AGENȚIA DE DEZVOLTARE REGIONALĂ NORD-VEST

[draft] Action Plan

North-West Regional Development Agency

EMOBICITY Project

"Increase of energy efficiency by Electric Mobility in the CITY"

April 2022

Photo by Nova TV Medias

General project data

Project: **EMOBICITY** - "Increase of energy efficiency by Electric Mobility in the CITY"

Partner organisation: **North-West Regional Development Agency**

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country: **Romania**

NUTS2 region: **North-West**

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Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	X	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	☐	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	☐	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:
Regional Strategy for Sustainable Urban Mobility and Smart Cities of the North-West Region 2021-2027 (RS – SUMSC 2021-2027)

Brief description of the Action Plan

In order to prepare for the 2021-2027 programming period, the North-West Regional Development Agency (NWRDA) developed a sectoral strategy focusing on those fields considered to be new or novel. The Regional Strategy for Sustainable Urban Mobility and Smart Cities of the North-West Region 2021-2027 (RS-SUMSC 2021-2027) aimed to prepare cities with regards to smart city and sustainable urban mobility projects by creating a common vision, goals, KPI's as well as regional and local project portfolios. This strategy also lies at the basis of the future ROP 2021-2027 which should also ensure funding for most projects. A lack of expertise at the level of cities and the NWRDA with regards to smart city and smart mobility projects is hampering the progress on implementing the RS-SUMSC 2021-2027. As a result of the learning process carried out within the EMOBICITY, the NWRDA aims to strengthen the governance structure, implementation, and monitoring process of the RS-SUMSC 2021-2027 by developing a "Smart Mobility" training programme for the staff involved in preparing and implementing the policy instrument: NWRDA staff / representatives of cities and counties, public transport companies and other important stakeholders. The aim of this training is to form a regional network of smart mobility experts that will further guide the development, implementation and monitoring of smart mobility and electromobility projects.

National context – the transition to e-mobility in Romania

With the support of the national funding scheme for the acquisition of electric vehicles (RABLA Program) supported by a national funding scheme for the acquisition of electric vehicles and the availability of National and EU funds (mostly ERDF but also CF) for the development of charging infrastructure supported a rapid increase of electric vehicles (114% between 2020 and 31.12.2021). In 2022 there are more than 12.4k electric vehicles registered and more than 250 electric busses. The number of electric busses is expected to more than double in the next two years as many cities have orders pending. The number of electric vehicles is expected to continue to grow even faster based on the following:

- An increase in purchasing power at national level
- The continuing of the national subsidy scheme for electric vehicles
- The launch of extremely cheap electric vehicles (Dacia Spring – 20.300 € or 10.300 € with maximum subsidy)
- The increase in funding targeting the development of charging infrastructure - 3 different funding sources: Regional Operational Programme 2021-2027[1] / National Resilience and Recovery Fund / Administration of the Environment Fund.

Electromobility is therefore a more and more important component of the Romanian transport and mobility systems. However, even with these beneficial conditions the number of electric vehicles is still low as people still prefer to buy cheap second-hand vehicles imported from other EU states. Subsidies are targeting mostly personal cars without a focus on small freight vehicles and completely avoiding harnessing the potential of e-bikes and e-scooters.

Electromobility in the Nort-West Region of Romania – needs and challenges

At the end of 2021, 1280 electric vehicles and 111 buses were registered in the North-West Development region. More than half of the electric vehicles and 72% of buses are located in the county of Cluj. This trend can also be seen when analysis the number of charging stations. Even if electromobility projects (charging stations and acquisition of e-buses) had financial support from the ROP 2014-2020 a rather low number of cities implemented such projects. Most cities focused just on buying electric busses but did not use the ROP funds for electric vehicle charging stations[2]. They mostly either relied on the private sector to install charging points or accessed other funds to install a few stations (generally less than 5).

