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# Sustainable and Social Inclusion: Empowering Women in Mountainous Regions through Mobility and Gender Equality

*Resilience through Innovation and Sustainability*

6<sup>th</sup> Transnational Meeting, Valongo, Portugal

# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY & COMMUNITY



Women in mountainous Greece (e.g., Epirus, Crete, Peloponnese) are the backbone of:

- ✓ **Agriculture & Livestock:** Daily management of small family farms, olive groves, and cheese production – often the only source of income in remote villages.
- ✓ **Tourism:** Running guesthouses, tavernas, and craft shops; guiding cultural and nature tours.
- ✓ **Caregiving:** Elderly care, childcare, and household management – usually without formal recognition or remuneration.
- ✓ **Local Business & Cooperatives:** Women-led cooperatives producing traditional products (herbs, textiles, honey) that rely on access to markets.

👉 Despite their contribution, women's mobility is often an afterthought in transport planning.

| <b>Barrier Type</b> | <b>Specific Challenges in Mountainous Greece</b>   |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Physical</b>     | <b>Narrow, poorly maintained roads; lack of safe pedestrian paths; no street lighting in villages; infrequent or non-existent bus services to remote settlements.</b>  |
| <b>Economic</b>     | <b>High cost of car ownership and fuel; low female employment rates mean less disposable income for transport; no subsidised public transport for rural women.</b>   |
| <b>Cultural</b>     | <b>Traditional gender roles – women expected to prioritise caregiving over personal mobility; stigma around women driving alone at night or travelling unaccompanied.</b>  |
| <b>Temporal</b>     | <b>Bus schedules designed for 9-5 commuters, not for school runs, market visits, or healthcare appointments; women’s “linked trips” (e.g., child to school + grocery + elderly parent) impossible within fixed timetables.</b> |

# IMPACT OF LIMITED MOBILITY ON WOMEN'S LIVES



## Concrete consequences of transport exclusion:

- ✓ Economic: Women unable to reach regional job training centres or markets for their products → lower income, perpetuation of poverty cycle.
- ✓ Example: A survey in three Epirus villages found that 68% of women turned down paid work because of lack of transport.
- ✓ Education: Girls drop out of secondary school earlier than boys because the nearest high school is hours away and no safe bus option exists.
- ✓ Healthcare: Routine screenings (mammograms, prenatal checks) skipped due to distance and cost.
- ✓ Data: 40% of women over 50 in mountainous areas have not had a mammogram in five years, citing transport as the primary barrier.
- ✓ Social Participation: Isolation from community events, religious celebrations, and even voting – leading to loneliness and reduced civic engagement.

# INNOVATIVE SOLUTION – “MOUNTAIN MOBILITY HUBS + ON-DEMAND E-SHUTTLES”



Concept: A network of low-tech, community-managed mobility hubs combined with bookable electric shuttles.

- ▶ Hubs located at village squares, churches, or mini-markets – places women already frequent.
- ▶ On-demand e-shuttle service (3-8 seats) bookable via a simple phone call (no smartphone needed) or WhatsApp.
- ▶ Dynamic routing based on real-time requests: collects women from home, drops at hub or directly at destination (health centre, school, market).

How it addresses identified barriers:

- ▶ Physical: Hubs at safe, lit, familiar locations; shuttles accessible for wheelchairs and strollers.
- ▶ Economic: Subsidised fares through municipal budget + EU funds (e.g., LEADER, Interreg) – target cost ≤€2 per trip.
- ▶ Cultural: Female drivers employed where possible, and women-only time slots for sensitive trips (e.g., evening medical visits).
- ▶ Temporal: Flexible scheduling aligns with women linked trips – can combine school drop-off with market run.

# ENGAGING WOMEN DIRECTLY IN PLANNING – OUR PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY



**We cannot design for women without designing with women. Our proposed approach:**

- ▶ **Mobile Citizen Assemblies:** Facilitators travel to villages to hold “kafenio chats” – informal gatherings at local cafés where women feel safe to speak.
- ▶ **Mobility Diaries:** Women keep simple paper diaries of their trips (or lack of trips) for two weeks, revealing hidden patterns and unmet needs.
- ▶ **Walk-and-Talk Audits:** Women guide planners along their daily routes, pointing out unsafe crossings, missing pavements, dark spots.
- ▶ **Digital Inclusion:** For women with smartphones, a simple voice-based survey tool (no literacy needed) to collect real-time feedback on shuttle services.
- 👉 **Ensuring marginalized voices are heard:**
  - ▶ **Separate focus groups** for elderly women, Roma women, women with disabilities, and low-income single mothers.
  - ▶ **Childcare provided** during meetings to remove a major participation barrier.
  - ▶ **Materials available** in simplified Greek, Romani, and Albanian (languages spoken in border mountainous areas).

# CITIZEN SCIENCE IN ACTION – WOMEN AS COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS



## **Building on GreenMove's Demos-Kratos philosophy, we train women as Community Researchers to:**

- ▶ Monitor air quality and noise near schools and health centres using low-cost sensors.
- ▶ Map safe vs. unsafe pedestrian routes using participatory GIS (paper or digital).
- ▶ Collect testimonials and stories of mobility exclusion to present to municipal councils.

Outcome: Women move from “subjects of study” to co-owners of data and solutions – a transformative shift in local power dynamics.

# POLICY ASK – WHAT WE NEED FROM MUNICIPALITIES AND THE EU



- ▶ **Budget line** for rural on-demand transport pilots (small is beautiful – €50k per valley can launch a 2-year pilot).
- ▶ **Gender impact assessments** mandatory for all regional transport infrastructure projects.
- ▶ **Training programmes** for female drivers and mechanics in rural areas.
- ▶ **Integration of citizen-generated mobility data** into official transport planning (e.g., via the GreenMove Digital Toolbox).

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# THE GREENMOVE LEGACY – WHAT RTIS PLEDGES FOR VALONGO AND BEYOND



- ▶ Toolkit: Publish “Mobility for Women in Mountainous Regions” – a practical manual derived from our pilot.
- ▶ Peer-to-peer exchange: Facilitate a virtual “Sister Villages” network where women share solutions across Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, and Bosnia.
- ▶ Interreg Europe proposal: Co-lead a new project focused exclusively on gender-responsive rural mobility, building directly on GreenMove 2.0.

# CALL TO COLLABORATE



We invite every GreenMove partner to:

- ▶ Share your own data on women's mobility barriers.
- ▶ Join our planned online community of practice on gender and rural transport.
- ▶ Co-design a "Gender Equality + Mobility" badge for the European Day of Sustainable Mobility (May 9).



# THANK YOU

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