

Cesena Takes the Right Path: Testing Responsible Innovation in Urban Mobility

A people-centred testbed for autonomous mobility in Italy



Photo credit: Municipality of Cesena / CISE

A real-life laboratory for autonomous mobility

From **14–16 November 2025**, the Italian city of **Cesena** hosted the **GINEVRA Demonstration Days** at **Cesena Fiera**, transforming the fairground parking area into a real-life test environment for autonomous mobility. Over three days, more than **120 citizens and visitors** experienced the autonomous shuttle firsthand, discovering how responsible innovation can be tested transparently and safely in an urban context.

Funded by the **Interreg Central Europe Programme**, GINEVRA supports cities in developing and testing governance tools to responsibly manage technological transformations such as autonomous vehicles, while keeping citizens at the centre of decision-making.

From policy to practice

The Cesena Demonstration Days were organised by **CISE** in collaboration with the **Municipality of Cesena**. The first day was dedicated to press and institutional representatives, while the following two days were open to the general public. The autonomous shuttle operated continuously between 10:00 and 16:30, running on a controlled route that allowed participants to observe its behaviour in realistic conditions.

Safety remained a central priority throughout the initiative, with a trained on-board operator ensuring full compliance with safety protocols. Participants were invited to complete pre- and post-ride questionnaires, allowing the project to collect valuable data on public perception, trust, comfort, accessibility, and social acceptance of autonomous mobility.

Innovation with inclusion

Beyond the technological demonstration, the Cesena Demo placed strong emphasis on **inclusion and participation**. The diverse audience - ranging from students and families to seniors and technology enthusiasts - confirmed the importance of engaging all segments of society when introducing emerging mobility solutions.

By linking test rides with direct citizen feedback, Cesena demonstrated how autonomous mobility can be explored not only as a technical innovation, but also as a social process of trust-building, awareness, and shared governance. This approach reflects the core philosophy of GINEVRA: that innovation must be co-designed, citizen-oriented, and ethically guided.

In the national spotlight

The Cesena demonstration attracted **extensive national and local media coverage**, including major Italian newspapers, online news platforms, and television channels. Headlines highlighted Cesena as one of the first cities in the region to offer citizens the opportunity to test a driverless shuttle in a real-world context, reinforcing the city's role as a frontrunner in responsible urban innovation.

This broad visibility significantly amplified the impact of the demonstration, strengthening public dialogue around the future of mobility and the role of autonomous technologies in sustainable urban development.

Building the future of mobility, step by step

The Cesena Demo Days marked a key step in GINEVRA's pilot phase, following the first large-scale demonstration in Varaždin and preceding the final pilot in Bad Schönborn. The **insights collected from participants** will directly contribute to the project's **transnational strategy for responsible innovation governance** across Central Europe.

By combining technology testing with public participation, institutional engagement, and media outreach, Cesena has shown how cities can introduce autonomous mobility in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and oriented toward long-term societal benefit.