To kickstart the development of the Action Plan the first step was to identify the most important needs and challenges in the field of electromobility. This has been done as part of the Stake Holder meeting held in December 2022 where following needs and challenges have been highlighted:

1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects,
2. High cost for the acquisition of electric vehicles (even with subsidies),
3. A still low number of EV charging points,
4. The power grid is not prepared for a large number of fast charging stations,

[1] Different for each region. Not all regions include charging stations for private vehicles.
[2] Projects that involved the acquisition of electric busses included slow charging station at the depot and usually 1 charging station at a public transport terminal.

5. A low diversification of subsidies for the acquisition of electric vehicles (subsidies just for cars but none for e-bikes, e-scooters, e-mopeds etc.).

These challenges have to be approached within the main policy instruments supporting the green and digital transition at national, regional and local level.

Matching local needs with good practices

For the NWRDA the aim of the EMOBICITY project is to help stakeholders to overcome main challenges in further promoting electromobility and to improve the selected policy instrument. This is to be achieved by knowledge and experience exchange actions specific for most Interreg Europe projects. As good practices lie at the base of this project, with the support of our stakeholders, we selected the most relevant good practices, linked them to local challenges and analysed how they can be transferred. Details are presented in the table below.

Table 1 Link between good practices, local challenges and transferability potential

Good practice	Local challenge addressed	**Potential to adapt for the regional level**
E-Lotsen in Hessen	1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects	**This project can be transferred completely, with maybe a slight focus on electric public transport.**
Annual Electric Mobility Project Manager Meeting	1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects	This measure can be transferred with slight adjustments: more frequent meetings and stronger focus on technical assistance.
GO ELECTRIC boosts e-mobility	1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects	Diversification of subsidies for acquisition of electric vehicles could be either adopted at national level (out of the reach of this project) or at local level as part of a SUMP and using local / municipal funds. The ROP can't address such subsidies as they are targeting private entities.
Azorean incentive system for the acquisition of electric vehicles and charging stations	2. High cost for the acquisition of electric vehicles 5. A low diversification of subsidies for the acquisition of electric vehicles	
Incentives for the introduction of low-emission vehicles	2. High cost for the acquisition of electric vehicles 5. A low diversification of subsidies for the acquisition of electric vehicles	
Promoting electric bike delivery (PRO-E-BIKE)	2. High cost for the acquisition of electric vehicles 5. A low diversification of subsidies for the acquisition of electric vehicles	
E-mobility and autonomous driving - CityMobil2	1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects and autonomous driving	Such an action is being implemented also making use of expertise from the EMOBICITY

		project but there will be no direct impact on the policy instrument.
Eco-driving training for electric bus (trolley) drivers	1. Lack of expertise at local level to develop and implement electromobility projects	There is a need to further train drivers of new electric busses. This action is planned to be implemented in major cities but will have no direct impact on the policy instrument.

Eight good practices have a good chance to be transferred to NWRDA as they also match local needs. However, as the aim is to improve a selected policy instrument, from the selected good practices just two qualifies directly to be part of an actions plan. The other good practices remain an inspiration for NWRDA and stakeholders and should be implemented in relation with other policy instruments, at national or local level.

Therefore, the focus of the Action Plan will rely mostly on the good practice: E-Lotsen in Hessen - https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/e-lotsen-in-hessen. Additionally, parts of the Annual Electric Mobility Project Manager Meeting - https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/annual-electric-mobility-project-manager-meeting good practice will be integrated into the proposed action.

Policy instrument addressed

The policy instrument selected by PP6 in the application form is The Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020- Priority Axis 4. At the time the project started calls for funding were still active. However, due to a strong demand for mobility projects, funds have been rapidly consumed while most projects are now in process of being implemented. **Changes to the policy instrument are impossible to be made at the moment.** It is only possible to improve the impact of already funded projects and help local authorities achieve better impact indicators. For the case of the ROP 2021-2027, developed by the NWRDA it is not yet 100% sure that relevant calls will be launched by June 2023. Under these conditions **PP6 The North-West Regional Development Agency decided to change the addressed policy instrument and target the Regional Strategy for Sustainable Urban Mobility and Smart Cities of the North-West Region 2021-2027 (RS – SUMSC 2021-2027)**. The policy instrument lies at the basis of the future ROP 2021-2027 when it comes to the fields of smart city and sustainable urban mobility. Funding needs and development gaps in these fields identified in the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 shaped the priorities and targets of the ROP 2021-2027. On the other hand, the ROP 2021-2027 as well as the National Resilience and Recovery Plan, are the main sources of funding for the projects integrated into the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027.

