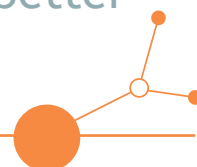


D.3.4.1 - GOVERNANCE STRATEGY

Long term strategy for promoting cooperation and better governance of public transport in Central Europe



Final version
03 2026





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A. Introduction

As reported in the SUSTANCE Application Form (AF): “*following the outcomes of Activity 1.2, 1.3 as well as 3.2 and 3.3, a long-term strategy for the promotion of cooperation and better governance of public transport (PT) in Central Europe (CE) is designed by EURAC in cooperation with PPs*”. Based on this reference, the aim of this document (hereinafter called “Governance Strategy”; D.3.4.1) is to support institutional dialogue and enhance governance of PT planning at regional and cross-border level in CE. To this end, the Governance Strategy is based on four activities of the SUSTANCE project (see Figure 1):

- **Activity 1.2:** The *knowledge-based accessibility assessments of rural, peripheral and cross-border areas* carried out by PPs in five pilot areas of CE is taken as starting point in the analysis of existing PT accessibility challenges, and potential opportunities provided by pilot initiatives.
- **Activity 1.3:** The *design, adoption and dissemination of Roadmaps* in six pilot areas is taken as reference to identify strategic PT development paths that PPs wish to follow in the next years, in order to further develop PT accessibility at regional and cross-border level.
- **Activity 3.2:** The *analysis of innovative governance schemes at regional and cross-border level* conducted at the CE scale is used to highlight the key role that multi-level and sectoral cooperation may play in the development of effective PT accessibility.
- **Activity 3.3:** The outputs of the *three rounds of stakeholder consultations* held by PPs with their APs and strategic stakeholders are considered, in order to let the strategy reflect the viewpoints of key actors working in the involved regions.

The results of these activities are organically integrated in the Governance Strategy, which is made up of four sections. **Section B** defines a vision to address the key PT accessibility challenges common to many CE regions, by acknowledging operational limits beyond the PPs’ control. **Section C** explains how PPs plan to address these challenges through potential developments and upgrades of their pilot actions implemented during SUSTANCE. **Section D** provides governance recommendations for the three SUSTANCE cross-border areas, inspired by the contents of the Governance report (D.3.2.1) and the experience gained by PPs during the project. Finally, **Section E** provides complementary governance/cooperation tools usable by any CE (cross-border) region to achieve the defined vision in geographical areas beyond SUSTANCE’s ones.

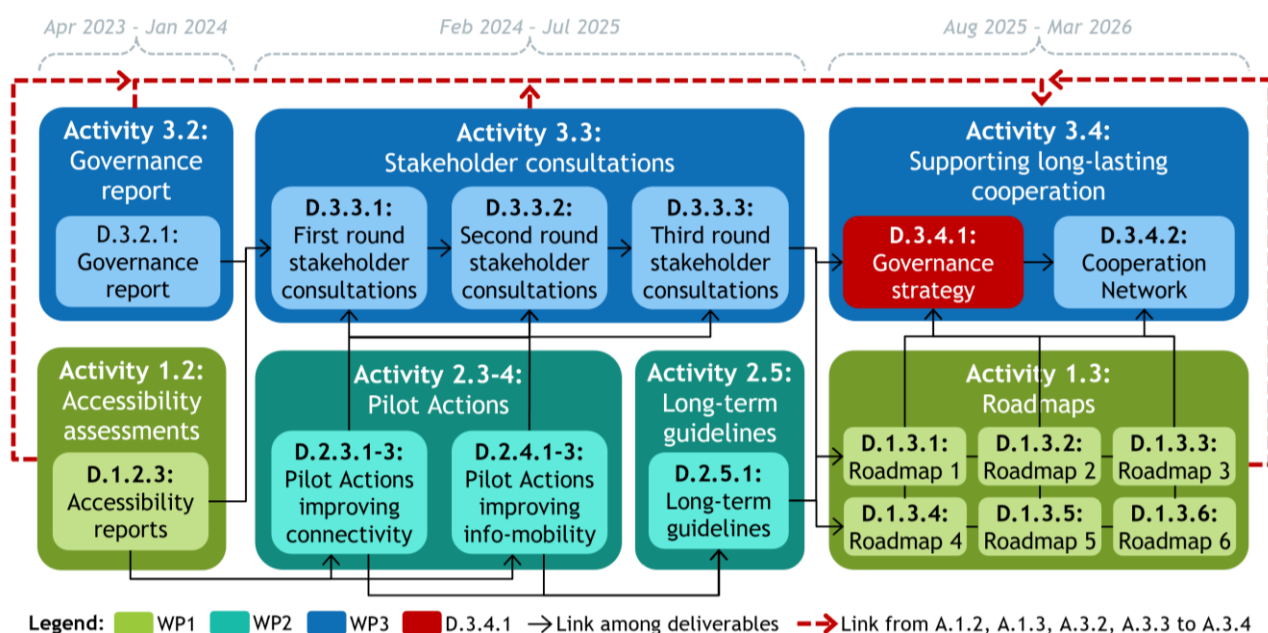


Figure 1. Role of SUSTANCE Activities in feeding the Governance Strategy.



