

What are the solutions for sustainable and inclusive *mobility in sparsely populated areas* ?

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Most of us must travel every day, whether it's to buy food, go to work or keep a doctor's appointment. In sparsely populated areas, a car is often the only solution. Dependence on a car can be accompanied by economic and social inequalities. Not everyone can afford or has the ability to drive one. Climate change is another issue, given the impact of fossil fuels.

Meeting the challenges of mobility in sparsely populated areas

Developing sustainable and inclusive mobility in sparsely populated areas is both an undeniable necessity and an ambitious challenge. The development of alternative solutions, a real, necessary transition, requires changing mind sets and investing substantial financial resources to meet people's expectations.

To achieve these goals, the EESC has drawn up a set of recommendations that are the result of a major public participation process designed to ensure that the expectations and needs of the people living in the areas concerned are heard.

The recommendations, which focus on three areas, aim to:

- Bring together the conditions for a successful transition to more energy-efficient transport;
- Favour the inter-municipal level and inclusive governance involving citizen participation;
- Enhance the appeal of sparsely populated areas through public transport.

These recommendations require a major new policy and programming law and an overhaul of the tax system to restore local authorities' empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

AN INNOVATIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION SCHEME

To draw on the experiences and proposals of those directly concerned, the EESC has co-produced this opinion with eight CESERs and devised an innovative system of citizen participation. An online platform

has been set up providing feedback on expectations from over 10,000 respondents. To complement this system, a physical consultation specifically designed for residents of the French Overseas

Departments and Regions (DROM) was organised with help from French Post Office employees. It was used to include a contribution specific to overseas France in the opinion.

What are the solutions for sustainable and inclusive mobility in sparsely populated areas ?

1 BRING TOGETHER THE CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO MORE ENERGY-EFFICIENT TRANSPORT

- Include the right to choose the means of transport in town planning regulations, which guarantees all citizens, wherever they may live, easy access to varied, intermodal, safe mobility geared to their situation;
- Rethink the different uses of the road and strengthen and perpetuate training and awareness-raising campaigns to encourage the use of soft mobility;
- Offset inequality by encouraging a change of use through implementing a geographical sustainable mobility flat fee subject to resources and/or disability;
- Meet individual mobility needs in sparsely populated areas by encouraging the production, conversion and use of lighter emission-free motor vehicles;
- Develop a network of new mobility ambassadors in sparsely populated areas to support the shift to other uses and provide residents in these areas with individualised and inclusive advice on mobility, particularly intermodal mobility.

2 GIVE PRIORITY TO THE INTER-MUNICIPAL LEVEL BY PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND SYSTEMATICALLY INVOLVING CITIZENS

- Encourage inter-municipal authorities to organise mobility by opening up governance to all local players;
- Review the criteria for using the Versement Mobilité (VM) by extending it to non-scheduled sustainable and inclusive transport and use tax revenues from motorway companies to increase the financial resources of the most underserved sparsely populated areas;
- Encourage the pooling of different modes of transport by holding local "time management" consultations and, for example, encouraging employers to offer their employees shared low-emission light company vehicles in return for a modulation of the mobility payment.

3 MAKE SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS MORE ATTRACTIVE BY PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

- Launch a public transport reinvestment plan of at least €3 billion a year for small rail lines and at least €500 million a year for public road transport;
- Restore local services (public service access points at railway stations or mobile shops in villages, for example) to reduce the demand for travel from residents of sparsely populated areas (multi-year plan of €36m per year).

THE RAPPOORTEUR

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