



Flanders
State of the Art



WELCOME TO THE BUSIEST CROSSROADS IN EUROPE

TRENDS, INSIGHTS AND IDEAS FROM FLANDERS

ABOUT MOBILITY & LOGISTICS AND YOUR CONFERENCE

VISITFLANDERS

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO BEGIN THIS PREFACE WITH A REMARKABLE HISTORICAL FACT



BY **EVELYNE BARDYN**
Head of Convention Bureau
VISITFLANDERS
Convention Bureau

Of all the regions in Europe, Flanders is the one that has been conquered by a foreign country most often over the centuries. Virtually all the great powers have set up camp in this northern half of Belgium at one time or another.

That is no coincidence. Flanders is located right on the busiest crossroads in Europe. Germany, France and the UK are just around the corner. The Netherlands and Scandinavia are our neighbours to the north.

Today, this strategic location translates into a key position in logistics and mobility. Half a billion consumers live within a three-hour radius. In a territory 726 times smaller than the US, there are two world ports, including the rail gateway to China. Flemish companies are at the forefront of sustainable developments and new trends.

It goes without saying that such a region welcomes your conference in mobility and logistics with open arms. The entire ecosystem surrounding this field - from researchers to entrepreneurs, from policy makers to the general public - joins forces to create a rock-solid support base in support of your association or PCO.

The fact that Flanders is a dream biotope for your conference can be seen in this e-book, offered to you with great pleasure by the official convention bureau of Flanders. These 40 pages are packed with inspiration and ideas, provided by international experts in your field.

These experts do more than just share their expertise. They are also happy to put their shoulders to the wheel of your conference. This, together with the free services of VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau, gives you a cast-iron guarantee of a successful conference.

You can read more about these services in this brochure. For example, you will find out more about our unique impact methodology, which allows you to set a real milestone with your conference. Not only within your field of mobility and logistics, but also for the whole of society.

In the name of all Flemish experts in your field and all my colleagues, I wish you much reading enjoyment. We look forward to welcoming you and your delegates here for your conference in mobility and logistics.

Evelyn Bardyn
Head of Convention Bureau

GET INSPIRED FOR YOUR CONFERENCE IN MOBILITY AND LOGISTICS



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THE FUTURE OF MOBILITY AND LOGISTICS IS TAKING SHAPE HERE

JAN ADRIAENSSENS ON CONNECTED TRAFFIC, THE “PHYSICAL INTERNET” AND THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

Every day, 200 million people in the European Union travel to work. Worldwide, billions of containers are shipped every year. These impressive figures show the importance of the mobility and logistics sector. According to the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, Belgium - which includes Flanders - ranks third. The future of mobility and logistics is being co-designed by research centre imec, with projects that are attracting a great deal of attention internationally.



JAN ADRIAENSSENS
imec



“Cars are no longer a bodyshell with an engine, but computers on wheels.”

TRAFFIC LIGHTS IN A KEY ROLE

Mobilidata is such a flagship. The programme focuses on cooperative intelligent transport systems (C-ITS) to make traffic more efficient, safer and more sustainable. Intelligent traffic lights play a major role in this, says Jan Adriaenssens, Director of Public Technology at imec.

“Intelligent traffic lights are connected to the Internet and exchange data with road users. Based on those data, they can adapt to changing circumstances. Everyone is familiar with the so-called green wave: when traffic passes a first traffic light at a fixed speed, the traffic light a little further on also turns green and traffic flows smoothly. But there is also such a thing as a blue

wave, where emergency vehicles are automatically given a green light and can continue on their way without stopping. And not only that: the intersection with intelligent traffic lights will also have been made traffic-free for a short while, so that no other road users can get in the way.”

MAKING SENSORS WORK TOGETHER EFFICIENTLY

“Companies, transportation firms, app builders and more can all work together with Mobilidata. Consider sensors or other devices that can be attached to a bicycle, allowing traffic lights to detect someone. Or road users with disabilities. For example, in the future it may

be possible to provide someone with a visual impairment with information about current traffic conditions in their surroundings by audio, in their headphones. The possibilities are enormous, and that really does make Mobilidata a programme with a future. Flanders is the European pioneer in this regard, because we are bringing this new technology to the streets as the ‘new normal’. This makes us the frontrunners in Europe.”