B. Common challenges and related vision

B.1. Common challenges

Cross-border PT faces several operational, legal and administrative challenges in CE, which are discussed in **various scientific and policy documents**. At institutional level, e.g. the EC study “*Cross-border transport infrastructure in the EU*” provides tools to measure accessibility and connectivity of border regions at national and international level, so as to identify road-transport barriers (Christodoulou and Christidis, 2018). Yet, the 2022 EC study “*Providing public transport in cross-border regions - Mapping of existing services and legal obstacles*” analyses cross-border PT services in EU and identifies obstacles to its upgrade (EC, 2022). In the scientific community, works like Cavallaro and Dianin (2019), Gamon and Naranjo Gómez (2019) or Kołodziejczyk (2020) contribute to the understanding of cross-border challenges in PT provision, with specific reference to CE countries and regions. Based on these and other knowledge tools, as well as considering the operative experience of SUSTANCE in the provision of cross-border PT services (across national and regional borders), it is possible to identify several **common PT challenges in CE that require a shared vision to be addressed**. Referring to the fields of “connectivity” and “info-mobility” (addressed in SUSTANCE), core examples are reported below.

Connectivity challenges (examples):

-  **Physical infrastructure:** Due to e.g. geographic obstacles typical of natural borders (e.g. mountain ranges and river courses), as well as historical prioritisations of local/national rail networks, some border areas are crossed by limited rail and road infrastructures, especially in CE.
-  **Operational standards:** Even when rail infrastructure exists, operational differences across countries may hamper the continuity of the railway lines and related services. This is especially the case of electricity supply, which may have different standards in CE countries like IT, AT, SI, HR or HU.
-  **Cross-border service provision:** Due to limited potential demand (or limited knowledge of it), as well as prioritisation of domestic transport needs, dedicated cross-border PT services are often less diffused in CE, although significant differences apply, especially in areas of tourist interest.
-  **Transfer and timetable coordination:** When dedicated cross-border services are not available, domestic services interfacing at the border may fulfil transboundary connectivity. However, the need for transfer at border stations and lack of timetable coordination may undermine competitiveness.

Info-mobility challenges (examples):

-  **Pre/on-trip data:** Beside physical infrastructure and services, even digital services (e.g. journey planners and other mobility apps) are typically organised at regional and national level, potentially triggering issues of data coordination and sharing, especially if data standards differ.
-  **Ticketing data and standards:** Ticketing data (and related standards) pose a further issue of cross-border agreements among PT providers regarding ticketing data, ticket distribution, and especially revenue sharing between the providers of services and ticket platforms.
-  **Multimodal info-mobility:** The challenges mentioned above are even more complex when dealing with multimodal combinations like road-rail or bike-rail transport, which are especially relevant when addressing e.g. routes of tourist interest and recreational travellers (like cycle tourists).

In CE, these challenges are exacerbated by the **relatively low and scattered demand that typically shapes CE countries and their border regions**. Indeed, compared to e.g. cross-border western EU areas shaped by several urban agglomerations (like Luxemburg, Geneva and Bern, or the Meuse-Rhine area), CE border regions typically register lower population density and broader peripheral and rural areas. These factors typically hinder PT feasibility and challenge-related investments.



B.2. Common vision

To address the cross-border connectivity and info-mobility challenges exemplified above, SUSTANCE PPs set a common vision, which is displayed as follows and graphically reported in Figure 2.

COMMON VISION:

In the next years, regional, national and EU bodies will provide resources to develop more competitive PT services in the peripheral and rural areas of CE experiencing scattered demand and lacking PT accessibility. Based on that, **cross-border cooperation and governance tools will foster the allocation of such resources not only for domestic PT, but also for the connectivity of CE areas across regional and national borders.** To this end: (1) Public but also private PT actors must be connected to exploit their cooperation in the supply of rural/peripheral PT¹. (2) Decentralised or externalised governance models must be encouraged (such as EGTCs) to facilitate a balanced representation of the interests of all involved parts and ease the coordination of transboundary initiatives². (3) Short-term pilot initiatives and long-term strategies must be combined to supply both concreteness and perspective for cross-border PT development in CE³. (4) Ad-hoc cross-border agreements will be discussed to deal with specific bilateral barriers typically affecting cross-border PT interventions⁴. (5) Financial opportunities will be discussed to realistically shape a plan of how cross-border collaboration and initiatives are financially supported⁵.

