

# GRANULAR

## LIVING LABS CROSS VISIT DOSSIER

### France: Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. UK participants in the GRANULAR project are supported by UKRI- Grant numbers 10039965 (James Hutton Institute) and 10041831 (University of Southampton).

**Authors: Louise Chasset (Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée )**

**Review: Maite Iglesias (AEIDL)**

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# Pays Pyrénées Méditerranée

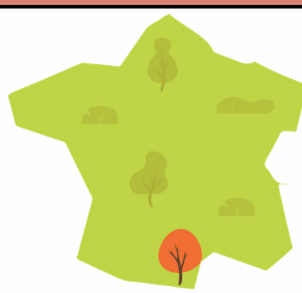
## ABOUT THE CROSS VISIT

This dossier describes a three-days cross-visit of the GRANULAR project in Pays Pyrenees Mediterranee (France), in March 2025, focusing on rural mobility, access to services, and the use of data for decision-making in rural and tourist areas. This document also includes an organisational assessment, lessons learned, and communication and ethics guidelines.

Mobility poses specific challenges in rural areas, which are common to the living labs involved in the GRANULAR project. The first question is energy consumption, due to the often long distances involved in travel. Access to services, employment, and more generally to everyday living spaces is a challenge in sparsely populated areas, some of which are mountainous or mountainous and lack public transportation options. This dependence on cars also requires vigilance with regard to people in precarious situations.

Observing mobility demand in rural areas requires the use of alternative methods and data sources that enable detailed measurement at a lower cost. However, these steps are necessary to inform local and regional decisions on transport infrastructure and mobility services.

For three full days, participants were invited to explore the area of the pays Pyrenees Mediterranee Living Lab and interact with local stakeholders: public institutions, municipalities, businesses, associations and researches involved in rural mobility.

Location

Topic
Rural mobility
Number of participants
16 participants
Contacts
Louise Chasset louise.chasset@payspyreneesmediterranee.org
Related material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Practice Abstract</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Catalogue</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Mobility monitoring exercises</a></li></ul>

## **DAY 1: Mobility and citizenship (overview of activities)**

The event kicked off with an in-depth exploration of local mobility challenges through a first overview presentation and interaction with members of the Living Lab core group in the town hall of Saint-Genis-des-Fontaines. Then participants visited the Casiers Ethiques, a vending machine that sells products from farmers within a 20 km radius. The participants were able to talk to the company's co-founder and several local farmers. The visit continued in the village of Laroque-des-Alberes, where La Chaine des Alberes association's volunteers welcomed the participants and shared the operating of their bicycle repair association.

The first day afternoon focused on the mobility strategy for rural areas in Occitanie (the NUTS2 region in which the French Living Lab is located), highlighting innovative approaches to address these challenges. This was followed by presentations on participatory initiatives that engage citizens in mobility planning, culminating in a visit to the municipality of Elne to witness these efforts firsthand. Citizen and elected representatives worked towards conversion of public spaces in the town centre, currently used for car parking, into community gardens.

## **DAY 2: Mobility and hinterland (overview of activities)**

The second day focused on immersing participants in the hinterland, featuring themed stops along the cross-border Pirinexus bike path, between Arles-sur-Tech and Ceret. These stops allowed participants to engage with local stakeholders and discuss challenges related to accessing everyday services in sparsely populated mountain areas. For example, the Aspres community of communes presented its health diagnosis, the basis for a joint action plan between the state and the local authority, to improve the health and access to healthcare for the inhabitants of this rural area. Participants also discovered the micro-folie in Amelie-les-Bains, a facility that supports access to pieces of art from major French museums using digital tools, and the Maison France Services in Thuir, which aims to facilitate administrative procedures for citizens in rural areas.

In the afternoon, Ecorys led a session that shifted the focus back to policy and rural proofing. This session provided an opportunity to test the regional carpooling strategy, assess its impact, and collectively discuss the validation exercise.

## **DAY 3: Mobility and tourism (overview of activities)**

The third and final day of the cross-visit culminated in a dialogue between European and local stakeholders in mobility and tourism, welcomed at the Banyuls-sur-Mer Oenological Observatory, a branch of the Sorbonne University. The workshop initiated a discussion on the potential and limitations of leveraging big data to monitor tourist mobility in rural areas. Presentations highlighted the work conducted within GRANULAR, focusing on the use of Facebook data (UoS) and TripAdvisor data (IIASA) at the EU level.

Additionally, a local stakeholder presented an example of how to use mobile phone geolocation data to characterise tourist flows, focusing on the municipality of Argeles-sur-Mer. The session concluded with participants exchanging best practices in mobility solutions for tourists in rural areas from their respective regions.

## INSIGHTS & LEARNINGS

The diversity and quality of the participants in the cross-visit led to some interesting and stimulating discussions, such as how to involve citizen in collecting data, which tools to support access to services in rural areas, and how to monitor seasonal mobility demand. The questions and interactions with the members of the local living labs were much appreciated and helped to make the GRANULAR European research project on a day-to-day basis a reality.

The face-to-face meetings between facilitators, members of living labs and researchers have enabled connections to be made to explore GRANULAR projects in greater depth and to share common issues. The direct interactions between participants in the cross-visit and members of the local living lab is also a point worth highlighting: exchanges of best practice and future collaborations have been initiated. For example, European elected representatives have invited the founder of Casiers Ethiques to come to their place to present his tool, and local consultants and European researchers are planning to share their methods for exploiting big data to monitor mobility demand.

The balance between indoor presentations, meetings with local stakeholders, activities in the field and informal time is an interesting aspect of the cross-visit. As well as the scope of the programme, from observation methods to decisions and action. The cross-visit is an opportunity for the research laboratories involved in GRANULAR to share their work with interested living labs, and directly with the local members of the living labs.

We could have mobilised more local players during the cross-visit and provided some more time for dedicated exchanges - beyond the presentation of good practice. After all, a cross-visit is as enriching for the host region as it is for the representatives who are travelling. Greater involvement, particularly from local elected representatives, would have enabled the cross-visit to have a greater impact on our region. The local press could also have been invited.

In addition, we could have better planned, organised and led the discussions session between living labs. Even if the participants in the cross-visit had the opportunity to talk informally, the cross-visit could also be an opportunity to share good practice and the work of the living labs on the theme of cross-visit in a more formal way. Following the same logic, the participation of research laboratories involved in the cross-visit theme would be an added bonus. This would provide an opportunity to share research advances with interested living labs and get feedback from the field, as well as directly with members of the local living lab: the very essence of a living lab!

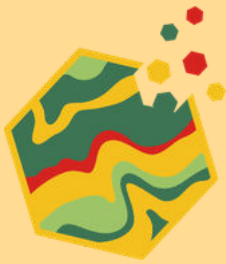
## USEFULNESS FOR DECISION MARKERS

Decision-makers were able to re-(discover) methods and data sources through a number of activities:

- The municipality of Elne explained how it had drawn on the knowledge gathered from citizens and residents to draw up its sustainable mobility plan - thereby strengthening their involvement in its implementation.
- The commune de communes des Aspres shared its diagnosis of access to healthcare in its area, based on statistical data drawn up by national institutes and interviews with local players.
- Giulia Martino from Ecorys led a workshop on implementing the rural proofing tool, enabling participants to get to grips with it more easily.
- The workshop initiated a discussion on the potential and limitations of leveraging big data to monitor tourist mobility in rural areas.

# PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS





# GRANULAR

GRANULAR is a four-year multi-disciplinary and transnational project. It aims at generating new datasets, tools and methods to better understand rural diversity and to promote place-based rural policies.



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