

What happens in Ghent (sustainably) travels abroad

A sustainable travel story from Ghent University (January 6, 2019)

Context

Aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, yet it was overlooked in the Paris Agreement. Failure to find effective measures to significantly reduces emissions by 90% in 2050 in all sectors (including aviation) would severely undermine the Paris goal of limiting global warming to 1,5 °C. Universities are leading the way: they take sustainability serious in their daily practices and are divesting their funds from fossil fuels. However, most universities also strongly focus internationalization, which often implies that the university staff regularly travels by plane since universities mostly lack travelling etiquette. We believe that universities can continue pioneering by reconciling their sustainability and internationalization goals with a profound sustainable travel policy.

What you can do

Individual level	Organizational level
Fly less....	Find enthusiastic colleagues and start a group
Sign the flyingless petition	Organize debates, form discussion groups at your organization
Raise awareness among colleagues (e.g. symbol for your presentations)	Start an awareness campaign using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stickers (example attached) - Decision tree (example attached) - Awards for researchers travelling sustainably
Join existing groups working on related issues	Contact policy level of your organization
Host a special session on flying less at a conference	Have a regular climate strike
...	...

Grassroots initiatives at Ghent University

Over the last years, Ghent University has seen a range of bottom-up initiatives emerging that tried to find new and promote existing solutions towards a more climate-friendly mobility policy. The departments of political sciences, biology, literature, history, innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as the sustainability office and the INTEC research group worked out practical guidelines ranging from promoting to travel by train or bus, compensating CO2 emission and fixing a yearly limit for international travel. [D'URGENT](#), a student association focused on sustainability, promoted more sustainable mobility choices for students on an ERASMUS grant. Finally, [De Groene Locomotief](#), was formed in 2016 with the aim of raising awareness around the climate impact of travelling by plane and further promoting and



facilitating more sustainable choices for work-related travel (through debates, decision tree¹, a 'pilot' project, sticker campaign²). The combined effort of the bottom-up movements and their interaction with the central administration was recently mainstreamed.

The grassroots initiatives stimulated the board of governors to adopt an over-arching sustainable travel policy at university level: *Ghent University goes #flyingless: First steps towards a sustainable travel policy*.³ On the 5th of June, Ghent University announced its ambitions to engage in more sustainable ways when it comes to the hefty travel agenda of researchers and staff. The motivation for an updated travel policy stems from the strive to combine two major policy goals of the university: Sustainability and internationalization. An estimated 15% of the CO2 emissions caused by the university is generated through work-related travel. Since the majority of the travelling is happening within Europe, the policy focusses on promoting alternatives to aviation for meetings and conferences that are reachable by train or bus.

For this, the university established a system of a green and yellow list of cities: The green list consists of cities that can be reached in less than 6 hours and travel by plane is no longer an option. Cities that can be reached in less than 8 hours, bus and train will be suggested as the preferred modes of travel. Moreover, the university commits to compensate all plane travels in collaboration with [CO2-logic](#).

Other inspiring initiatives

- Gothenburg University's [Meeting](#) and [Travel Policy](#)
- KU Leuven's [voluntary contribution for air travel](#)
- ETH Zürich's [air travel project](#)
- University of Edinburgh's [business travel reporting](#)
- A [virtual congress](#) and a [multi hub-based seminar](#)
- [Flying Less](#) has a petition and an inspiring newsletter
- Ken Hiltner's [Nearly Carbon-Neutral Conference model](#)
- [Zomer Zonder Vliegen](#) (a social campaign for a 'Summer Without Flying')
- [Stay Grounded](#) (a network to counter aviation)
- Excellent train travel information by the man in [Seat 61](#)
- Easy booking and comparing train and bus via [Loco2](#) and [Trainline](#)

Thanks for joining us on a sustainable travel journey,

*De Groene Locomotief*⁴



¹ Please find the decision tree in the appendix.

