

FLIPPER (eng)

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Throughout Europe the challenge of providing a cost effective integrated public transport system is seen as an essential prerequisite to reducing pollution and congestion whilst encouraging sustainable economic growth. The traditional fixed route services is ideal for clustered travel demand areas but the changing of habitation patterns and nature of work activities in today's society have created different mobility needs to which the conventional transport has become neither suited nor cost-effective.

In the last few years Flexible Transport Services (FTS) have proved to be an advantageous solution to the provision of public transport services. FTS are complementary to the conventional passenger transport and usually serve no scheduled mobility needs, either in low demand time periods and in weak demand areas. Given this flexibility, FTS are suitable to serve niche market customers and different citizens' groups (e.g. people with disabilities & elderly, students, tourists, etc.). FTS usually operate with small size buses on flexible routes and scheduling, based on the citizens needs and requests (off-peak hours, low demand zones, disadvantaged citizens like elderly & people with disabilities, etc.) and include a range of different transport services:

- Local buses on routes with some flexibility (routes, time, meeting points, etc);
- Real Demand Responsive Transport Services;

- Special customers transport;
- Community Transport;
- Shared taxis and car pooling, etc..

It is important to note that Flexible Services aim at reaching:

- An increase of the mobility and of new trips;
- A decrease in the use and necessity of a private car;
- The provision of a local feeder/distributor to conventional transport;
- An effective and cost effective mobility commuting possibilities both for established workers and for job-seekers.

Such a variety of flexible services and provision schemes for citizens and the different needs and/or characteristics of the urban/metropolitan areas also require a high-level co-ordination and flexibility which can be guaranteed only by the use of suitable Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions. These different services can be managed by a unique co-ordination centre ("Agency") which can ensure both the needed flexibility in the planning, operation and management of the concerned services and the supply of the requested, necessary information to the users. FLIPPER stems from the need of some partners who do not have experience in running FTS to assess their potential and how to integrate them in the overall Mobility and Transport policy. The project also takes into account the need of other partners, who already run FTServices but lack a co-ordination centre (ICT platform) able to provide a more complete information to the citizens (unique number, information centre, web interface, etc.) and networking the different transport operators.

The partnership, starting from the service experience and ICT tools development gathered by some partners, will guarantee the transfer of know-how about FTS schemes and the "ICT platform" concept in different EU areas, and their strong

promotion at European level. One of the project main aim is the identification of good practices in the implementation of these types of services and systems and their dissemination amongst governmental bodies, research organisations, transport operators and private companies.