

FLEXI TEC

COMBINE PT OPERATOR KNOW HOW AND LOCAL OPERATORS

Country: Belgium/Wallonia

OVERVIEW

Short description of the Good Practice Case:

The good practice, FlexiTec, is being tested in Wallonia in 8 mainly rural localities

- The local partners (municipality, CPAS-public center for social help, association and PT operator) determine the service. The local partner organises the call center and the shared taxi trips.
- People that would not have access to PT and often mobility in general get a possibility for transportation.
- It is a service of last resort, when no other alternatives are available.
- This lies in combining existing initiatives into a new mobility service



Figure 1. Flexitec (source: www.infotec.be)

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

- Transport services
 - addressing target group (people having no easy access to PT and by extension mobility, 48% is >65 years of age)
 - are less expensive than telbus (coverage 20% instead of 4% for telbus)
- There is a quite dispersed habitat, so conventional PT is not financially viable

Main objectives of the good practice

- Providing mobility in rural areas
- For people with no access to a car
- In a way as cost efficient as possible, integrating private operators (supporting in a way local operators) and localities

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

<i>Region</i>	<i>Target area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population density</i>
8 mainly rural localities in the provinces of Namur and Luxemburg in the Wallon region	791 km ² in 8 different localities that are not linked one to another	66.995 in 2015	84 inhab. /km ² , ranging between 40 and 240. (Average is increased as one city (density 240) is part of the area)

Other

The FlexiTec service is available in 7 rural villages: Hotton, Paliseul, Viroinval, Havelange, Durbuy, Rendeux and Tellin.

One service is organised around a regional city of 30.000 inhabitants, Arlon.

Target user groups and needs

- The main transportation motive is leisure (family, shopping, tourism, etc. (~50%), followed by medical reasons (~20%)
- Target users are users that have no other mobility solution. A survey among users (with a low response rate) shows that users are rather not active (77%), female (84%) and above 65 years of age (48%)
- 1/3 of users use the service more than 7 times/year, 1/3 use it 3 to 6 times and another 1/3 use it 1 to 2 times a year.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

The project started as a pilot project in 2015 in 8 rural localities for 2 years. It was furthermore prolonged for one year in 2018.

Bodies involved

- Public Transport Operator and local partners (municipality, CPAS (public center for social assistance), association, etc.).
- The regional government subsidises the service as a pilot project via the TEC (max amount of 150 000 EUR that was not completely used)

Mobility services provided/addressed

- The service provides mobility to people in rural areas where no conventional PT exists. Everybody having no access to classic PT can use the service. The use is limited to a maximum of 8 uses/year. Each locality finances the service in a different way. Drivers can be paid or volunteer.
- People need to call 24 hours in advance to reserve their seat. The service is foreseen as a service that brings you to the closest bus stop of a "classical bus line".
- The ticket is paid to the driver most of the time and needs to be paid at each use.
- The service is provided by minibuses (8 passengers) in order to respect legislation on the transport of passengers (in particular decree of 18-10-2007 transport of public interest.)
- The commercial name of the service is FlexiTEC. The service is provided by local operators, municipality, social taxi, association, etc., that also provide the call center for the service.
- PT operator provides logistic and communication support.

Legal Framework

- It is only a pilot project that has been in place since 2015. From 2019 on, it should be merged into a larger framework for rural mobility with one regional coordination and several local coordination centers. The legal framework will become clear at that time.

Cost and Financing sources

- The service is financed by the regional government (mobility minister) and the municipalities. The regional government pays the subsidy to the operators (the municipality in most cases) via the public transport operator.
- The PT operator pays 60% of the estimated average cost once the municipality proves its expenses. The revenues go to the public operator.
- Price of a ticket is a normal bus ticket

Organizational set-up

- The service is organised by local operators, municipality, social taxi. Also, the call center is local. Local operators bring clients to PT operator bus stops.
- Some services are operated by volunteers

Supporting technologies

- Today, there is no particular ITS systems supporting the operation of the service. Each municipality organises its own service.
- In the future, normally from 2019 on, there will be an ICT approach at regional level.

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

A good partnership between public transport operator and local partners. This allows it to work in a more cost efficient way.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Coverage ratio 20% for Flexitec in stead of 4% for telbus.

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Flexi Tec service can be considered a shared service that connects, if necessary, to public transport services.

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

In future a good ICT solution could make the service more attractive. An ICT solution will normally be provided at regional level.

OTHER (E.G. SOCIAL INNOVATION, ETC.)

N/A

ASSESSMENT

Ridership and other key metrics/results (through key-indicators, where applicable)

- In the period 01/2015 till 06/2016, 3624 persons have been transported and travelled 66 000 km. The average trip distance was 18 km with 5 localities where the average was around 25 km. These trip distances do not include onward trips taken using e.g. classic bus.
- This kind of service should be transferable to most other rural areas where different (not always well-marketed) services are in place
- The localities and users were very satisfied with the service, although further optimisation is probably still possible.
- The cost of the service is reasonable. Trips with (no longer) existing traditional buses have a cost of 50 EUR/passenger while the Flexi-Tec trips have a cost around 10 to 15 EUR/passenger. Some of these latter costs are a sunk cost and would have been there even without the service.

Success factors/strengths

- Combining existing resources in a rational and creative way.
- Using the strengths of both main actors. The municipality knows the services available and the particularities of its territory. The PT operator has a good mobility knowhow and regional (financial) support.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

- Lack of a more regional scale approach for call centres with better ICT approach with more real time approach and probably better use of vehicles.
- Uncertainties on how the service will continue. Normally the service will be integrated in a larger regional service.



Photo from Nouvelle La Gazette
<https://centre.lanouvellegazette.be/15430/article/2016-11-29/le-service-flexitec-fonctionnera-toujours-en-2017>

Good Governance

- The cooperation between local actors (municipalities and local (social) operators) is not yet mainstream in Belgium. It furthermore allows to reduce costs for the PT operator compared to a situation where he provides himself the whole service.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE (LESSON(S) LEARNT)

- Using existing resources in a creative way to improve the situation
- Integrating different existing initiatives is a cost effective way to provide rural mobility. The cost coverage rate went up from 4% for a isolated demand responsive transport service to 20% for the more the demand responsive transport integrating other existing services
- Collaboration of different stakeholders is important, in this case these were different transport operators, public, private and social, local and regional public authorities
- The PT operator know how is useful to help integrating local initiatives and make those more efficient
- Such services are an answer to a need

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Contact of the operator and of relevant stakeholders

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Key references

- TEC Namur-Luxembourg, Rapport d'évaluation du projet FlexiTEC, octobre 2016

Websites

- www.infotec.be/fr-be/medeplacer/solutionsdemobilit%C3%A9/solutionstec/flexitec.aspx