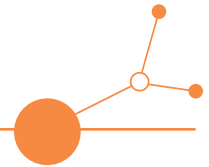
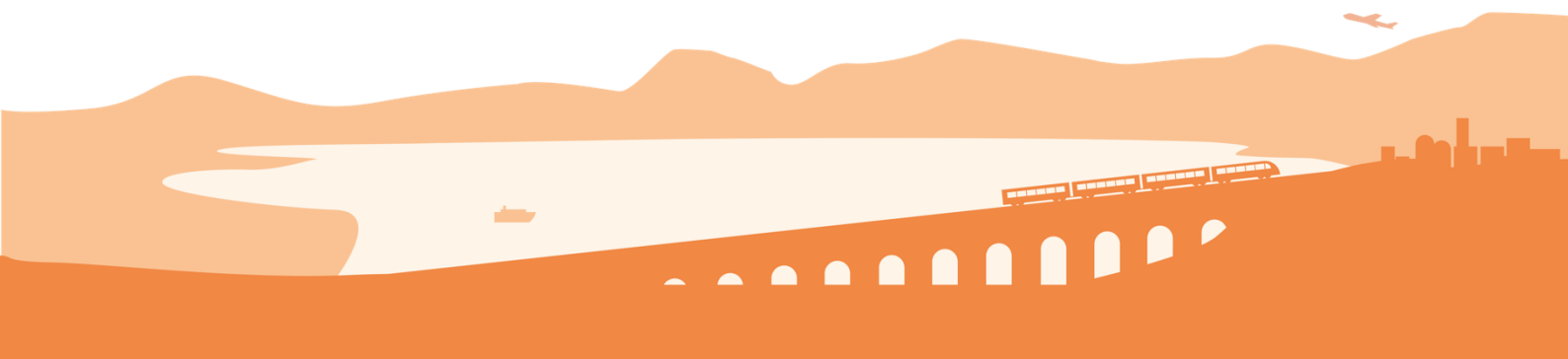


D3.4.3 Report on actions fostering the take up of the DRT strategy



Final Version

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1. Executive summary

The territory of Central Europe is characterised by uneven transport connections and mobility opportunities, across and within regions, between urbanized contexts and rural and peripheral areas. The project's common challenge is to improve accessibility and connectivity in CE peripheral and rural areas through better integration of public transport networks with Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, building on joint development and implementation of governance, planning, digital and operational innovations.

DREAM_PACE therefore developed innovative DRT concepts complementing regional mobility networks. The project aimed to improve DRT planning and delivery capacities of public authorities and operators. A new generation of DRT services became functional and integral part of regional mobility networks, enhancing accessibility for citizens, territorial cohesion and social inclusion. Integration is the key to the DREAM_PACE innovative approach, as DRT services are mostly developed as stand-alone solutions to specific needs, the potential of scalable strategies and solutions is widely underestimated.

Project Partners (thereafter PP) jointly developed a strategy for DRT in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans to be adopted at EU level, co-design, test and implement innovative DRT solutions enhancing mobility networks. Strategies and solutions fostered a better integration of DRT and public transport (Bologna, Pavia-Oltrepò, Budapest areas), supported a higher coordination among existing DRT initiatives (East Tyrol, Stuttgart Region) and experimented new integrated approaches for DRT "green fields" (Split-Dalmatia County).

DREAM_PACE exploited the potential of integrated planning and digital and operational innovations for a common strategy and develop innovative DRT modular solutions. The project implementation built on transnational cooperation to guarantee an adequate responsiveness and adaptability of project results to specific characteristics of mobility ecosystems across CE rural and peripheral areas.

This deliverable summarizes the actions implemented by the DREAM_PACE partnership to foster the take-up of the project's DRT 3.0 strategy through an official EU-level consultation process connected to the preparation of the "Topic guide DRT 3.0 in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs)" (Deliverable D.3.1.3). In line with the DREAM_PACE AF, the report focuses on the consultation steps envisaged for the official adoption pathway of a SUMP Topic Guide, including: (i) creation of Topic guide for DRT in SUMPs, (ii) cooperation with other projects and initiatives, (iii) open consultation, and (iv) review and consolidation.

The consultation was designed to ensure relevance, usability and transferability of the guidance beyond the six DREAM_PACE Living Labs, and to increase the likelihood of having the Topic Guide as recognised and used by EU, national, regional and local actors involved in Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP) and public transport modernisation.