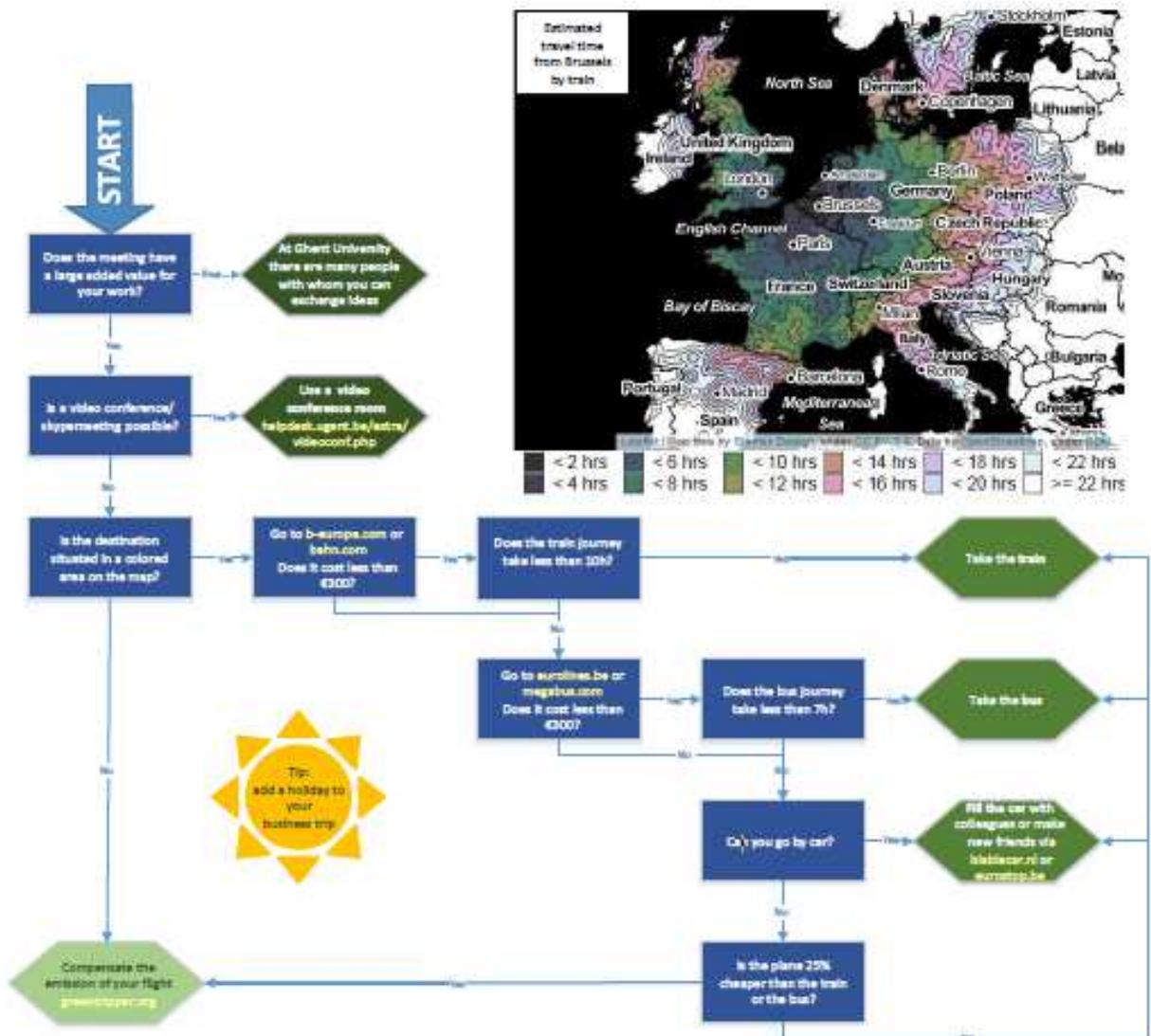
² Do not hesitate to contact us to ask the source code of our sticker design.

³ [Original statement](#) in Dutch.

⁴ Contact: groenelocomotief@gmail.com or  [De Groene Locomotief](#)

How to travel sustainably for your job

- Decision tree for UGent staff -



This decision tree was made by the Green Locomotive (Groene Locomotief), winner of the Groene Ruijter Award 2016. The Green Locomotive promotes sustainable study and research trips for staff and students of Ghent University. This poster was distributed to a selection of departments and research groups who wanted to commit themselves to test these guidelines for sustainability. The results of this pilot will be used to formulate feasible and balanced guidelines for sustainable travel.

