghidoro/San Benedetto Val di Sambro, Castel d’Aiano and Mobilito). Other 6 organizations were SMACKER Project Partners (PPs), while 1 was a SQPM member from another organization. The other participants were independent consultants (SMEs) and general public.

The screenshot below shows 28 people who were connected in a specific moment of the webinar.



**Figure 5:** Screenshot of the GoToMeeting platform showing the participants connected to the webinar at that specific moment

The SMACKER ETP webinar reached out different SMACKER Target Groups<sup>4</sup>. The table below summarized the target groups directly reached by the SMACKER ETP webinar.

<sup>4</sup> Ref. SMACKER AF page 89



**Table 2: SMACKER Target Groups reached through the ETP webinar training**

SMACKER Target Groups	Number of reached persons per Target Group	Number of reached organizations in the Target Group
General public	1	1
Higher education and research	8	2 (5 considering SMACKER PPs)
Local public authority	14	8 (11 considering SMACKER PPs)
SME	6	6
National public authority	1	1
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>19</b> <b>(25 considering SMACKER PPs)</b>



## 4. Webinar promotion, follow-up activities and takeaways

In the weeks before the webinar, two reminders were sent to all the SMACKER ETP followers and their external technical experts, as to encourage their participation.

Also, a news was published on the SMACKER website on 30 July 2021 in order to inform all the interested stakeholders about the webinar.

After the webinar, all presentations and the webinar recording were made publicly available on the SMACKER website:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SMACKER/SMACKER-ETP-training-webinar.html>

Afterwards, a dedicated email was sent to all ETP members providing the above link to facilitate their full access to the ETP webinar content.

Furthermore, a news was published on the SMACKER website on 13 September 2021 announcing the availability of all the ETP webinar training materials.

**30.07.2021**  
**NEWS**

### SMACKER ETP TRAINING WEBINAR IN SEPTEMBER

The SMACKER ETP training webinar is coming up and will be held on **September 8**. This event will provide ETP followers all the required information to correctly draft and present their Action Plan on how to develop/improve their DRT service. Key technical topics such as data needs and sources for planning and ICT tools will be discussed. Stay tuned!



**13.09.2021**  
**NEWS**

### SMACKER ETP TRAINING WEBINAR: MATERIAL ONLINE

The ETP training webinar was held on 8 September, with over 30 participants, including ETP followers and technical experts.

By clicking **here** you will have access to all the presentations as well as the video recording of the event!



Figure 5: Screenshots of the news published on the SMACKER website before and after the webinar

The main technical takeaways from the webinar - which can be supportive especially for the ETP followers in preparing their Action Plans - can be summarized as follows:

- The summary of the 10 ETP State-of-the-Art reports presented by Andrea Ballarin shown as there are many difficulties for traditional public transport to match the need of users, with particular



reference to non-urbanised areas and off-peak hours. For this reason, it is necessary to develop new mobility solutions that are flexible, sustainable and efficient, in order to cater for the needs of all kinds of users, including elders, youngsters and people with reduced mobility. Every activity related to a development/improvement of a DRT service has to start from an analysis of the users' needs;

- The Milton Keynes Council case shows as it is possible to convert all the entire network of subsidised bus service into a demand-responsive service. This “large scale” conversion requires large national funds. This case study also shows the importance of communication activities and the difficulties in getting people aware and informed about the new services in spite of the high commitment to online communication activities (also due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the possibility of having physical communication events);
- The Mr. Maratini’s presentation focussed on the scientific literature; the analysis of DRT real case studies showed that there are some potential factors that could hamper a successful DRT service implementation/improvement. Unrealistic expectations about costs, lack of understanding of the targeted demand, attempt to provide very flexible services with small fleets, insufficient marketing and lack of awareness among potential users, insufficient engagement of the required key local actors and the competition with alternative on demand transport modes (e.g. taxi) are the main hampering factors;
- SHAREPLACE project showed the importance of a good data management and the definition of solid business models, which are fundamental in order to have successful and reliable DRT services. Moreover, the case studies developed in this EU project are deeply described in the project website, which gives the opportunity to access to reports and online open-source tools able to help public authorities in improving/developing their DRT services;
- The Trieste Trasporti DRT case study showed some practical examples and solutions on how to develop a demand responsive transport in a peripheral rural area. This case also is very interesting as some solutions (also thanks to some EU funds) can be developed also in cross border areas, which in the specific case involved Italy and Slovenia.