2. Context and purpose of the deliverable

DREAM_PACE develops and tests innovative approaches to better integrate Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) into regional mobility networks and public transport systems in Central Europe. A core strategic output of the project is the “Topic guide DRT 3.0 in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP)” (D3.1.3), intended to support planners and decision-makers in embedding DRT throughout the SUMP cycle.

The Topic guide is built on the intermediate and final outcomes of the pilot activities, through cooperation with other projects and initiatives, and on the feedback resulting from an open consultation process conducted to finalise the contents.

Deliverable D3.4.3 is a wrap-up report that documents the process and results of the official consultation phase of the Topic Guide at EU level, as foreseen in the project agreement. The deliverable is positioned within Activity 3.4 (Knowledge transfer, uptake and upscale of project outputs) and complements other take-up reports focusing on regional action plans and solutions.

2.1. Mandatory steps for official adoption pathway and scope of this deliverable

In line with the project AF, the consultation process was structured around the following mandatory steps for an EU-level SUMP Topic Guide adoption pathway:

- Creation of Topic guide for DRT in SUMPs (scope, structure, quality criteria, intended dissemination route).
- Cooperation with other projects and initiatives, ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication, while leveraging existing communities and events.
- Open consultation phase, inviting EU-wide stakeholders to comment on the draft and provide feedback through accessible channels.
- Review and consolidation of feedback, including documentation of how comments were addressed and quality assurance prior to final publication.

The scope of this report is limited to actions directly supporting the take-up of the DRT 3.0 strategy through the Topic guide consultation and pre-adoption pathway. It does not replace the Topic guide itself (D3.1.3), nor does it provide a full account of local Living Lab and pilot activities (covered by specific WP1 and WP2 deliverables). Instead, it explains how local insights were translated into EU-level guidance and validated through consultation.

2.2. Definitions

Key terms used in this report:

- DRT 3.0 strategy: the integrated strategic approach covering governance, planning, digitalisation and operations for DRT as a component of public transport.
- SUMP Topic guide: a practical guidance document supporting implementation of SUMP guidelines on a specific topic; in DREAM_PACE, DRT integration in SUMPs.
- Consultation: structured engagement with internal and external stakeholders to review, validate and improve the Topic guide prior to dissemination and publication.



3. Consultation framework and governance

3.1. Consultation objectives

1. Validate that the Topic guide content is aligned with the needs of cities/regions implementing SUMP and integrated public transport planning.
2. Check usability, clarity, and completeness of recommendations, checklists, and planning steps for different territorial contexts (urban, peri-urban, rural).
3. Ensure consistency with the European Commission's SUMP Guidelines and related EU urban mobility policy framing.
4. Gather input from EU-wide networks and peers (public authorities, operators, researchers, technology providers, NGOs) to support transferability and legitimacy.
5. Strengthen pathways for take-up and future updates by connecting the Topic guide to existing platforms and communities (e.g., SUMP Coordination Platform, Eltis, thematic networks).

3.2. Governance and roles

The consultation was coordinated within WP3, with the PP12 Rupprecht Consult supporting the alignment with SUMP Topic guide standards and the interfacing with the SUMP Coordination Platform ecosystem (including Eltis-related dissemination channels).

The Lead Partner SRM ensured overall coherence with the project agreement and reporting requirements, while all the Project Partners (PPs) contributed by mobilising stakeholders and channelling feedback from their networks.

The responsibility was split as illustrated in the following table.

Role	Main tasks	Lead / contributors
Consultation coordination	Overall process management; timeline; consolidation of feedback; editorial workflow	PPs engaged in WP3
SUMP Topic guide alignment & platform liaison	Check against SUMP Topic guide format; liaison with SUMP Coordination Platform actors; publication pathway advice	PP12 Rupprecht Consult (supported by all PPs)
Communication & outreach	Consultation announcements; social media; newsletters; events promotion; stakeholder invitations	PP10 TU Berlin + PPs
Regional stakeholder mobilisation	Invite local/regional stakeholders with EU relevance; collect practical feedback; validate examples	All Living Lab PPs
Technical and content review	Review specific chapters (governance, planning, digital, operational, M&E); propose revisions	All PPs and their expert reviewers



4. Consultation process: timeline and activities

4.1. Overview timeline

The following table provides an indicative timeline for the consultation process.