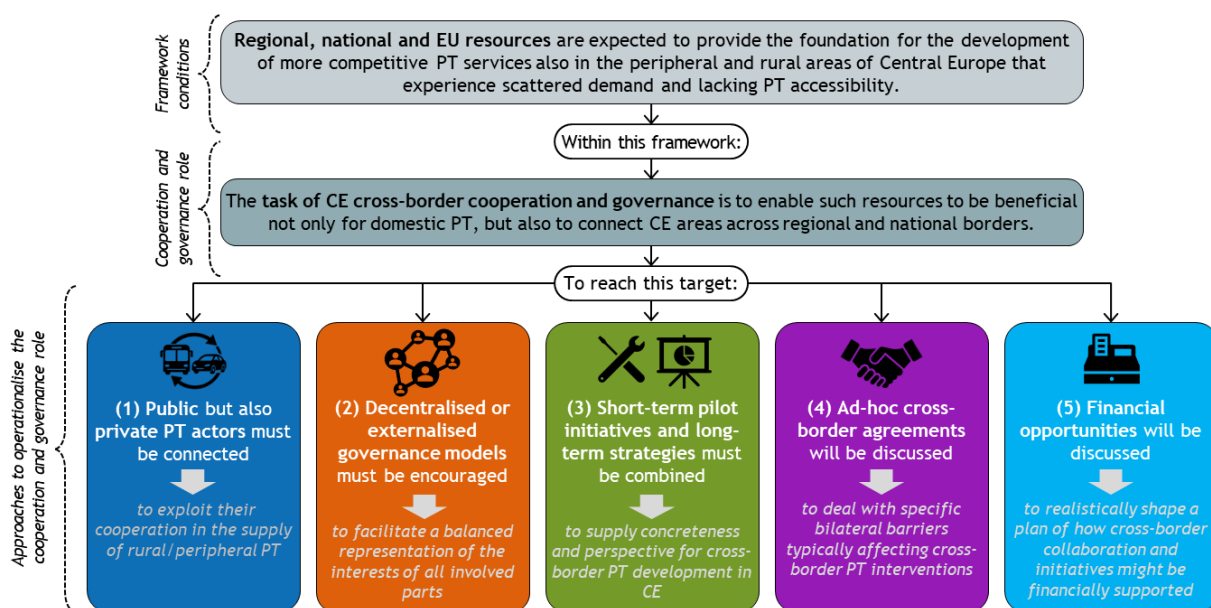


Figure 2. Common vision for better cooperation and governance of PT in CE.

The six **Pilot Actions (PA1-6;** Activity 2.3 and 2.4) implemented by the SUSTANCE project in the fields of connectivity and info-mobility represent exemplative initiatives to translate the vision presented above into concrete short-term measures. At the same time, the **Long-term Sustainability Guidelines** drafted for each pilot action and the **Roadmaps** designed for each study area (Activity 2.5 and 1.3) represent long-term strategic documents contributing to the vision. Further details are given in Section C.

¹ See the “**governance types**” in the Governance Report (D.3.2.1): public-public, private-private, public-private.

² See the “**governance structures**” in the Governance Report (D.3.2.1): centralised, decentralised, externalised.

³ See the “**technical and planning contributions**” in the Governance Report (D.3.2.1): connectivity, ICT tools, others.

⁴ See the “**legal/administrative contributions**” in the Governance Report (D.3.2.1): managing/solving legal obstacles.

⁵ See the “**financial contributions**” in the Governance Report (D.3.2.1): managing costs and revenues, fund acquisition.



C. Contribution of SUSTANCE pilots to the vision

C.1. Connectivity

PA1: Cross-border train connection Trieste-Divaca-Pivka-Rijeka

Implementation (D.2.3.1): PA1 introduced a new couple of direct train connections on the cross-border route linking Trieste Villa Opicina (IT), Divaca (SI), Pivka (SI), and Rijeka (HR). The electric motor units applied on the route served both, utilitarian and recreational travellers, including bike transport. Thanks to PA1, travel time and directness improved, providing convenient alternatives to private car.

Guidelines and a Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.1): To enable the evolution of PA1 beyond the SUSTANCE project, the formation of a cross-border advisory group would ease the definition of service frequency, schedule, tariff and financial sources. Yet, arrangement of financing by the involved PT authorities through PSO (public service obligation) by all involved bordering countries would guarantee proper financial coverage by all involved authorities. Financing strategies are also needed to fund new governance structures dedicated to cross-border passenger railway corridors.

PA2: Cross-border train connection Neusiedl am See-Fertőszentmiklós-Sopron

Implementation (D.2.3.2): PA2 extended the cross-border train service from Neusiedl am See (AT) to Fertőszentmiklós (HU) up to Sopron (HU), removing transfers currently needed. Two pairs of train connections per day provided during weekends and festivities served especially tourists and related bike-transport demand. Thanks to PA2, convenience of train connectivity in the World Heritage site of Lake Fertő improved.

Guidelines and Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.2): To foster the development of PA2 after SUSTANCE, several actions may be relevant. They include e.g. the extension of the service to a circle route around Lake Fertő, the extension of frequency and duration of the service to shoulder seasons, or the integration of the service in regional tourist cards. All these options require funding, as well as a multi-level and -sectoral governance system involving transport/infrastructure operators, local municipalities, and regional tourism agencies.

