

11 AVENUES. 11 PROPOSALS

CONNECTIVITY. TRANSPORTATION (WATERWAYS, TRAINS, FLIGHTS, BICYCLE TRACKS). THE HUMAN DIMENSION

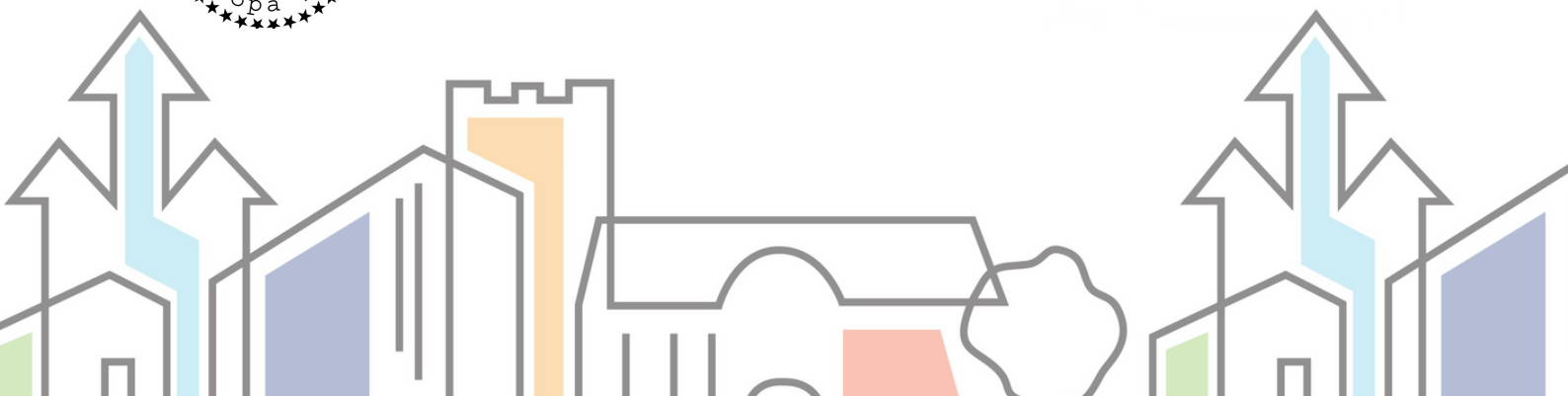
With the adoption of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 accompanied by a unique Recovery Plan conditions have been created to develop a more just, resilient and sustainable Europe. A robust and new cohesion policy is one of the cornerstones of this ambitious endeavour.

The 'Meet the Citizen 2.0' project of the European House covers 5 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CZ, HU, HR, RO and SK); all of them are massive beneficiaries of the EU Cohesion Fund. Our 11 working papers indicate possible avenues how to use effectively these financial instruments in remote, less developed areas of these countries highlighting not only the importance of EU assistance in daily life of citizens but simultaneously contributing to reducing the still significant gap between the citizens and the EU institutions.

Each paper of ours offers not only a brief analyses of an important aspect of cohesion policy in Central and Eastern Europe but proposes also practical solutions for the involvement of citizens, their organisations and other stakeholders in practising partnership for making cohesion policy a success.



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Today when the world is increasingly interlinked, connectivity plays a vital role in strengthening the human dimension in the transport domain and many other areas as well. Making transport networks better prepared for handling challenges also means that citizens will benefit more from the growth that connectivity generates. Civil actors have the possibility to contribute to achieving this aim.

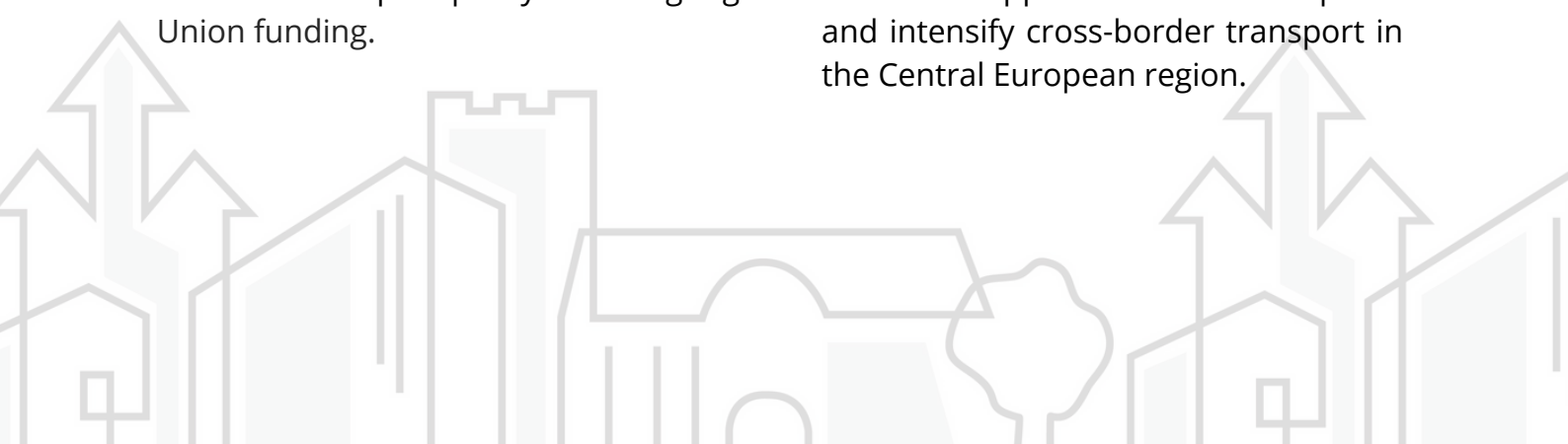
Like other topics such as climate change or digital transition, connectivity is a cross-cutting issue and addresses the following important questions: What exactly is “connectivity”? Why is it important for European citizens? What is the human dimension of connectivity? How can civil society actors make their contribution to strengthening the human dimension of transport connectivity?