Phase	Period	Key activities	Outputs
Set-up	[Q3 - Q4 2024]	Define consultation framework; map EU-level stakeholders; prepare communication kit; pre-check Topic guide outline	Consultation framework (from D.3.1.2); meeting minutes; stakeholder list
Pre-consultation engagement	[Q4 2024 - Q1 2025]	Present draft concept in selected events & networks; collect early feedback	Event presentations; online posts; bilateral exchanges
Open consultation	[Q2 - Q3 2025]	Publish draft for feedback; run webinars / workshops; collect comments via survey/form/email	Consultation landing page; survey results; participant list
Editorial review	[Q3 - Q4 2025]	Consolidate feedback in review matrix; revise draft; peer-review cycle; final proofing	Feedback log; revised draft versions
Submission / publication steps	[Q4 2025 - Q1 2026]	Submit final package to agreed platform(s); prepare communication package; announce publication	Submission email; publication confirmation; dissemination materials
Follow-up	[Q1 - Q2 2026]	Promote uptake; capture early use cases; define update mechanism	Final event outputs; uptake tracking notes

4.2. Step 1 - Creation of Topic guide for DRT in SUMP

DREAM_PACE envisaged the integration of the DRT 3.0 strategy into the EU SUMP methodology by producing a Topic guide aligned with the format and expectations of the SUMP Coordination Platform ecosystem. Rupprecht Consult's longstanding involvement in SUMP methodology development and related EU platforms supported the preparation of a publication-ready Topic guide package, including a clear policy focus, target audience definition, structured chapters aligned with the SUMP cycle, and actionable checklists.

The proposal stage consisted of: (i) an early exchange on scope and positioning (how DRT relates to existing Topic guides on public transport, shared mobility, MaaS, resilience, etc.); (ii) a pre-check of the draft outline and chapter logic; and (iii) agreement on an intended dissemination route via established SUMP guidance channels (e.g., publication repositories and/or linking through EU Urban Mobility Observatory and Eltis-related channels).

4.3. Step 2 - Cooperation with other projects and initiatives

Cooperation activities aimed to ensure complementarity with other EU-funded projects and to leverage existing dissemination channels. Key cooperation strands included:

- Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE synergy mechanisms (online synergy roundtables and Joint Secretariat-supported exchanges).



- Collaboration with the EU Urban Mobility Observatory on thematic areas such as public transport and shared mobility and SUMP monitoring/implementation.
- Engagement in major European mobility networks and events (e.g., POLIS, CIVITAS, UITP), used both to disseminate interim findings and to invite participation in consultation.
- Cross-referencing of related projects and previous Topic guides to position DREAM_PACE contributions and avoid duplication.

Illustrative examples of **cooperation actions**:

- DREAM_PACE participation in an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Joint Secretariat synergy roundtable on “Transport and Greening Urban Mobility” (10 October 2024).
- Consultation invitation and engagement opportunities linked to the POLIS Conference 2024 (27-28 November 2024), including on-site outreach.
- DREAM_PACE selection by the EU Urban Mobility Observatory (from September 2024) for collecting lessons learned from EU-funded projects and subsequent collaboration topics.

DREAM_PACE also cooperated with these **Interreg Central Europe projects**:

- **CE4CE¹**: DREAM_PACE held bilateral discussions with CE4CE during an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE communication & synergy event (26-28 September 2024 in Vienna), with the aim to explore thematic complementarities and opportunities for mutual learning and future collaboration. The exchange supported wider take-up by mapping potential channels to disseminate DREAM_PACE results and by identifying overlapping stakeholder communities relevant for sustainable mobility and public transport innovation.
- **MECOG-CE²**: Within the same Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE synergy framework (26-28 September 2024 in Vienna), DREAM_PACE exchanged with MECOG-CE project to identify overlaps and possible cooperation paths. The dialogue contributed to building a broader community of practice around sustainable mobility solutions in Central Europe and strengthened mutual awareness of approaches that could inform replication and upscaling of DRT-related measures.
- **SUSTANCE³**: DREAM_PACE reported in 2024 and 2025 positive talks with SUSTANCE under the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE synergy umbrella, aimed at identifying cooperation opportunities and cross-fertilisation of results. This exchange supported take-up by enabling peer learning on implementation conditions (governance, operations, stakeholder engagement) and by opening opportunities for mutual signposting of outputs and lessons learned.
- **GreenPATH⁴**: GreenPATH appeared in 2024 and 2025 in the same Interreg CE mobility projects communication as DREAM_PACE, enabling mutual visibility and identification of peer exchange opportunities. This supports take-up by strengthening the programme-level network of sustainable mobility initiatives and by opening possibilities for future dissemination and knowledge-sharing contacts.

4.4. Step 3 - Open consultation

The open consultation phase was designed to gather feedback from EU-wide stakeholders beyond the project partnership.

