

FLEXIBLE MOBILITY SERVICES IN BYALA (OPEN AIR E-MINIBUS AND PHAETONS WITH HORSES)

Country: Bulgaria

OVERVIEW

The project is implemented in Byala, a small town and seaside resort in Eastern Bulgaria, located on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast, in the Varna Province.

“Flexible mobility services in Byala” is a community led initiative designed to provide transport options for tourists as an alternative to individual car-use or taxis. In 2014, the Municipality of Byala permitted private citizens to offer transportation with horse led phaetons during the summer tourist period. In 2015, the Municipality launched an electric minibus designed for site-seeing trips.

The project implementation resulted in (i) improved accessibility to touristic sites in the municipality, (ii) decrease in car-use for tourists.



Figure 1. Horse-drawn phaetons in Byala

Source: Last Mile Project, Interreg Europe; Best Practice Analysis

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

The project addresses the following aspects:

- Local initiatives involving the community to identify transport solutions + needs assessment campaigns.
- Transport solutions at bus/train stations for last mile connectivity.

Main objectives of the good practice

- The main objectives of the project was to provide alternative transport methods for tourists, connecting the town with adjacent site-seeing touristic objectives.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Region	Target area	Population	Population density
Varna District (NUTS III), part of the Northeastern Region (NUTS II) of Bulgaria.	161.8 [Km ²] of which 9.4 Km ² are urban and 152.4Km ² are rural	2,112 ¹ inhabitants	20.56 [inhab. /Km ²]

1 - Values for December 2016, Bulgarian National Statistics Institute

Other

Byala is a touristic attraction located in the central part of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Byala municipality includes 6 settlements, a small town and 5 villages, and is characterised by an aging and declining population. Tourism is defined as the backbone of Byala's development, and the majority of Byala's territory is included in the Natura 2000 protected sites.

Target user groups and needs

The main beneficiaries of the new transport services are the tourists and the owners of summer houses and flats in the municipality who travel to Byala during the summer season. The number of tourists arrivals registered for the high touristic season (May-September) when the services operate was 268,490¹ for 2016.

1 - Data from Municipality of Byala



Figure 2. E-shuttle in Byala
 Source: Last Mile Project, Interreg Europe, Best Practice Analysis

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

The current services were developed in two stages. In 2014 the Byala municipality allowed private citizens to offer transportation with phaetons with horses and next year under a project funded by Operational Programmes Regional Development an e-minibus for site-seeing was purchased and launched during the summer season.

Bodies involved

The stakeholders are the Byala Municipality, the Municipal Cultural Institute, the Historical Museum of Byala and the private owners of the phaetons.

Mobility services provided/addressed

Byala Municipality launched 2 distinct options for flexible transportation for tourists in order to manage the existing mobility needs: phaetons with horses and an e-minibus.

During the high season (May-September) there are a lot of tourists coming to Byala for holidays. The distance from the Byala centre to the resort area is between 2 and 5 km and before implementing the project it was covered only by taxis or private cars.

The same modes of transport were used for visiting the biggest tourist attraction in Byala, i.e. the restored

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Late Antique Fortress at Cape Sv. Atanas, re-opened for visitors in 2014. Together with the new services, access limitations for private cars were introduced in the Late Antique Fortress.

There are 4 phaetons with horses operating in summer time, services being provided by local entrepreneurs. The e-shuttle has 8 seats and a flexible programme, usually running every hour but with the possibility to run every 30 minutes when the demand is high. Both services are located in the central area of Byala, in front of the Tourist Information Centre, and services are available on demand at hotels.

Legal Framework

The Byala Municipality allowed local citizens to offer transportation with phaetons. The legal framework did not require changes, as the private operators of the phaetons are registered as "sole traders".

In Bulgaria, Flexible Transport Systems (FTS) are not defined by the national legislation. The decision making regarding this type of service is left to the municipality level. The Ministry of Transport considers car-sharing and car-pooling services illegal and works at closing down corresponding websites.

Cost and Financing sources

The e-shuttle was purchased by the Municipality of Byala through the Operational Programme "Regional development" (OPRD 2007-2013). The phaetons are maintained by their owners.

Maintenance costs for the e-shuttle service are related to battery changes, estimated at about 50,000 EUR. The maintenance of horse-drawn phaetons is 500 EUR per unit.

"Flexible mobility services in Byala" was developed as part of the Last Mile INTERREG Project, and featured as a good practice.

Organizational set-up

The Municipality of Byala allows citizens to offer transportation with horse-drawn phaetons, under existing provisions of the legislation.

The e-shuttle is owned by the municipality and it is operated by the Municipal Tourist Information Centre. As a result of the project, this center was transformed into a Mobility Information Centre. Currently it offers information about public transport services to Varna and to other smaller settlements, and information about the bike rental offer.

Supporting technologies

No supporting technologies were used for the project.

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The phaetons are operated by private owners, while the e-shuttle is owned by the municipality and currently operated by the Mobility Information Centre.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The project was developed as part of the Last Mile INTERREG Project. The e-shuttle was financed through European funding in the 2007-2013 period and is maintained by the municipality. The phaetons are maintained by the private owners.

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

N/A

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

N/A

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

N/A

ASSESSMENT

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

Byala is a touristic destination and the main indicator collected to measure the project's success is the tourist overnights. These have increased with more than 10% for the 2015-2018 period (i.e. from 250,388 overnights in 2015 to 275,603 overnights in 2018).

The number of phaetons has remained the same as in 2014, but they have a higher occupancy rate. The occupancy has increased with approximately 10-12%, according to the tax declarations of the owners.

The service is more attractive for foreign tourists as it offers the only possibility to visit the main touristic attractions, areas where car access is restricted.

The project might be extended in the future, as the Byala Municipality recently received funding through the LEADER axis (funding under the Agriculture and Fishery programme). Byala together with other 2 maritime municipalities received funding for small projects designed at strengthening the economy and employment in the region. It is expected that after October 2019, calls for small rural projects will be launched.

Good Governance

"Flexible mobility services in Byala" demonstrated effective community engagement. Part of the flexible services are provided by private owners (with phaetons) and there was cooperation between the municipality and the private owners during the implementation of the project.

Success factors/strengths

The service is used by tourists and considered affordable as they are willing to pay for sustainable connections between the town centre and the resort area, especially in light of private-car access restrictions to the Antique Fortress. The number of tourists has increased by 10% after 2014, and the services are permanently in use during the summer season.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

The main difficulties are related to the high demand for the two services, both of which are too small for all the tourists willing to use them. Furthermore, maintenance costs for the recharge of batteries is very expensive. High costs are a difficulties for the maintenance of horses as well, as these costs are not supported by any state body.

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

The good practice of Byala is an example of public-private cooperation for offering flexible transport services profitable both for the local municipality and the SMEs. It could be transferred to many other tourist destinations by using different means of private transport (e-cars, rikshaws, etc.)

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Contact of the operator and of relevant stakeholders

Organization: The Club "Sustainable Development of Civil Society" (CSDCS)

Person contact: Lucia Ilieva

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Key references

- Last Mile Project, Interreg Europe; Document "Best Practice Analysis Synopsys": www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1534255803.pdf
- Last Mile Project, Interreg Europe; Document "Results of PROJECT PHASE 1": www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1538054976.pdf

Websites

- Last Mile Project, Interreg Europe: www.interregeurope.eu/lastmile