

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000988/25
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(6 March 2025)**

Subject: The need to improve public transport in the areas and towns of the Madonie mountains

The challenges posed by geography and the lack of services in mountain areas, particularly in the union of municipalities of the Madonie mountains, make it necessary to rethink mobility in a way that ensures access to basic services and fosters social inclusion.

Not only does the current reliance on private transport exacerbate the remoteness of mountainous areas, it also fuels major inequalities in accessing basic public services, highlighting that there is a problem with regard to guaranteeing citizenship rights for the inhabitants of these areas.

The need to innovate the transport system through travel information services, integrating solutions such as soft mobility and dial-a-ride options, is a key step towards a more sustainable and inclusive mobility.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. What initiatives can the EU promote to support the development of innovative public transport solutions in mountain areas, in line with the strategy of the 2021-2027 European Regional Fund Operational Programme (OP ERDF)?
2. Which European funds earmarked for sustainable mobility can improve accessibility in mountain areas without perpetuating obsolete and non-inclusive transport models and how can this be done?
3. Is any additional financial support envisaged in order to integrate and scale up sustainable and smart mobility projects, besides soft mobility, in Sicily's mountain areas?

Submitted: 6.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission
(12 May 2025)**

1. Mobility issues in rural areas are fully recognised at EU level ⁽¹⁾. Under the current programming period of the European Regional Development and Cohesion Funds, investments should contribute to addressing rural mobility issues and promoting sustainable solutions ⁽²⁾. To assist rural municipalities, the Commission designed and funded the SMARTA-NET project ⁽³⁾, which delivered a catalogue of innovative rural mobility solutions, training programmes for local authorities and practitioners, and established the European Rural Mobility Network, connecting 70 rural municipalities from 14 Member States.

2. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can support projects of accessibility to mountain areas, incl. innovative and soft mobility transport solutions, under the Specific Objective (c) (ii) ⁽⁴⁾ of Regulation 2021/1058 ⁽⁵⁾.

The Regional Programme Sicily ERDF 2021-2027 has in fact planned such actions of support to improve accessibility to inner areas, smart public transport systems and soft local mobility ⁽⁶⁾.

These actions are based on local strategies and with local authorities responsible for the planning and selection of projects. The responsible local authority for Madonie, an inner area with a dedicated territorial development strategy, is currently selecting projects.

The Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan includes around EUR 4.6 billion of investments that could, as part of their scope, promote sustainable mobility in mountain areas.

⁽¹⁾ The New Urban Mobility Framework (2021) promotes sustainable connections between rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. The Commission's Long-Term Vision for Europe's Rural Areas (2021) calls on Member States and regions to develop sustainable rural mobility strategies. In the 2023 Barcelona Declaration, EU transport ministers agreed on the importance of recognising sustainable rural mobility needs in regional and national transport planning systems and called for investments, leveraging the Social Climate Fund and Fit for 55 policies. The Logroño Declaration (2023) advocates allocating EU funds to rural mobility projects.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60-93) includes references to rural and mountainous areas in Recitals (1), (45), (47) and Article 10 (Support for disadvantaged areas).

⁽³⁾ <https://www.smarta-net.eu/>.

⁽⁴⁾ Specific Objective (c) (ii) 'developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility'.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/oj/eng>.

⁽⁶⁾ Actions 3.2.3, 3.2.4 and 3.2.7 of the Regional Programme, respectively.

3. Any internal reallocation of the resources within the Regional Programme Sicily ERDF 2021-2027 can be requested by its Managing Authority to the Commission, following the approval by the Monitoring Committee, if adequately justified and in line with applicable Regulations ⁽⁷⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/oj/eng>),
lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj/eng).

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj/eng>).