Finally, the following practical information must be kept in mind by the ETP followers:

- It is important to start the Action Plan related activities in due time in order to get the document ready to be released by the set dealines, which are available in the the Mr Grasso’s presentation (paragraph 3.1.4);
- DRT improvement is not an easy task but there are several succesfull experiences and case studies showing potential solutions that can be replicated. Each ETP follower must consider these experiences in order to develop more reliable and effective Action Plans;
- The SMACKER project intends to support the ETP followers in the development of their DRT Action Plans. After the two training events held in November 2020 and in September 2021 to provide technical information on DRT solutions development/improvement, the next ETP event will be hold in coincidence with the final SMACKER conference in Vienna in May 2022: in this occasion, all the 10 ETP followers will present their Action Plans.

After this webinar, all the ETP followers are called to start working on their Action Plans with the support of the SMACKER technical experts and the related SMACKER partners of reference.



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## 5. References

1. SMACKER Application Form, Version 27 February 2019
2. SMACKER “D.T3.2.1 Guidelines for Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) for Central Europe Policy Makers and stakeholders”, April 2020
3. SMACKER “D.T3.2.2 Call for non partner “peripheral” authorities in CE to attend Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP)”, July 2020
4. SMACKER “D.T3.2.4 Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) Training Curriculum”, May 2021
5. SMACKER “D.T3.2.6 Enlarged Transfer Programme (ETP) transnational event in Maribor-SI, March 2021

### Web references

6. <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SHAREPLACE.html>
7. <https://getaroundmk.org.uk/on-board/mk-connect>
8. <https://www.triestetrasporti.it/>



## 6. Annex - Participants to the SMACKER ETP webinar

ID	NAME	ORGANIZATION	SMACKER TARGET GROUP	ROLE IN SMACKER <sup>5</sup>
1	Alexandra Hochkofler	Verkehrsplanung Hochkofler	SME	Technical expert
2	Denis Grasso	ITL	Higher education and research	PP
3	Marco Selmin	Provincia di Padova	Local public authority	ETP
4	Mojca Breščak	Municipality of Moravske Toplice	Local public authority	ETP
5	Tadej Kurent	City of Maribor	Local public authority	ETP
6	Brigitte Hainzer	Tirol Werbung	Local public authority	ETP
7	Michele Scozzai	TPL FVG	Infrastructure and (public) service provider	None
8	Loretta Papisca	Provincia di Padova	Local public authority	ETP
9	Arianna Bichicchi	AMR	Local Public Authority	ETP
10	Roxani Gkavra	BOKU	Higher education and research	PP
11	Giuseppe Luppino	ITL	Higher education and research	PP
12	Justyna Suchanek	Gdynia	Local public authority	PP
13	Manfred Mair	RMO	Local public authority	PP
14	Irene Sabbadini	ITL	Higher education and research	PP
15	Gabriele Grea	RedMint	SME	None
16	Marco Amadori	SRM	Local Public Authority	PP
17	Alexandra Dörfler	Ministry of sustainability and tourism	National public authority	SQPM MEMBER

<sup>5</sup> [PP / ETP FOLLOWER / CONTRACTED ETP TECHNICAL EXPERT / None]



ID	NAME	ORGANIZATION	SMACKER TARGET GROUP	ROLE IN SMACKER <sup>5</sup>
18	Katja Hanzic	University of Maribor	Higher education and research	PP
19	Rainer Schrögenauer	Komobile	SME	Technical expert
20	Kamil Bujak	Metropolitalny Związek Komunikacyjny Zatoki Gdańskiej	Local public authority	ETP
21	Lakatos András	Budapest University of Technology and Economics	Higher education and research	Technical expert
22	Adele Wearing	Milton Keynes Council	Local public authority	None
23	Mateja Krampac	City of Maribor	Local public authority	ETP
24	Riccardo Maratini	Studio Ing.Riccardo Maratini	SME	Technical expert
25	Chiara Lepori	SRM	Local Public Authority	PP
26	Roman Klementschtz	BOKU	Higher education and research	PP
27	Andrea Ballarin	Studio Ballarin	SME	Technical expert
28	DI Gerald Altenweisl	Raum I Schmiede	SME	Technical expert
29	Simon S	N.A	General public	None
30	Czerliński Mirosław	Politechnika Warszawska	Higher education and research	Technical expert
31	Kalmár Ervin	City of Szombathely	Local public authority	ETP