Flanders is therefore a leader in these kinds of digital tech applications for mobility and logistics, says Adriaenssens. For example, imec is also engaged in hardware research, in the automotive sector among others.

“Cars are no longer a bodyshell with an engine, but computers on wheels. So there is a lot



of innovative sensor technology. We are looking into the question of how to make all those sensors work together better, in an energy-efficient way. Because while car drivers like receiving all that information from sensors, it consumes electricity. And they'd rather use that electricity to drive further, without the stress of running out of power."

SENDING CONTAINERS THE SAME WAY DATA ARE SENT ON THE INTERNET

Much is also happening in the field of logistics in Flanders. Take, for example, the growing market of sending and receiving packages. Adriaenssens compares that process to exchanging data on the Internet.

"Online, packets of data are sent over a digital highway. But the big difference is that a large packet of data - an email, a large document, a website - is broken up into smaller packets on the web. And these packets are sent via different routes, finally arriving together at the same destination. If we could apply that principle to physical packages, it would significantly increase the efficiency of transportation."

"Suppose you have a large amount of goods you want to ship to the other side of the world. Instead of loading all the containers together onto a ship, you could send only one via ship - where there just happened to be a space left - and send the rest of the goods by rail or by road. But all the goods would finally arrive at their destination at the same time. As the sender of the goods, you could then set some conditions: the packages must arrive at their destination by a certain date and at a particular budget. How? The system then calculates that."



THE GOVERNMENT PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE

One of the main conditions for a physical Internet like this is that companies and shipping companies must share their data with each other. And they are often reluctant to do so.

“Certainly shipping companies protect their data very closely. But if we want to find an alternative to road transport and, for example, focus more on rail or inland waterway transport, we do need that information. The solution lies in building a connected environment in which each party remains the owner of its own data. The government will have to play a big role in that.”

“Another thing we need to revisit is the method of delivery in a city. Postal packages make up only 2% of all deliveries within city walls. The construction industry in particular moves a

lot of material; up to a third of all logistics in a city comes from construction. So to optimise that, you have to be able to work with construction companies, contractors, scaffolders and truck drivers. Waste collection is also a major logistics operation. And what about shop and restaurant suppliers? We must dare to rethink all these things, in the context of climate transition among others. And set up city warehouses, for example. Right now, there are more questions than answers, but we are bringing the answers together to figure out the puzzle of the future.”

THE FUTURE OF MOBILITY AND LOGISTICS IS TAKING SHAPE HERE

The biggest challenge is keeping the large-scale changes manageable and finding support

among residents, road users, consumers and manufacturers, Adriaenssens says.

“But it’s worth it, because the possibilities are huge. And you get an excellent picture of these possibilities in Flanders. That’s why our region is such an excellent choice for a conference in this field. The future of mobility and logistics is taking shape here. Moreover, we have an enormous focus on innovation and cooperation between public and private sectors. Add to that our rich history of research and development, and you have the perfect base.”





ANTWERP

WELCOME TO A CITY AT THE TOP OF THE INNOVATION CITIES INDEX

Antwerp is renowned for its commitment towards innovation and expertise in smart mobility and logistics. Networking and idea exchanges thrive in a city defined by its forward-looking culture. The Innovation Cities Index ranks Antwerp as number 140 of 500 cities worldwide. The city's advanced transportation infrastructure benefits congress attendees by ensuring smooth mobility through efficient public transit, cyclist-friendly routes, and pedestrian pathways.

Antwerp's logistical expertise is showcased by Port of Antwerp-Bruges (see also page 20), a model of efficiency utilising technology and data-driven insights to optimise cargo flows. Attendees will find themselves surrounded by an ecosystem of experts of smart mobility like the academics of the University of Antwerp and local thought leaders of the R&D hub Imec, the sustainable business park Blue Gate and the smart innovation community the Beacon.

Delegates can gain unique vantage points in Antwerp, observing firsthand the synergy between technological innovation, seamless transportation and streamlined supply chain management.