¹ <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/ce4ce/>

² <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/mecog-ce/>

³ <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/sustance/>

⁴ <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/greenpath/>



To strengthen take-up of the DREAM_PACE DRT strategy and maximise EU-level transferability, the partnership combined (i) cooperation and exchange with peer Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects and programme communities, and (ii) a structured set of EU-level and thematic **consultation activities** feeding directly into the development and refinement of the **DRT Topic guide (DRT 3.0 in SUMPs)**. These actions ensured that the guidance reflects practical needs across different territorial contexts (urban, peri-urban and rural) and is aligned with the Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP) ecosystem.

Consultation activities supporting the DRT Topic guide development included:

- **Conference-based consultation and outreach (EU-level validation).** DREAM_PACE used major European mobility events as opportunities to present interim versions of the Topic guide approach, test key messages with practitioners, and invite structured feedback. Dedicated consultation and exchange moments were organised in connection with:
 - **POLIS Annual Conference 2024** (27-28 November in Karlsruhe) and **POLIS Annual Conference 2025** (26-27 November in the City of Utrecht), used to engage cities/regions and mobility stakeholders, discuss the positioning of DRT within the SUMP cycle, and collect practitioner-oriented comments on usability and transferability.
 - **UITP Summit Hamburg 2025** (15-18 June 2025), used to reach public transport authorities/operators and industry stakeholders, with a focus on operational and governance considerations for integrating DRT into public transport networks.
- **Targeted online consultation workshops (deep-dive feedback).** To complement conference outreach and ensure actionable input, DREAM_PACE organised thematic and language/community-specific online consultation formats, enabling detailed discussion on selected parts of the Topic guide (e.g., governance, planning steps, stakeholder engagement, digitalisation, monitoring):
 - **Tech&Business Community Online Workshop**, to gather feedback from innovation and technology-oriented stakeholders on practical enablers, barriers and implementation considerations (especially in the meetings of 27 June 2024 and 01 July 2025).
 - **German-speaking (DACH) Stakeholder Online Consultation Workshop**, to validate clarity and applicability for German-speaking practitioners and capture feedback reflecting DACH governance and planning contexts (10 April 2025).
 - **Italian Stakeholders Online Consultation Workshop**, to capture Italy-specific practitioner perspectives and validate transferability to Italian planning and service frameworks (29 October 2025).
 - **CIVINET DE Network Online Consultation Workshop**, to engage the CIVINET DE community and gather structured input from SUMP practitioners and mobility stakeholders connected to the network (9 December 2025).

In parallel, the Topic guide development was **supported by regular interactions** (online and in-person) among DREAM_PACE PPs and pilot/Living Lab teams. These internal exchanges ensured that lessons learned from pilots and regional stakeholder processes were consistently translated into Topic guide recommendations, examples and checklists, and that revisions based on external consultation were technically feasible and aligned with real-life implementation conditions.

4.5. How consultation feedback was integrated into the DRT Topic guide

The main consultation feedback resulting from the process described above can be summarised as follows:

- **Strategic planning needs and gaps:** stakeholders emphasised the need for clearer guidance on how DRT can address existing gaps in public transport systems, particularly in low-demand, peri-urban and rural



contexts. This included identifying required operational and contextual data, as well as clarifying the evolving roles and expectations of both public authorities and private operators.

- **Operational models and governance frameworks:** the consultation highlighted a strong interest in practical guidance on viable DRT operational models. This included complex and often challenging aspects such as funding mechanisms, business models, public-private cooperation, and long-term financial sustainability. Key challenges and opportunities related to scaling and integration within wider mobility systems were also raised.
- **Monitoring and evaluation frameworks:** participants stressed the importance of defining clear approaches to monitoring and evaluating DRT services. This included the identification of relevant KPIs, allocation of responsibilities across stakeholders, and a broader reflection on what constitutes “success” for DRT in different contexts.
- **Multi-level and cross-sectoral perspectives:** the consultation process underscored the importance of addressing DRT planning and implementation across European, national, and local levels, while also ensuring cross-sectoral alignment (e.g. mobility, digitalisation, social inclusion). Inputs reflected the diversity of institutional settings and operational environments in which DRT is deployed.

The feedback collected through the conference-based outreach (POLIS Annual Conferences 2024 and 2025; UITP Summit Hamburg 2025), the targeted online consultation workshops (Tech&Business Community; DACH workshop; Italian workshop; CIVINET DE network), and the continuous partner-pilot interactions were systematically processed to ensure transparency and quality assurance in the Topic guide development.

