

# Which mobility policy for rural or sparsely populated areas?



Republic of Serbia

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- ▶ Creating policies for rural and sparsely populated areas, suggests a holistic approach in planning \* involving all stakeholders, government, transport operators..). Due to different topographic conditions of the terrain, rural settlements differ among themselves i Serbia, which is a key precondition for further development of active mobility modes in such environments (example of Vojvodina plain villages, that allow uninterrupted use of cars, bicycles and even walking, and the example of sparsely populated or mountain villages, that require a lot of investment in infrastructure, *due to steep hilly terrain and highly dispersed and isolated dwellings*).
- ▶ When we talk about rural areas and transport policies, in Serbia, in addition to the Ministry of Transport, the competencies are shared by the Ministry of Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, if we talk about rural transport policies in national parks and protected areas.
- ▶ The responsibilities for transport in rural areas, according to the Constitution of Serbia, is delivered to local governments ( local governments take care of the construction, reconstruction, maintenance and use of local roads and streets and arranges and provides local transport);
- ▶ About 36% of the total rural territory of Serbia, includes settlements at an average altitude of 500 meters and more, were the poor quality infrastructure contributes to certain disorders in the quality of the environment.
- ▶ In the context of increasing private car use, rural areas, especially sparsely populated areas, are in a position where they need to find alternative transport solutions to address changing mobility issues.

# Legal framework

## ▶ **Draft Road Safety Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030**

### One of the special goals:

- ▶ Mobility management goals - in favour of sustainable road safety
- ▶ This strategy relies on a sustainable development strategy and sustainable mobility plans.
- ▶ **Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for the period 2014-2024** offered a vision to manage the natural resources, environment and cultural heritage of rural areas in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, in order to make rural areas an attractive place to live and work for young people and other residents.
- ▶ There is no specific rural mobility/transport policy in Serbia

## Rural mobility in Serbia

- ▶ There is no policy for rural mobility in Serbia, nor any assigned responsibilities and sufficient committed budget• It is left to regions and local governments to provide such services if they choose to, or do what they can with the limited resources allocated.
- ▶ Rural mobility has received far less attention from policy-makers than urban mobility and there is a serious lack of conventional transport.
- ▶ The reality for many rural areas is few buses, even and almost total dependence on cars. This obliges people to spend more on travel, and to use private transport, cars and bicycles..



# Improving mobility in rural areas in Serbia

- ▶ The development of transport infrastructure is an important prerequisite for reducing and controlling the emigration from rural areas. Poor quality of infrastructure and lack of investment in rural and less populated areas in Serbia, contributes to certain disorders in the quality of the environment.
- ▶ As regards road safety, infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and the elderly will be improved (especially sidewalks, curbs, bicycle paths, public transport stops, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in areas of schools and gathering places, roads through settlements and other parts of the network where the participation of vulnerable users is increased).
- ▶ In order to improve the rural mobility, the Ministry of Village Care awarded non-refundable funds for the purchase of minibuses for the transportation of the rural population - 10 million EUR from the budget.
- ▶ This assistance will directly contribute to solving the problem of transporting the rural population in 479 villages across Serbia, and on a weekly basis this type of transport will be used by between 17,000 and 18,000 passengers. Minibuses purchased with these funds will be used exclusively for the needs of transporting the rural population from one village to another, or from the village to the city / municipal headquarters.
- ▶ In this way, the inhabitants of the village will be enabled to perform economic activities, availability of adequate health care, going to school for the youngest, sports and cultural activities.



# Future challenges

In order to improve future investments, the government must:

- ▶ Begin to create policy frameworks that improve mobility in rural areas
- ▶ Initiate cooperation among all responsible institutions and levels,
- ▶ continue to offer subventions for better mobility in rural areas,
- ▶ Allocate more financial resources
- ▶ continue investing in infrastructure ,
- ▶ existing and emerging mobility deficits in rural areas must be addressed,
- ▶ On our path towards EU, as a candidate country, we will use our eligibility for regional and rural development funding in order to improve the mobility in rural areas,
- ▶ Use technical assistance programs to build technical and institutional capacities