The Action Plan

ACTION 1: Network of Smart Mobility Managers

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

As part of the EMOBICITY project the NWRDA could access important knowledge on electromobility and found inspiration to further boost the adoption of electric vehicles at multiple levels (national, regional and local). See **"**Table 1 Link between good practices, local challenges and transferability potential" that presents a synthesis in terms of knowledge transfer. Because not all actions that inspired can generate trackable improvements of the policy instrument (RS – SUMSC 2021-2027) we decided to focus on a single good practice "E-Lotsen in Hessen".

This good practice helped us to better understand how important communication is in the case of policies emerging fields where not all stakeholders are familiar with the latest evolution in technology and how to make use of it. Bringing relevant stakeholders at the same table would help the NWRDA to better overcome one of the main challenges, the lack of expertise at developing electromobility projects at local level. The "E-expert", a local expert with knowledge on the future of mobility and that is in direct contact with the managing authority, as in the example from Hessen, is something that we consider could help us to improve the communication between the NWRDA and the local level – cities (beneficiaries) while also facilitating access to important knowledge.

There are multiple challenges in the transition to electromobility that don't have yet a solution in our regions. For example, from EMOBICITY study visits we found how important the placement and usage of charging stations is in relation to the power grid. This may not yet be an issue for smaller cities in our region, but it will be something verry important in the new 2-3 years. Addressing such challenges will be part of the training provided for the future "E-experts" (or "smart mobility managers" – for the case of NWRDA).

A second important good practice is the "Annual Electric Mobility Project Manager Meeting" from where we could learn how important exchange of knowledge and experience is between experts from various cities / counties that activate in the same field. We consider such meetings extremely helpful as cities that struggle with certain projects can learn from others that already manage to overcome them. An annual or semestrial meeting of project managers would be that best environment to solve such issues.

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

The need for expertise and collaboration

While the NWRDA and cities in the region already developed a basic or medium understanding of sustainable urban mobility projects this not valid when it comes to electromobility. The ROP 2014-2020 clearly showed that just some cities such as Cluj-Napoca, Zalău or Turda (and to some extent Bistrița) approached electromobility projects, mostly by buying electric busses. Other large cities such as Baia Mare, Satu Mare or Oradea have been more sceptical and avoided the acquisition of electric busses and bought hybrid buses or no buses at all. While large cities have been reluctant about electric busses, smaller cities such as Carei, Sângeorz-Băi or Beclean decided to develop their own public transport services and bought new electric buses so that they now have a complete electric fleet. In general cities made use of other funding sources than the ROP for installing a few charging stations for electric vehicles. Even cities that decided to invest in electric busses or charging stations face important challenges in implementing these projects. Cluj-Napoca has been the only city in the region that focused more on electromobility and smart mobility by massive investments in electric busses (50% of the fleet is already electric) and integration of charging stations into street reconfiguration projects. This rather low adoption of electromobility or smart mobility projects under the former ROP (2014-2020) can be partially motivated by a lack of knowledge that generated scepticism to the adoption of new technologies. Also, there is still not enough knowledge on the operation of the new electric busses while the installation of the new charging stations without overloading the power grid while also finding a good position, remains an important issue. Public charging stations in the region are still free to use (charge) as cities are not prepared to monetize this service.