Connectivity is mainly about networks. These include different transport links e.g., air, land or sea but also digital networks that can be mobile or fixed, cables to satellites, internet etc. Moreover, connectivity covers energy networks and flows of gas, renewable energy or electricity grids. The improvement of connectivity has become a common European goal. The EU has been successfully connecting its Member States with the creation of a common transport policy including big Union funding.

As part of it, the so-called Trans-European Networks (TEN) were established in 1991 to enhance transport connections between the Member States. The development of transport networks today is part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and involves the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of railway lines, roads, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports, and railroad terminals.

The TEN-T consists of nine corridors that cover multiple modes of railways, roads, inland and maritime shipping routes. The final objective of the EU is to support the extension of TEN-T in order to close gaps, remove barriers and to strengthen social, economic and territorial cohesion in the EU. These types of transport corridors have been extended to many countries outside the EU as well. So far, more than 100 billion EUR has been invested in energy, digital and transport connectivity. The finalisation of the core TEN-T network is scheduled for 2030 and the whole transport connectivity for Europe is planned to be completed by 2050.

Connectivity also became part of the EU Cohesion policy and that of cross-border cooperation. In this line, the new Interreg programme for 2021-2027 will support activities to improve and intensify cross-border transport in the Central European region.



The Interreg programme set priorities in the TEN-T in this regard. The Central Europe region is a hub for European transport connectivity: 7 corridors cross the territory and five of them connect at least three economies of the region. Central Europe is an area that is territorially deeply integrated into the TEN-T network. However, there is a strong need for an improved, more far-reaching comprehensive network for the countries with fewer core TEN-T links and big rural and suburban areas as well, where people are living in poverty and social exclusion. Within the region Croatia, Poland and Slovenia are connected to only two core TEN-T corridors; the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are linked to three corridors.

Connectivity has its human dimension that covers a broad range of issue-areas from education, research and innovation to travel and tourism. Connectivity serves and facilitates human interaction and brings people, places and opportunities closer. Therefore, connectivity has to be approached and managed well and must be sustainable not only environmentally and economically, but also socially.

There are many best practices in Central Europe which illustrate the positive effects of connectivity on human interactions.

The project “BICY” aimed to reduce the excessive automobile use that causes traffic congestion, pollution and health problems. BICY developed a transnational strategy to generate, share and exchange approaches to support a widespread shift towards cycling mobility.

The project made cycling fashionable in Central European cities, among others in Graz, Budaörs (Hungary), Prague and Velenje (Slovenia) and also in the region, particularly among tourists and younger people. In this line, training courses were organised for children from secondary schools to help them to learn cycling from home to school.

The project CHAMPIONS aimed at increasing accessibility by enhancing public transport links between airports and the regions around them, and also by encouraging new flights. CHAMPIONS focused on the development of information infrastructure, the “Passenger Information Systems and Equipment”. Examples of this kind of system include passenger apps and information screens that were put into use by pilot actions in Poznan and Wroclaw airports in Poland. Airports in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Ukraine carried out similar studies.

The project SOL – “Save Our Lives” – aimed to strengthen measures taken by local and regional stakeholders to prevent death and injury caused by road accidents in Central Europe. SOL is based on a grassroots, bottom-up approach and assists communities among others in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia in implementing best practices for developing tools on specific aspects of road safety, child safety, vulnerable road users, roadside workers, etc.



Solutions of automated transport in Central Europe such as unmanned trains, cars or operating systems can reduce or eliminate human factor errors, however, they can also generate social and economic problems such as unemployment. Therefore, public understanding, use and acceptance of automated transport can be a core domain for specialised civil organisations to deal with human and social aspects of transport connectivity.

Follow-up, proposals

Civil society organisations in Central Europe should set up a common platform (with panels and working groups) to analyse the impact of connectivity on the societies in the region. By using best practices, exchanging knowledge, the platform should work out proposals for better design of common public space by connecting different transport routes which will strengthen human interactions and social cohesion thereby increasing safety, well-being, and the quality of citizens' social and material living conditions.

Furthermore, trends such as removal of the human element from transport operations should also be studied. The main findings of the platform should lead to concrete actions such as information and educational campaigns across the region.

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