PA3: Feasibility analysis on train connection Divaca-Buzet-Pula

Implementation (D.2.3.3): PA3 studied the feasibility, economic viability, sustainability, and justification of potential investments to improve railway services on the cross-border route linking Divača (SI) to Pula (HR). Even in this case, recreational travellers played a major role. To meet its aim, the feasibility study included an analysis of the current state, required investments, potential benefits, and financing plan.

Guidelines and Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.3): To turn the results of the study into action, a critical step is the formalisation of a governance commitment of regional authorities, national transport ministries, and public railway companies in the intervention. Inter-institutional agreements, e.g. through memorandums of understanding (MoUs) or integrated planning procedures may be suitable to this end. Additionally, a formal cross-border governance structure (HR-SI) could be introduced, such as a Joint Railway Corridor Committee.

C.2. Info-mobility

PA4: New ICT booking service of DRT in Rimini-Ravenna-Forlì

Implementation (D.2.4.1): PA4 introduced a webapp to allow for planning and booking rides with demand-responsive transport solutions already available in Emilia Romagna region (Valmarecchia and Valconca), as well as to purchase e-tickets for such rides. The app included the back-end system allowing the management of all information by the PT operators supplying involved DRT services.



Guidelines and Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.4): To ensure durability and transferability of PA4, several governance tools may be helpful. They include: the online open-source publication of the developed app and technical guidelines to ease transferability; the identification of a Lead Coordinating Authority (e.g. regional transport agency or municipal consortium) acting as central coordinator of future initiatives; or the adoption of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model since the coordinating authority often is not the company managing services, but it contracts private operators via tenders or public service contracts.

PA5: New ICT service for MaaS in Istria

Implementation (D.2.4.2): PA5 included two investments. The first was the installation of e-bike and e-scooter sharing stands at strategic locations close to railway nodes to promote bike-and-train practices in Istria Region. The second one regarded the introduction of a MaaS-oriented application collecting public and private transport options in Istria region under a single umbrella easing multimodal journeys.

Guidelines and Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.3): To foster the maintenance and broadening of the app, a formal assignment of responsibilities for technical maintenance, data accuracy, and content updates to a designated public authority or transport operator is needed. To this end, a cooperation agreement should clearly define the role of each part. Moreover, the Istria region may consider engaging private service providers through limited partnership models to support technical upgrades or joint promotional efforts.

PA6: New IT tool for bike and rail in HR and neighbouring regions in SI & IT

Implementation (D.2.4.3): PA6 introduced a new webpage within the website of Croatian railways specifically dedicated to the promotion of train-and-bike experiences in Croatia, Slovenia and Italy. The new webpage is organised in thematic subsections, encompassing e.g. information of bike transport on trains, bike rental facilities, bike tours and events. The page is suitable for future extendibility.

Guidelines and Roadmap (D.2.5.1 and D.1.3.5): To keep promoting cross-border bike-and-train practices, ongoing cooperation with stakeholders must be brought forward, e.g. by sharing with them news and information regarding future events. Moreover, media campaigns regarding raising awareness on eco-friendly means of transport can target not only end users, but even public and private bodies potentially interested in joining forces. Finally, signing different MoUs can help confirming ongoing collaboration and defining future steps in the development of the webpage content.

Figure 3 below displays how the information provided above regarding the **governance-related potential actions included in the Guidelines and Roadmaps of the PAs** contribute to the common vision related to PT governance in Central Europe introduced in Section B.2.

 Governance type	 Governance structure	 Technical and planning contribution	 Legal/administrative contribution	 Financial contribution
PA1: PSO financing by involved countries PA2: Multi-level and multi-sectoral governance system PA4: Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model PA5: Limited partnership models engaging private service providers	PA1: Formation of cross-border advisory group PA3: Formalisation of a governance commitment PA3-6: MoU or integrated planning procedures PA3: Joint Railway Corridor Committee PA4: Setup of a Lead Coordinating Authority	PA4: Online open-source publication of app structure PA6: Media campaigns regarding raising awareness on eco-friendly means of transport	PA5: Formal assignment of responsibilities for technical maintenance, data accuracy, and content updates PA6: Sharing of news and information regarding future events with potential stakeholders	PA1: Financing strategies for new ad-hoc governance bodies

Figure 3. Contribution of the SUSTANCE Pilot Actions to the vision of the Governance Strategy.