In this context, there is a strong need for capacity building for local and regional authorities to support the uptake of electromobility and smart city projects. A first step in this direction was already done by the NWRDA as part of the Interreg project TRAM where a Regional Strategy for Smart Cities and Sustainable Urban Mobility for the 2021-2027 period has been created. Within this process a strategic framework at regional level was created and cities had access to expertise to draft a preliminary pipeline of smart city and sustainable urban mobility projects. Even with this strategic framework and the draft pipeline of projects there is further need for local and regional authorities to strengthen their internal human resources to be better prepared to develop and implement electromobility / smart mobility projects. This need for expertise is slightly different at regional compared to the local level.

At the regional level, the team involved in the preparation of the ROP 2021-2027 (the main funding source for the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027) needs to better understand the potential of electromobility and smart mobility in order to ensure a lean integration of these kind of projects into the guidelines. Also, a better understanding of electromobility and smart mobility help the NWRDA to transfer knowledge and help local authorities prepare projects. The NWRDA is used to visit cities at least 2-3 times per year to discuss the state of project development and implementation.

At local level the need for expertise is related more to the technical specificities of electromobility and smart city projects: how to prepare tenders, access to service providers, project operation (ex. what kind of charging station to buy, what is the optimum placement of a station related to the need and the power grid, how to operate a charging station etc.).

After the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 has been approved it is still not very clear which projects have been implemented or are being prepared for accessing various funding sources. There is still a gap of information at the level of the NWRDA regarding the main challenges cities encounter in preparing smart mobility projects and how the local project portfolios evolved since the approval of the strategy. This is even more important as the NWRDA is now designing the ROP 2021-2027 which will be the main funding source for the strategy. In this regard, there is a need to optimize the governance structure of the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 in order to create an intermediary body between the NWRDA and the cities, especially in the field of smart mobility.

Starting from the above-mentioned needs, this action builds on the good practices E-Lotsen and Annual Electric Mobility Project Manager Meeting from Hessen. **The aim is to improve the governance of the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 by strengthening the capacity of regional and local authorities and forming a regional network of "smart mobility managers".** This will be done by starting a training and networking programme called "Smart mobility Manager Academy".

The programme should be open to:

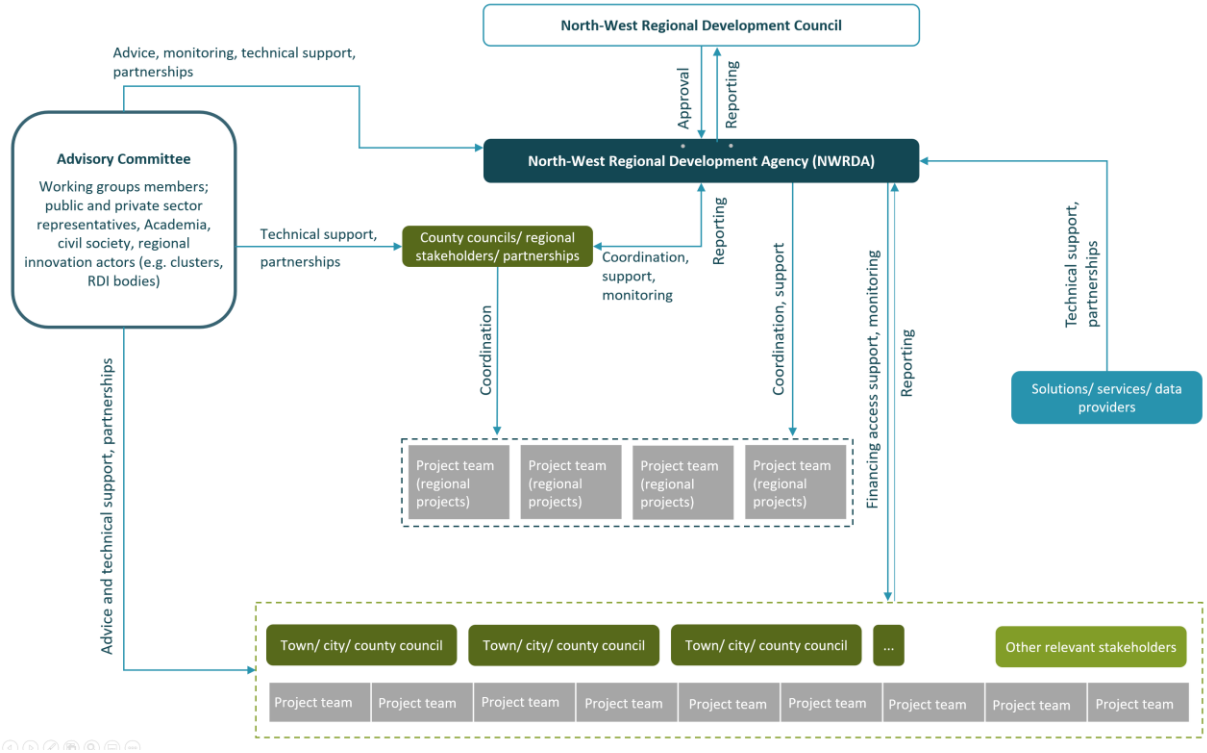
a) NWRDA staff (preferably 2-4 employees involved in drafting the ROP 2021-2027)
b) Representatives of counties, metropolitan areas and cities
c) Representatives of local/metropolitan public transport authorities

