



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

PRE-EVENT BRIEF

ESPON Peer Learning Workshop on Sustainable Transport Infrastructure in the Strategic Urban Region Eurodelta (STISE)

Virtual

27 April 13:30-17:30 (CET)

Introduction



For decades sustainable mobility has proven to be a wicked problem. Aside from the ongoing traffic jams and travel disruptions, today, transport emissions represent around 25% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, these transport emissions are rapidly increasing after COVID-19. Therefore, and as part of the European Commission's (EC's) ambition of being the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, major goals have been set with regard to changes in travel and transport. All of the 27 EU Member States have pledged to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to levels in 1990, in order to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

This would mean achieving a 90% reduction in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions, in parallel to specific goals concerning smart and resilient mobility. For that purpose, zero-emission and fully automated new vehicles are being promoted to replace regular vehicles by 2035, pollution pricing and emission trading will be implemented from 2026 onwards for all road transport, and carbon pricing will be introduced for the aviation sector in combination with a tripling of high-speed train travel. The maritime sector must also contribute to major decarbonisation targets, including a fully operational, smart, multimodal, and sustainable trans-European Transport Network by 2050. These ambitious goals can only be met successfully through an intensive cooperation with the leading stakeholders in the respective sectors themselves and with the lower-tier national, regional, and local public authorities.

Against this backdrop, the public authorities and stakeholders gathered within the Strategic Urban Region of the Eurodelta (SURE) have taken up this challenge and have elaborated, with the support of the ESPON program, a strategic policy roadmap towards a more Sustainable Transport Infrastructure, for the SURE-region of the Randstad, Belgian Regions, Nord Pas de Calais, and the Ruhr and Rhineland (STISE, see figure 1). Next to a baseline scenario for 2050, and the combination of this scenario with external trends, part of this strategy also comprises of four policy measures on an aviation shift on short-/midrange distances, the installation of Zero Emission Zones in all major cities, improvements of cross-border public train transport, and an integrated approach on Mobility as a Service (MaaS). The first two measures will be discussed in this event, the others in similar events of the adjoining regions of The Netherlands, France, and Germany.

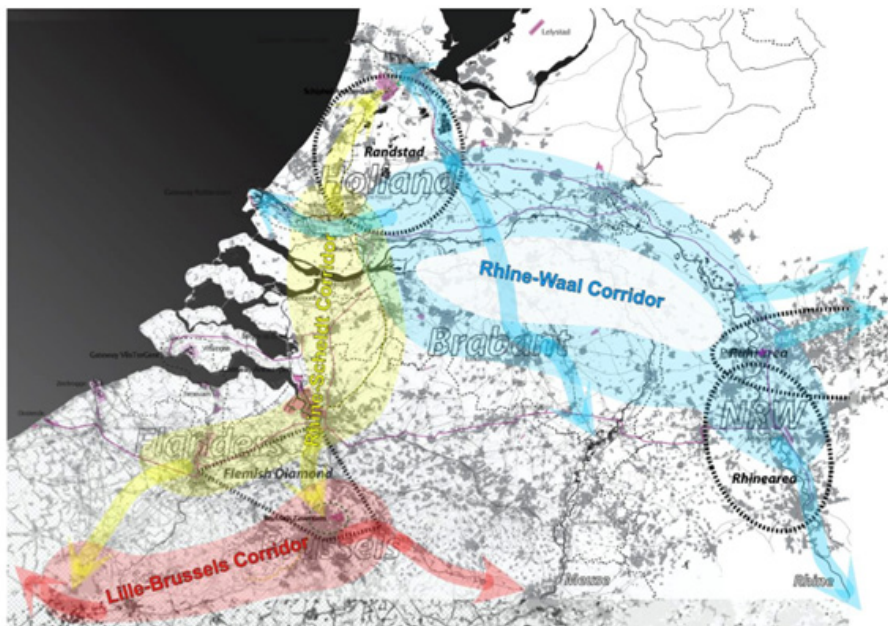


Figure 1. Corridor focus of the STISE study

Aviation shift on short- and midrange distances

According to data from 2019 (2020 and 2021 were not representative due to COVID-19) around 18 million passengers travelled up to 500 km to, within or from the major airports in SURE. A mid-run business-as-usual recovery scenario of the aviation sector after COVID-19 showed that these numbers might climb up towards 20 and 23 million in total for 2030 and 2050 respectively. Given the travel times, including the pre- and post-transport and check-in delays, most of these travellers could be more sustainably shifted towards high-speed train services. This might lead towards a doubling or, on some corridors, even a tripling and quadrupling of the high-speed frequencies of the Thalys, Eurostar, and ICE, which in itself could have a major impact on the ticketing prices, and (cross-border) domestic travel as well. However, investments up to approximately €30 billion in high-speed infrastructures would be needed over the next 30 years (around €1 billion/year). But in turn this would already have a 10-12% impact on the reduction of aviation greenhouse emissions and a 10-19% impact on the estimated noise reduction of the sector, provided that the open slots would not been taken by longer-distance aviation. For that purpose, the study suggests installing an aviation shift ambassador to implement the measures with the airports, aviation carriers, high-speed operators, infrastructure stakeholders, and national slot-coordinators step by step.

