

## MAMBA Final web conference:

### No future for rural Europe? Breaking the vicious circle with successful mobility and accessibility ideas

*(3, 10 & 17 September 2020)*

#### Conference report III

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The web conference series of the Interreg BSR project MAMBA has invited participants from the Baltic Sea Region and beyond to explore the conditions and challenges for innovative mobility solutions in rural Europe, get inspiration from forerunners in the field and learn how all of us can make a change – be it as citizens or decision-makers! The conference series has been delivered as a three-parted event, each with a different scope and focus – **Session #1 sets the scene** by providing an analytical framework and discusses the multi-disciplinary aspects of the challenge, **Session #2** dives into tangible **examples of mobility and accessibility solutions** realised on the ground, and **Session #3** addresses the **policy dimension of the rural mobility and accessibility** challenge, to discuss and promote regulatory frameworks to support bottom-up solutions as have been explored in the previous session. A total of almost 300 international participants have joined the different sessions!

All sessions have been graphically recorded by **Kitty from Ellery Studio**, which you can see below each of the conference days. We invite you to access the knowledge and get inspired by this conference report and further dive into the challenge to “maximise mobility and accessibility of services in rural areas” by delving into our outputs, available on our [website](#).

#### **Session #3** How can mobility policies open the road for better mobility and accessibility in rural areas? (17 September 2020)

In this session, we explored the potentials for mobility policies towards better accessibility in the rural areas. **Åsa Hildestrand, Head of Communications at Nordregio**, **chaired and moderated** the day. She gave a quick recap on the first and second sessions of the MAMBA web conference series and then briefly introduced the structure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> session, which was directed towards the policy level as compared to the conceptual-analytical and grassroots level before.

A **short video** was shown, explaining how MAMBA responded to the primary challenge of the ageing population in South Ostrobothnia in Finland, by reorganizing services, taking user perspective into consideration and by cooperating with the authorities involved, eventually leading to a Regional Steering Group on Mobility, which is essentially an institutionalised multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism. The video illustrated the need for affordability while catering to mobility services in the remote locations.

**Merja Kyllönen, Member of the European Parliament**, as well as **former Minister for Transportation in Finland** was the keynote speaker of the day. She delivered a talk on **“Rural Mobility – European Policies and Perspectives”** where she expressed how a collaborative approach is the future for rural mobility. With her

experience from Finland, she explained the emerging issue of 'mobility poverty' in socio-economically declining regions causing mobility to be increasingly expensive in remote areas. As a fundamental approach, she recommended the incorporation of political negotiations with the legislature and policy makers; not just for a sustainable mobility market but also for the affected quality of life that outmigration brings. She emphasized on stepping up the pilot work and hard lobbying their positive outcomes to upscale comprehensive MaaS (Mobility as a Service) solutions for rural mobility. She further explained how the Treasuries and Ministries of Finance have a strong leverage to improve the situation, namely taxation, and how making these institutions aware about their apex role against climate change and tax-free, sustainable commutes can be a big step towards the overall mobility services. She ended her speech by persuading everyone involved to learn to think and learn to change for a revolution in the mobility.

The second speaker **Linda Randall, Research Fellow at Nordregio** delivered a recommendation-based presentation on the "[Policy guidelines – Lessons from the MAMBA project](#)". She presented innovative suggestions and inspiring ideas how to structurally support the improvement of mobility in rural areas. For instance, she talked about the need for integrating short-term pilots as disruptive injections embedded in the regular operations and policies, eventually developing long term sustainable rural mobility planning tools. She highlighted the issues associated with public procurement and the scope for making mobility-related procurements easier in the rural areas. Backed with empirical data, she stated how the MAMBA project has not just improved the travel quantity but also the value to accessibility of a range of services, including reaching socio-economically relevant places (e.g. work places).