Some of the training needs have already been discussed within the LSG: i) technical specifications in the acquisition of electric busses (what to prioritize in the ToR), ii) important tips related to the use and maintenance of electric busses, iii) correct placement of charging stations in relation to the power grid and need for this facility, iv) monetization of charging station – offer free charging or charge money for electricity (how to operate under state aid schemes). The academy would therefore have following 4 modules (6 training hours each):

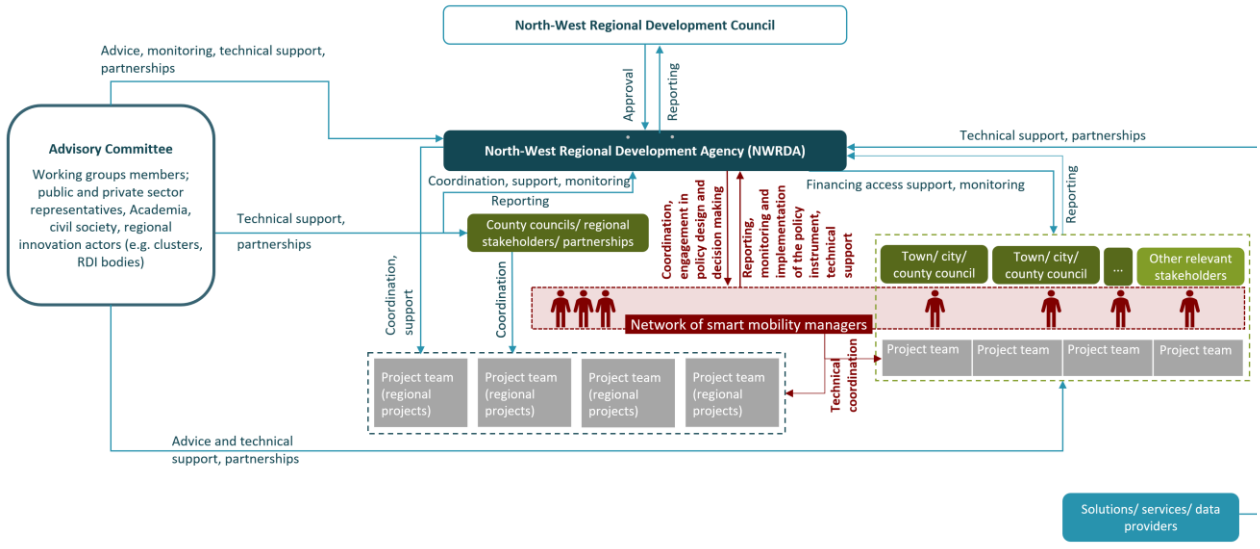
1. Introduction into smart mobility and electromobility (new concepts, trends, emerging technologies and future of mobility)
2. Smart mobility – from opportunity to problem solving
3. [Focus Area] Electromobility – benefits and main challenges
4. [Focus Area] Traffic and public transport management systems

The result of the programme would be a network of approx. 20 “smart mobility managers” at regional and local level. The smart mobility manager will be the contact person for the NWRDA (and for other managing authorities) for all smart mobility projects that are part of the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027, especially those to be financed under the ROP 2021-2027. This would mean a **direct change of the governance structure** of the policy instrument.