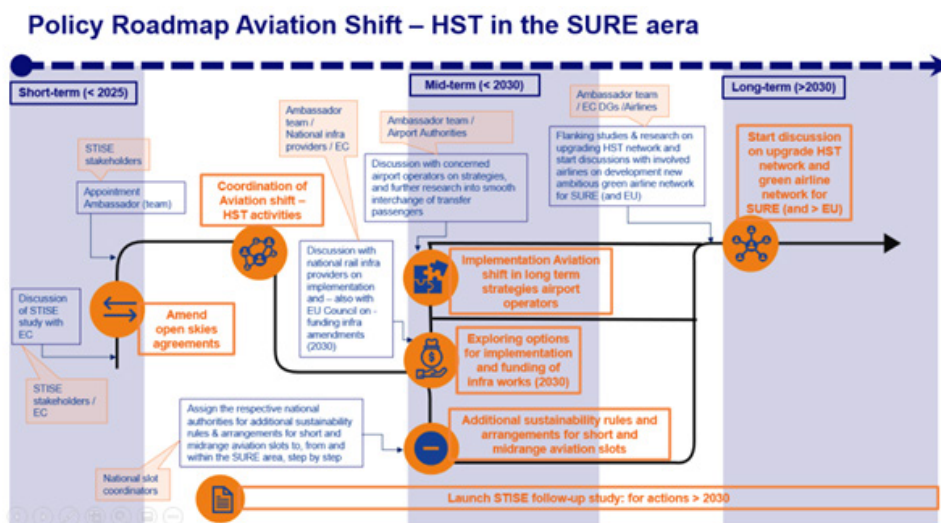


Figure 2. Roadmap for Aviation Shift on short- and midrange distances

Zero Emission Zones in all Major Cities

Currently, 14 Low Emission Zones have been implemented in the SURE area, of which 9 are situated in Germany, 3 in Belgium, and 2 in The Netherlands. But given the fact that these zones are not installed in each of the 50+ major cities of SURE (defined as the municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants), and standards are different in each city/region, their current impacts are low and mostly only relevant on the local level. Harmonisation of the policies in each of the major cities and harmonisation of the emission standards (only zero-emission vehicles are allowed) in full by 2035 would boost the shift to zero-emission vehicles overall in SURE and could result in a reduction of 55% of CO₂ emissions, 37% of NO_x, and 54% of PM₁₀ compared to the reference situation. Moreover, this could also lead to a shift of car ownership, diminishing the social inequalities in terms of exposure, vulnerability and contribution to pollution, cost-savings benefits, and an overall effect on the balance between passenger rail and road demand towards a more sustainable equilibrium. The downside to full harmonisation might be the restriction of the ability of cities to tailor Local Emission Zone rules, since it is not always “one size fits all”. Furthermore, the financial impact could be significant, particularly for freight transporters in terms of vehicle logistics. Therefore, there would be a need for a well-defined geographical scope, progressive predictability, provision of alternatives, facilitative measures, and good consultation and communication. As such, the study proposes to set up a dedicated taskforce and technical working groups to assess the feasibility and political acceptance in the respective cities and to explore the possibility of the adoption of a political memorandum of understanding in order to implement the proposed harmonisation measures.