D. Governance recommendations for SUSTANCE cross-border areas

Based on the vision set in Section B, the expected follow-up activities of SUSTANCE pilot actions reported in Section C, and the governance best practices analysed in D.3.2.1, some **governance recommendations** can be formulated. These recommendations specifically address the context of cross-border PT development with reference to the **three cross-border areas addressed in SUSTANCE** (Figure 4). They include:

- The **cross-border area IT-SI-HR** linking the NUTS2 regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia (ITH4), Slovenia (SI03+SI04), and Adriatic Croatia (HR03). This is the cross-border area hosting the PA1 (train Trieste-Divaca-Pivka-Rijeka), PA3 (train Divaca-Buzet-Pula), PA5 (ICT tool for MaaS in Istria), and PA6 (ICT tool for bike and rail between HR, SI and IT).
- The **cross-border area AT-HU** linking the NUTS2 regions of Burgenland (AT11) and Western Transdanubia (HU22). This is the cross-border area hosting the PA2 (direct train Neusiedl am See-Fertőszentmiklós-Sopron).
- The **cross-border area AT-IT** of the EGCT Euregio, linking the NUTS2 regions of Trentino (ITH2) and South Tyrol (ITH1) with the Austrian region of (north and east) Tyrol (AT33). This is the cross-border area of the accessibility assessment D1.2.3, and of the Roadmap D.1.3.6.

It is important to underline that these three cross-border areas focus on **peripheral and low-demand areas** of CE. They are **crossed by long-distance sections of TEN-T corridors** such as the Verona-Munich connection (Scan-Med), the Vienna-Budapest link (Rhine-Danube), and the Venice-Zagreb connection (Baltic-Adriatic). However, the focus of this document and of the following governance recommendations is not on such main corridors, but rather on the **peripheral area surrounding the border and crossed by the corridors**.

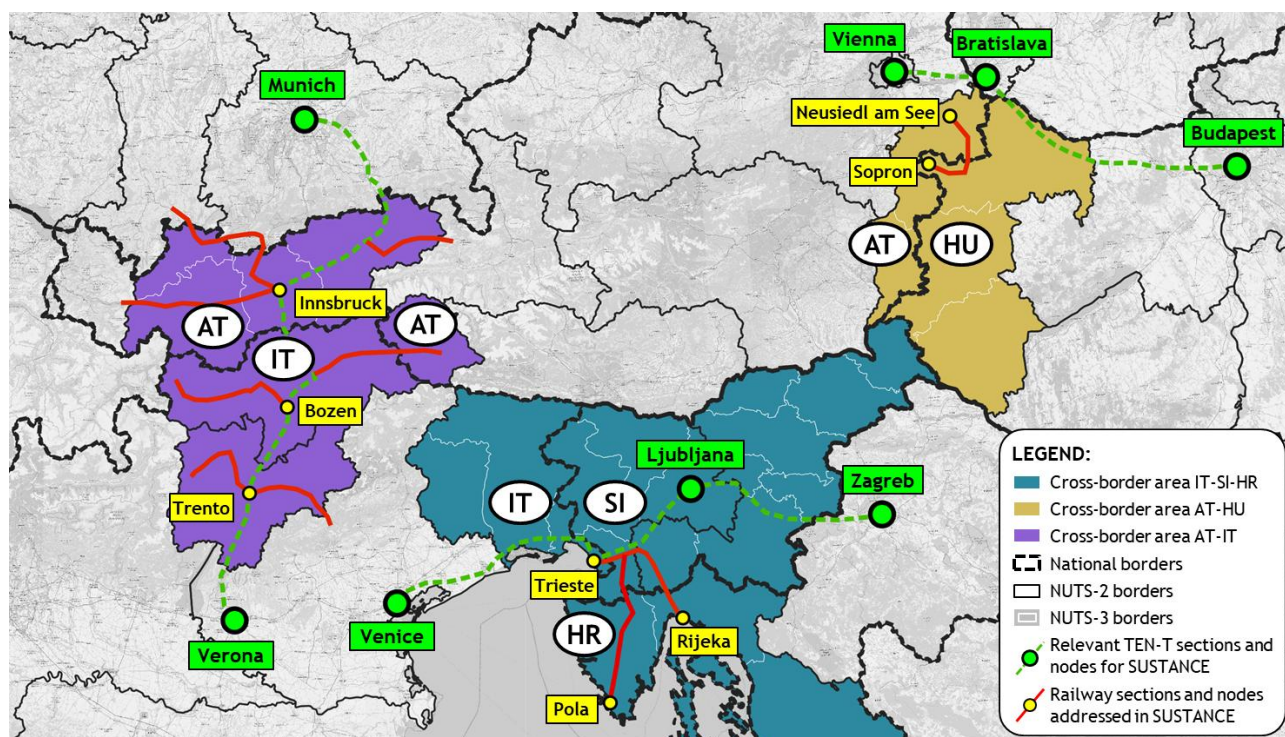


Figure 4. Cross-border areas addressed by SUSTANCE for which governance recommendations are provided.



D.1. Cross-border area IT-SI-HR

This cross-border area (Figure 4) is served by three main railway players that act at both regional, national, and cross-border level: Trenitalia and its regional division FVG (TI), Slovenian Railways (SZPP), and Croatian Railways (HZPP). Road PT operators mostly serve the regional and local level, except for some cross-border bus connections shared between Italy and Slovenia. Finally, local operators provide complementary services (of active and shared mobility) especially for first/last mile purpose.