All inputs (written comments, workshop notes, Q&A logs, and direct suggestions received by email or during bilateral exchanges) were consolidated and structured. Revisions were implemented through controlled versioning and tracked changes, followed by a peer-review cycle among partners to verify consistency of terminology and alignment across chapters. This workflow ensured that external consultation outcomes were concretely reflected in the final structure and content of the DRT Topic guide, while maintaining coherence with the overall DRT 3.0 strategy and alignment with real-life implementation conditions observed in DREAM_PACE pilots.

Online Miro boards were used to facilitate live interaction with participants and stakeholders. The results, including participants’ contributions and key discussion points, were systematically processed and analysed, and subsequently integrated into the refinement of the Topic guide.

The interaction during the online workshops and events focused on stakeholders’ expectations of the guide, as well as on the proposed methods and structure, in order to ensure its relevance and practical usability. Subsequent internal discussions among Project Partners concentrated on reviewing draft versions of the guide and jointly reflecting on its strengths and any remaining gaps, ensuring a continuous feedback loop throughout the development process.

4.6. Step 4 - Review, consolidation and finalisation

All consultation inputs were consolidated into a review log managed by the editorial team. The **consolidation process** followed a transparent workflow:

1. Screening and deduplication of inputs (grouping similar comments; removing out-of-scope items).
2. Categorization of comments (e.g., editorial clarity, methodological alignment, missing content, examples/case studies, data & indicators, inclusiveness).
3. Editorial decision: accept / partially accept / reject, with justification.
4. Implementation of revisions and version control (tracked changes).



5. Final peer-review cycle and quality assurance (consistency, terminology, formatting, references).

A final consistency check ensured that the Topic guide is structured along the SUMP cycle and that it provides actionable guidance, including guiding questions, recommended tools and methods, and an implementation checklist.



5. Lessons learned and recommendations for future Topic guide consultations

Lesson	Practical recommendation
Start the EU-level consultation early	Early pre-consultation engagement (before the full draft is complete) helps validate scope and avoid late structural changes.
Use a mixed engagement design	Combining open online feedback with targeted interviews and event-based outreach increases both reach and depth of comments.
Provide low-effort and high-effort feedback options	A short survey increases participation; a detailed review template enables high-quality expert feedback.
Document responses to comments	A transparent review log facilitates reporting and supports credibility when presenting the final guide.
Plan for continuity	Define how the guide can be updated (e.g., via periodic community inputs) to remain relevant as DRT technology and policy evolve.



6. References

- 1) DREAM_PACE Application Form, Version 3.0. 2025.
- 2) DREAM_PACE D3.1.2 “DRT strategy draft and setup of the consultation process”. 2024.
- 3) DREAM_PACE D3.1.3 “Topic guide DRT 3.0 in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP)”. 2026.
- 4) DREAM_PACE D3.2.2 “Report on strategy-setting workshops for Action plans’ implementation”. 2025.
- 5) DREAM_PACE D3.3.1 “Report on set up and development of community and measures to animate the debate on DRT trends”. 2024.
- 6) DREAM_PACE D3.3.2 “Report on actions accompanying the development of pilot activities”. 2025



7. Annexes

7.1. Annex 1: Stakeholder typology for EU-level consultation

Stakeholder categories targeted in the open consultation:

- SUMP practitioners (city/regional mobility planners).
- Public transport authorities and operators.
- National/regional ministries and transport agencies.
- European and national mobility networks (POLIS, CIVITAS, UITP, etc.).
- DRT technology and platform providers.
- Research organisations and universities.
- Civil society, accessibility and mobility justice organisations.
- Consultancies and mobility planning support organisations.

7.2. Annex 2: Public communication items to reference (non-exhaustive)

The following publicly available items are evidences of consultation-related outreach and cooperation:

- DREAM_PACE Newsletter No.4 (January 2025): mentions consultation framework set-up and collaboration with EU Urban Mobility Observatory.
- DREAM_PACE Newsletter No.5 (June 2025): announces final stakeholder consultations and knowledge transfer activities; final event details.
- DREAM_PACE Newsletter No.6 (February 2026): informs about the release of the “Topic Guide on Demand Responsive Transport (DRT 3.0) in Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs)” and presents the DRT4All website.
- LinkedIn post by Rupperecht Consult (POLIS24, November 2024): invitation to register and participate in the consultation process on the SUMP Topic guide for DRT.
- LinkedIn post by DREAM_PACE (October 2024): participation in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE synergy roundtable on Transport and Greening Urban Mobility.
- EU Urban Mobility Observatory article referencing DREAM_PACE Topic guide for DRT in SUMPs (strategic planning insights).