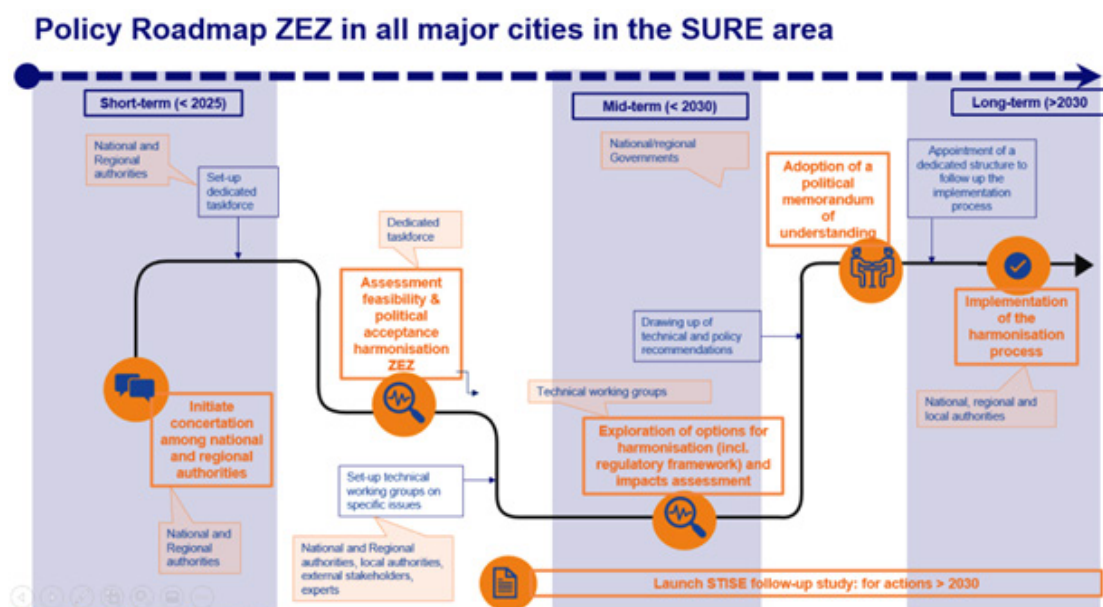


Figure 3. Roadmap to Zero Emission Zones

Focus of the event

This high-level ESPON event will discuss if these sustainable transport and travel policies could be feasible for Belgium and, if so, if the presented roadmaps could become a way to move forward in respect to the EU Green Deal. The ESPON territorial evidence gathered in the STISE report (see <https://www.espon.eu/sustainable-transport>) could serve as a background to nurture these discussions. As mentioned previously, similar events will also be organised in The Netherlands, Germany, and France in order to draft an integrated program shortly after the summer of 2022. However, the objective of the event is not only to discuss how this evidence from ESPON can affect sustainable mobility policies within the SURE area alone, but also how this example of the Eurodelta could also inspire other regions in Europe to more effectively and decisively implement the ambitions of the European Green Deal concerning travel and transport.

Therewith, the following discussion themes during the event include:

- I. *How can (semi)private, institutional, and non-profit stakeholders contribute to a more ecologically and economically sustainable cross-border transport infrastructure?*
- II. *How can national, regional, and local authorities contribute to the intended reduction in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions outlined in the European Green Deal?*
- III. *Which roles and under which framework could each of these partners work together towards a more sustainable future for transport and travel infrastructure?*

This online event has been scheduled for half a day with 4 sessions. The **first session** will provide the general introduction and overview of the study, including the baseline scenario. The **second** and **third session** will delve into more detail on the two policy roadmaps introduced above, including the first reflections of the respective stakeholders. The **fourth session** is organised as a roundtable to discuss the policy implications for Belgium, in cooperation with the Directorate General MOVE of the EC. The results of this event will contribute to the Belgian input for the overall SURE conference in the autumn of 2022.

Agenda

13:30	Online check-in open
13:45-14:30	Session 1: Welcome by Wiktor SZYDAROWSKI (Director ESPON EGTC) Introduction to the STISE by Stefanie VAN DEN BOGAERDE (Tractebel) Baseline Scenario
14:30-15:15	Session 2: Policy Measures <i>A. Aviation Ban – Shift to HST (High-Speed Trains)</i> Presentation Luuk BOELENS (Ghent University) Reflections of Jochen Bultinck (Infrabel, tbc) and Léon Verhallen (Brussels Airport) Discussion with stakeholders
15:15-15:30	Comfort Break
15:30-16:15	Session 3: Policy Measures (proceeding) <i>B. Zero Emission Zones (ZEZ)</i> Presentation Pierre VAN DEN LEEMPUT (Tractebel) Reflections of Christina CEULEMANS (VMM, tbc) and Laurent Willaert (Febiac) Discussion with stakeholders
16:15-16:30	Comfort Break

16:30-17:15

Session 4: Roundtable, with

Christophe VANOERBEEK (General Director Brussels Mobility)

Filip BOELAERT (Secretary General Flemish Department Mobility and Public Works)

Emmanuelle VANDAMME (President of the FPS Mobility and Transport Belgium)

Jan STEINKOHL (Policy Officer DG MOVE-B1, dealing with TEN-T Policy)

Moderated by **Luuk BOELEN**

17:15-17:30

Summary & Closing remarks

The main event language will be English, but interpretation from English to French and French to English are available.



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ESPON 2022

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The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

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