Considering these framework elements, a **cross-border PT advisory group** could be introduced to foster and coordinate the introduction of new policies (Table 1). As regards the **governance structure**, this group could be led by a player that does not directly belong to the public administrations and PT operators listed above. Rather, it is a third part with the duty to balance the needs of all operative actors (in line with the externalised governance model, D.1.2.3). Institutions like CEI could cover this role, as its core mission is the cooperation in CE, with no particular interest for any of the operative parts.

Under this structure, the **governance type** may include both public and private PT actors organised with different hierarchical roles. The three railway operators (TI, SZPP, HZPP) might form the **core cross-border working group**, each backed by one reference public administration (Region FVG, Slovenian Ministry, Croatian Ministry). Indeed, they are the operators that actually must cross the borders with their services and thus must coordinate for the overcoming of barriers such as rolling stock and crew management, cost and revenue sharing, timetables, or ticket selling. Under the core group, an **additional cross-border working group** might incorporate the public and private road-transport operators that serve the involved regions, but without crossing the borders. Although these PT operators are not cross-border per se, they are essential to complement cross-border rail services at local level. Therefore, the additional working group is expected to discuss operative topics like rail-road timetable coordination, cross-border data sharing, and rail-road cross-border ticketing offers.

This governance scheme will foster several **short-term initiatives and long-term strategies**. For instance, the core group can discuss the setup of new direct cross-border connections, the purchase of rolling stocks able to travel on lines supplied by e.g. different voltages, the establishment of cross-border rail ticketing offers. Instead, the additional group might discuss e.g. the harmonisation of regional/local bus timetables with the timetables of cross-border rail services, the sharing and harmonisation of timetable data to provide seamless multimodal cross-border journey planners, or the setup of train-and-bus cross-border tickets that allow door-to-door easy trips even across borders.

D.2. Cross-border area AT-HU

This cross-border area (Figure 4) is served by three railway operators, namely GYSEV, ÖBB, and MÁV. In this case, no public bus operator provides regional cross-border connections. Indeed, road PT services mostly work at the regional and local level in AT, with the Transport Association VOR (Verkehrsverbund Ost-Region) coordinating regional transport services in Burgenland. Instead, bus transport is very centralised in Hungary, with the operator MÁV Passenger Transport providing most of regional and local bus services.

Given the framework described above, it is very challenging to define an externalised governance structure able to bridge the federal (regional) logic of Austria with the centralised (national) logic of Hungary. As such, a centralised **governance structure** might be more effective in this case. This would imply having one main operative actor as the **insider cross-border coordinator** of transport initiatives (Table 1). This role could be covered by GYSEV, as this is the main cross-border transport operator, with the know-how related to railway transport between AT and HU. In this setup, the coordinator has the role of initiating PT proposals at the cross-border level.

Under this structure, a multi-level and multi-sectoral **governance type** can be established. This may imply the formation of three groups: the **cross-border tourism working group**, the **cross-border transport**



working group, and the joint tourism-transport working group. The first and second groups bring together stakeholders from AT and HU that belong to the same sectors. In the former case, they may be regional and local tourism agencies that operate around the Lake Neusiedl and can join forces to offer cross-border tourism products. In the second case, involved stakeholders are the three railway operators (GYSEV, ÖBB, MÁV) sided by VOR and MÁV Passenger Transport as managers of regional/local bus services. They can join forces to propose new transport upgrades at cross-border level around the Lake Neusiedl. By merging together the two sectors, the joint tourism-transport group focuses instead of initiatives that specifically target tourism mobility and combine tourism and transport products.

This governance scheme will foster several **short-term initiatives and long-term strategies**. For instance, the tourism working group may focus on the design of joint guest cards that hold together diverse services in AT and HU under a single pricing scheme. The transport working group may design new routes across borders serving both local and tourists, such as the circle lake line involving both GYSEV and ÖBB lines. Yet, the joint tourism-transport group might define hybrid experiences, such as cross-border bike tours with foreseen trip sections by train both in AT and HU, with related unitary pricing schemes.

D.3. Cross-border area AT-IT

This area (Figure 4) is shaped by the presence of various national and regional PT operators, which have diverse areas of competence. National railway operators TI and ÖBB play a key role along the Brenner line (not the focus of SUSTANCE), e.g. by providing high-speed links. Three regional operators (VVT, STA, Trentino Trasporti) have instead competence on regional transport, both rail and road one. Therefore, these are also the key reference actors for SUSTANCE, given the focus of the project on minor lines connecting rural population to the main Brenner corridor.

In this cross-border area, an official and long-lasting cross-border governance system is already in place, namely the EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino (AP in the project). This is an externalised governance system with a leading third institution coordinating three regions and their PT players. Moreover, the system already involves both public and private stakeholders, although the public operators play a major role given also their prevalence in the provision of PT services. Given this solid functioning, this strategy does not provide recommendations regarding the **governance structure** or **governance type**.