Following this, a **short video** on the functioning of the [POJO app](#) as a traffic guide for the North Karelia region in Finland was presented. It has been developed in the MAMBA project as a so-called mobility centre and demonstrates how smart digital technologies can guide through suggesting and booking mobility options in remote areas.

Afterwards, **Brendan Finn, Project Manager at MemEx**, a transport research institute and **expert in the SMARTA project**, presented on "[The importance of policy to enable stakeholders to develop Rural Mobility](#)". In his presentation, he addressed the core issue of imbalance in the proportion of population living in the rural areas with the level of attention EU pays towards their corresponding mobility needs. He then talked about how the [SMARTA](#) project, which was commissioned by the European Parliament, and caters to sustainable mobility via research/insight papers of all EU countries, demonstrations/pilot sites and wideranging stakeholder engagements. Deriving from his findings from 14 different mobility practices that struggled due to lack of policy reforms towards a genuine rural mobility strategy not only in EU but also at national and regional level, he said this was a big hurdle for the local communities. He concluded his presentation by explaining how even though rural mobility is essentially a local issue which requires solutions suitable to the local context, the EU needs however to lead the way in setting a rural mobility framework and defining targets for them to trickle down to the local level.

### Q & A panel session

The session then conveyed the questions asked by the participants to the panellists about the timeline for a concrete EU level policy discourse on rural mobility and how MAMBA can be advocated by the participating Member States to the EU for making a common framework for the same. The discussion among the panellists also voiced the opportunity for MAMBA, SMARTA and other projects in this area (e.g. HiReach, INCLUSION, LastMile) to come together to approach to the EU and the EP as part of Territorial Agenda 2030 – this efforts could evolve to some sort of institutionalisation of the efforts on the EU-level, maybe a

permanent Rural Mobility Forum . They also made a strong point on the need for a wider and more holistic approach to deliver sufficient mobility over a long-term period, where the local communities should find the best solutions and are backed by the government’s support along with the EU policy makers.

Lastly, **Dr. Katharina Erdmenger** from the **Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union**, in her speech on [“Beyond 2020 – EU Funding and the German EU Council Presidency”](#) drew light on the two pillars of EU financial framework for the next funding period: the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU Funds and how they can be utilized towards funding rural mobility projects. She explained how while MFF is the traditional 7-year period funding mechanism, the Next Generation EU Funds for the first time will take loans from the financial market and redistribute for regional development. She also affirmed that the Interreg B part of the ERDF is going to stay in the next funding period building hope for the future continuation of projects like MAMBA and SMARTA. She also suggested other funding mechanisms through ERDF channels, Connecting Europe for instance, along with other research programs. She finally encouraged the MAMBA partnership to continue moving forward in cross-cutting solutions and multi-level cooperation to make EU-wide changes towards rural mobility.

### **Closing remarks**

Åsa Hildestrand ended the session by persuading all participants to further study the MAMBA project and to share their solutions with MAMBA. The session concluded with a wishful prospect for MAMBA and SMARTA to further their collaboration with each other and other important actors and projects.

# NO FUTURE FOR RURAL EUROPE ?

Breaking the vicious circle with successful mobility and accessibility ideas

# HOW CAN MOBILITY POLICIES OPEN THE ROAD FOR BETTER MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN RURAL AREAS?

Session 3

17.09.2020

**mamba**  
mobility – accessibility – innovation



Merja Kyllönen, Member of European Parliament  
Former Minister of Transportation

## EUROPEAN POLICIES & PERSPECTIVES



Linda Randall, Nordregio

## MAXIMISING MOBILITY & ACCESS TO SERVICES



Brendan Finn, SMARTA project

## IMPORTANCE OF POLICY TO ENABLE STAKEHOLDERS TO DEVELOP RURAL MOBILITY



Dr. Katharina Erdmenger, Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union

## BEYOND 2020

EU Funding and the German EU Council Presidency



You've got:

- Experience
  - Networks
  - Passionate people ...
- Use your potential & widen the debate!