Existing situation - RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 governance structure approved at the end of 2020)



New proposed governance structure for RS – SUMSC 2021-2027



The local “smart mobility manager” will have following roles:

- further prepare the pipeline of smart mobility (including electromobility) projects from the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027
- submit or coordinate the submission of smart mobility (including electromobility)
- communicate funding needs and give feedback on the ROP 2021-2027 design guidelines (funding source for the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027)
- help the NWRDA with monitoring of project implementation

The NWRDA will also have a pool of smart mobility managers that will be in direct contact with each local manager. These managers will have following roles:

- ensure that guidelines of the ROP 2021-2027 are adapted to the funding needs of the projects from the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027
- support local authorities in further developing smart mobility (including electromobility) projects
- monitor the implementation RS – SUMSC 2021-2027

In this way, the communication on in the field of smart mobility will be streamlined that will ensure a better implementation of this kind of projects under the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027.

To strengthen the network, the action also includes annual meetings for the smart mobility managers building on the Annual Electric Mobility Project Manager Meeting good practice from the EMOBICITY project. The annual meeting of the network has two aims:

- support monitoring of the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 (project implementation and preparation)
- identify and debate local challenges
- ensure that the ROP guidelines are adapted to the financing needs of local authorities and the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027.

The first annual meeting is expected to take place in the first half of 2023. For this meeting, a short monitoring report should be prepared with the help of local authorities. From the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027 each city has a city file with smart city and mobility projects. The report should include main challenges in the preparation / implementation of projects as well as the status of the projects from the city file. The structure of the report will be prepared by the NWRDA and will be completed in a collaborative manner by each city. The exact form of co-design of the report is to be established (questionnaire, collective document, integration of dedicated reports etc.).

3. Envisaged impact on the Policy Instrument

The "Smart Mobility Academy" will improve the governance and monitoring of the selected policy instrument (RS – SUMSC 2021-2027) by adding an intermediary network of local and regional experts that should ensure:

1. A better communication between the managing the authority (NWRDA) and the local level (beneficiaries) – a network of regional experts in smart mobility.
2. Stronger knowledge in preparing and implementing smart mobility projects (no more reluctance and scepticism towards electromobility or smart mobility projects).
3. Easier monitoring of project progress (from development till implementation) – annual "smart mobility manager meetings".

4. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Administration

- North-West Regional Development Agency (Department for Project Preparation / Compartment for Regional Development / Department for Regional Development, Projects and International Relationships)
- Local authorities - the 6 large cities, other smaller cities and county councils if they are interested

Academia (possible training providers)

- Technical University Cluj-Napoca
- University of Oradea – Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology
- AERO – Romanian Association for Electromobility

5. **Timeframe**

- May – June 2022 preparation of the TOR for the training services (possible validation of ROP 2021-2027 frameworks)
- June 2022 establishment of preliminary network of smart mobility managers (staff to be trained)
- June 2022 – August 2022 launch of the tender and selection of the service provider
- August 2022 – September 2022 preparation of the training material
- November 2022 – January 2023 launch of trainings
- January 2023 – Validation of the "smart mobility managers network"
- February 2023 – April 2023 first meeting of the "smart mobility managers" network
- May 2023 launch of the first monitoring report for the RS – SUMSC 2021-2027

6. **Costs** (if relevant)

10.000 € for the whole training package.

7. **Funding sources** (if relevant):

Technical assistance fund of the ROP 2021-2027

8. **Monitoring of the action**

- Number of employees trained
- Number of meetings of the "smart mobility managers" network
- (optional) number of projects submitted with actions / investments supporting electromobility (ex. Electric bus acquisition, street reconfiguration with charging stations etc.)

Date:25.05.2022

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____