Rather, based on the evidence emerged in the stakeholder consultations, it suggests further **short-term initiatives and long-term strategies** that could enforce cross-border cooperation in the PT sector (Table 1). Among the short-term initiatives, the setup of a **cross-border emergency platform** to share live information on service disruptions and related replacement services is advisable, especially considering the increasing climate hazards that affect Alpine infrastructures. Even a **cross-border mobility survey** can be coordinated by Euregio, to gain more realistic and detailed data on cross-border mobility flows by PT and car, in terms of e.g. trip distance, purpose, frequency, and mode-choice drivers. As regards the long-term strategies, Euregio could coordinate the definition of a **shared cross-border approach to the multimodal combination bike-and-train**, especially for the target group of visitors. This implies e.g. the definition of bike-spot reservation systems on trains, cross-border tickets for bike transport on trains, and shared strategies to foster the transport of bikes on board or the establishment of rental services at train stations.

SUSTANCE cross-border areas	Governance structure	Governance type	Short-term initiatives and long-term strategies
IT-SI-HR Including: • Friuli Venezia Giulia • Slovenia • Adriatic Croatia	Cross-border PT advisory group: Externalised structure managed by an actor that is not operational (e.g. CEI)	Core cross-border working group: Made up of railway operators TI, SZPP, HZPP with the support of public administrations and steering the cross-border transport initiatives	Examples: • New direct cross-border connections and rolling stocks to travel on lines supplied by different voltages • Cross-border rail ticketing offers



		Additional cross-border working group: Integrating also regional/local road transport operators, to guarantee multimodal coordination around cross-border rail transport	• Harmonisation of regional/local bus timetables with the timetables of cross-border rail services • Sharing of timetable data for cross-border multimodal journey planners • Train-and-bus cross-border tickets
AT-HU Including: • <i>Burgenland</i> • <i>Western Transdanubia</i>	Insider cross-border coordinator: Centralised structure managed by a pivotal operational actor (e.g. GYSEV)	Cross-border tourism working group: Local and regional tourism offices and authorities in the two regions of AT and HU Cross-border transport working group: Led by GYSEV, ÖBB, MÁV as cross-border railway operators and supported by regional or national bus operators VOR and MÁV Passenger Transport Joint tourism-transport working group: Multi-sectoral meeting point between PT and tourism operators for joint initiatives	Examples: • Cross-border tourism guest cards with services in HU and AT jointly • Cross-border train connections around Lake Neusiedl forming a circular route • Cross-border cycle tourism itineraries with part of the trip by train in AT, HU, and across borders
AT-IT Including: • <i>Trentino</i> • <i>South Tyrol</i> • <i>Tyrol (north and east)</i>	Already existing Euregio, no recommendation needed	Already existing Euregio, no recommendation needed	Examples: • Cross-border emergency platform for service disruptions and replacement • Cross-border mobility survey to reconstruct flows • Cross-border strategy for multimodal combination bike-and-train

Table 1. Governance recommendations for the SUSTANCE cross-border areas.

E. PT governance tools supporting the vision

Beside the **governance recommendations** provided above (and specifically tailored on the three cross-border areas addressed in SUSTANCE), other **governance tools** might be potentially useful to operationalise the vision proposed in Section B, especially in CE areas beyond the SUSTANCE's ones (Figure 5). Clearly, some of these tools go beyond the typical operative power of regional administrations or PT operators, since they require e.g. the commitment of other institutions or the allocation of dedicated funding. Nevertheless, they are worth mentioning in this strategic and visionary document as future inspiration. These governance tools are organised in five thematic clusters, following the logic of the vision proposed in Section B.

(1) Tools to connect public and private PT actors (point 1 in Figure 2): Especially in peripheral and remote areas where demand tends to be low and scattered, public-private cooperation is useful to enlarge PT provision and provide alternative services (e.g. on-demand transport, carsharing, carpooling, P+R). Ideally, these systems are combined with traditional backbone PT (e.g. rail and bus lines), which are typically managed by public operators. To maximise public-private cooperation, **public-private stakeholder mapping** could be implemented to map all the potential private transport actors that may provide services of public relevance. On this basis, dedicated **public-private PT exchange networks** and events could be organised, with the aim of interfacing the PT needs of public bodies with the business needs of private actors.



(2) Tools to encourage decentralised or externalised governance models (point 2 in Figure 2): Especially when dealing with cross-border PT initiatives, it is essential to integrate all the involved regions and actors to identify balanced solutions supported by all the involved parts. To guarantee such balance, decentralised and externalised governance structures are advisable. The former could be established by setting cross-border roundtables collecting the most relevant public PT actors of the involved regions and working based on a rotating leadership principle. The latter structure (externalised) is more challenging to achieve, since it requires the establishment of a mediator party (super partes) leading the governance, like the EGTCs. To explore externalisation opportunities, EGTC exchange workshops might be organised, to deepen the functioning and financing of successful EGTCs and evaluate their application in the CE area.

