

Historical Villages of Portugal: Sustainable Mobility Pilot

Background

- The Historical Villages of Portugal represent a network of picturesque, culturally rich settlements that capture the essence of the country's history and traditions. Amongst these villages, Castelo Novo stands out for its unique architectural heritage and stunning natural surroundings. However, like many historical areas, the village faces challenges linked to accessibility, sustainability, and preservation of its cultural and environmental landscape.
- Over the years, the increasing flow of tourists and the mobility needs of local residents have highlighted the necessity of a tailored urban mobility solution that respects the area's historical context. Narrow cobblestone streets, limited parking, and the absence of modern infrastructure made it essential to adopt innovative and environmentally friendly solutions. In response to these challenges, a Sustainable Urban Mobility plan was developed specifically for Castelo Novo as part of a broader initiative within the Historical Villages network. This project aimed to promote accessibility and reduce environmental impact while preserving the charm and authenticity of the village.



- The initiative introduced several key measures, including pedestrian-friendly zones, electric mobility options, and the promotion of cycling and walking paths. It also involved the installation of small-scale electric shuttles designed to navigate the narrow streets without compromising the village's structural integrity. These efforts align with Portugal's goals for sustainable development and tourism while ensuring that the local population benefits from improved mobility and quality of life.
- With support from local municipalities, national programmes, and European funding, the Sustainable Urban Mobility initiative in Castelo Novo has become a model for other historical villages facing similar challenges. It emphasises the balance between modernisation and preservation, offering a glimpse into how historical sites can thrive in the face of contemporary demands.

Key Activities

- Development of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan tailored to the unique needs of Castelo Novo and its historical architecture.
- Creation of pedestrian-friendly zones to reduce vehicle traffic in key areas of the village.
- Deployment of electric shuttles designed to navigate narrow cobblestone streets without causing structural or environmental damage.
- Establishment of cycling and walking paths, encouraging active and eco-friendly modes of transportation for residents and visitors.
- Installation of charging stations for electric vehicles, promoting the adoption of sustainable transportation technologies.

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- Collaboration with local businesses to integrate sustainable mobility solutions into tourism services, such as guided e-bike tours.

Impact

- Improved accessibility for residents, tourists, and individuals with reduced mobility.
- Enhanced tourist experience by offering sustainable and convenient mobility options that align with the village's historical charm.
- Preservation of the village's cultural and architectural heritage by minimising the impact of traditional vehicle traffic.
- Increased community awareness and engagement in sustainability practices, fostering long-term support for green initiatives.

Challenges & Solutions

Challenge: Resistance from locals to changes in traditional mobility patterns.

Solution: Community engagement initiatives, including workshops and informational campaigns, to ensure local buy-in and address concerns.

Challenge: High initial investment in electric shuttles and infrastructure.

Solution: Securing funding through national and European programmes to support the implementation of sustainable technologies.

Challenge: Balancing tourism growth with heritage preservation.

Solution: Designing mobility solutions that prioritise cultural heritage preservation and sustainable tourism strategies.

Tips for Similar Projects

- Engage the local community early in the planning process to build trust and ensure the project reflects their needs.
- Prioritise low-impact mobility solutions like electric vehicles and cycling paths to preserve historical and environmental integrity.
- Partner with tourism stakeholders to create integrated services that enhance the visitor experience while promoting sustainability.
- Seek funding opportunities from national and EU programmes to alleviate financial constraints.
- Plan for long-term maintenance and upgrades to ensure the sustainability of the mobility solutions.

Identified Limitations/Weaknesses

- Portugal has an elderly population, particularly in these rural villages. This can pose significant limitations to mobility and the adoption of new transport modes.
- High reliance on external funding makes scalability challenging for smaller or less resourceful villages.
- Limited capacity of electric shuttles, which may not accommodate peak tourism periods.
- The project's success depends heavily on continuous community support and proper maintenance of infrastructure.

Resources

- Read more about the project on this [Web Page](#).

Partners



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