(3) Tools to combine short-term pilot initiatives and long-term strategies (point 3 in Figure 2): To foster the implementation of short-term pilot initiatives, cross-border feasibility studies supported by all the involved regions/countries could be conducted together with reference to specific actions, like cross-border tickets or info-mobility integrations. However, these studies require funding that may be not available, especially if domestic transport priorities result more urgent. To define long-term strategies instead, cross-border Future Labs could be a potential tool to define desirable scenarios and related operational pathways to implement such scenarios. They would imply the involvement of all the most relevant PT actors, which set up a common scenario and define long-term perspectives to implement that. Although less concrete, these labs may be useful in preliminary planning phases.

(4) Tools to discuss ad-hoc cross-border agreements (point 4 in Figure 2): When concrete short-term actions are defined, a screening of the legal obstacles to desired cross-border interventions could be implemented as a starting point. Given the typical involvement of diverse regional and national legislations in -border measures, this screening activity would require the involvement of all the regions/countries in a first stage, and the confrontation of local obstacles at cross-border level in a second stage.

(5) Tools to discuss financial opportunities (point 5, Figure 2): In parallel to the analysis of legal obstacles, also the screening of financial opportunities, especially at EU level is relevant. Indeed, cross-border actions aimed and reaching a “borderless” European transport area may be suitable for the acquisition of international funding, but it can even rise the interest of involved single countries.

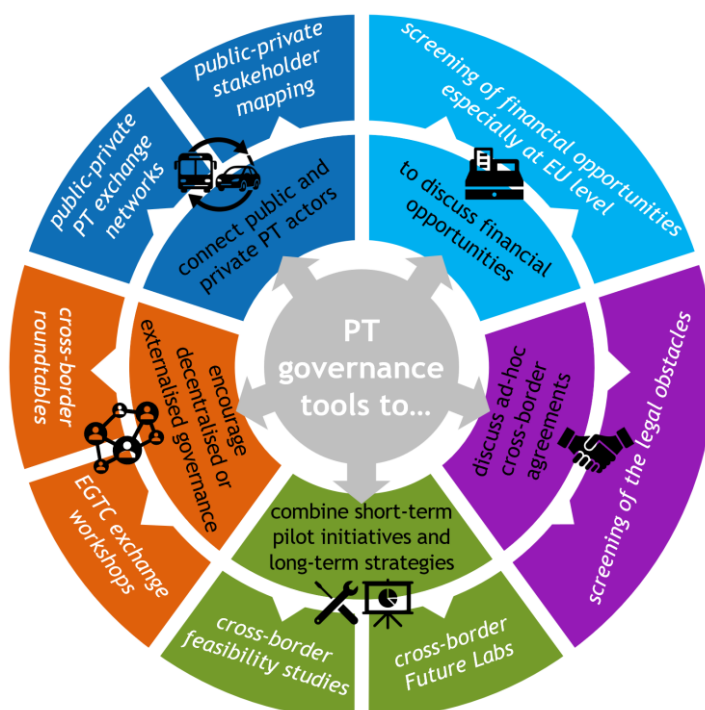


Figure 5. Summary of possible governance tools supporting the vision of the Governance Strategy.



As anticipated, most of the tools suggested above require the commitment (even financial) of the bodies involved in the governance system. Therefore, their potential applicability is highly subject to the availability of dedicated funding and the prioritisation of cross-border mobility interventions over domestic ones. Despite this unavoidable limitation, such governance tools may represent operative examples of how PT cooperation and governance may be boosted further in CE.

F. Conclusions

This Governance Strategy has presented four core contents: 1) the definition of a common vision to improve cooperation and governance for a better PT accessibility in CE; 2) the description of how implemented pilots and planned follow-up activities may contribute to such vision; 3) a selection of governance recommendations to foster better cooperation in the three cross-border areas addressed by SUSTANCE; and 4) the introduction of additional governance tools that CE actors beyond SUSTANCE ones may take into account, according to their financial and operational power. The indications included in this document represent a starting point to foster better cooperation and require the allocation of funds in order to be operationalised. However, beyond funds, they also require boosting the dialogue across national borders, as well complementing the strategic priorities defined by policymakers by reserving an increasing space to transboundary initiatives, beside domestic ones.

In the last project phase, SUSTANCE Project and Associated Partners (PPs and APs) will support the setting up of the so-called “SUSTANCE Transnational Cooperation Network” by signing letters of support (D.3.4.2), which acknowledge the common Governance Strategy presented in this document (D.3.4.1) and the single Roadmaps elaborated by each relevant PP (D.1.3.1-6). This activity will conclude the operational tasks of the SUSTANCE project, fostering CE cooperation in the PT sector beyond the project closure.

G. References

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