**Would you like more information about
your conference in Antwerp?**

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Sustainability



Innovation & Technology

Design & Aesthetics



The cars of the future are also experience cocoons.
Pictured: the Mercedes-Benz concept car at Living Tomorrow.

A whole new mobility experience is created.
Pictured: a drone for transporting passengers.



SHARED AUTONOMOUS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES DEFINE THE FUTURE OF MOBILITY



BART DEVOLDERE
TomorrowLab

A LOOK INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL WITH BART DEVOLDERE

Anyone striving for a sustainable future has a handy topographic map with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mobility also has an important impact on achieving these goals. For example, better mobility contributes to more liveable cities and communities (SDG 11). And reducing traffic congestion and air pollution improves public health (SDG 3) and climate (SDG 13).

That sustainable future of mobility is high on the agenda in Flanders. According to TomorrowLab, we are even on the eve of a revolution. Bart Devoldere, Strategic Business Designer of this think tank, developed four possible future scenarios with the Flemish mobility landscape (see box).

PHYSICAL TRAVEL IS NO LONGER THE NORM

“These four future scenarios serve to make us think about mobility. How individual will mobility be? Will everyone still have their own car or will we share them? Will we move around occasionally, hardly at all or a lot? In each roadmap, we will look for an answer. The reality will probably be a combination of this quartet. That’s why it is good to take a moment to consider all four.”

“The digital revolution is having a major impact on our mobility needs. Physical travel is no longer the norm; we are noticing a shift to a hybrid model - thanks to technological developments such as virtual reality, which allows us to collaborate

remotely as if we were in the same room. If we go down that path, we will move physically less often. And when we do, we’ll want an enriching experience. The cars of the future will not only be means of transportation, but also experience cocoons, tailored to our individual needs.”

TOWARDS A WHOLE NEW MOBILITY EXPERIENCE

“Also ‘Mobility as a Service’ (MaaS) is gaining a foothold. Consider subscriptions that give you access to different modes of transportation, from bicycles to trains and everything in between. Down with the traditional idea of ownership

FOUR FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR MOBILITY

1 DIGI-COSMOS:

We live in a virtual world, in which we move around only when necessary. We do everything online in our virtual cocoon, from shopping to sports to work.

2 FLEXI-MAXI:

Our freedom is central. We want to be as flexible as possible, including in traffic and our transportation.

3 OPTI-CONNECT:

we move often and eagerly, on land, on water and in the air. Yet we take into account the impact on the environment.

4 CONSCIOUS-LOCAL:

we stay closer to home. Indeed, climate change has made us aware of the consequences of our consumption and travel behaviour.

- we are shifting to shared mobility. And we're also seeing a shift in the same direction in the logistics sector. Instead of half-filling their own truck, different partners are bundling their flows of goods. This makes transport not only more efficient, but also more sustainable. Empty trucks are then a thing of the past; the focus is now on maximum utilisation and sustainability."

"Electric, autonomous and shared are the three pillars that will shape the future of mobility. Electrification contributes to more sustainable transportation, while autonomy increases safety and efficiency. Combine those things with the concept of shared ownership, and a whole new mobility experience emerges. That evolution will not only change our personal mobility, but also have a major impact on the transportation and logistics sector."

YOUR CONFERENCE IS WELCOME AT TOMORROWLAB AND LIVING TOMORROW

So there are large-scale and complex changes coming towards us. Making those manageable will be our biggest challenge. Bart Devoldere:

"The new ways of moving touch all facets of society: technological, social and policy. We must encourage people to choose more sustainable, safer and more efficient solutions. Companies must dare to switch, for example to rail and inland waterways instead of all transport by road. And this can only be done with an open mind to the future. That's why it is important to reflect on the current situation, but at the same time test and validate strategies. Only then will we work towards a future-proof mobility story."

That mobility story is being co-written in Flanders, including by the conferences the region wants to attract in this field. In that case, delegates are welcome to visit TomorrowLab within the Living Tomorrow innovation campus, says Bart Devoldere.

"Flanders wants to inspire internationally. With future-oriented initiatives from TomorrowLab in collaboration with the entire mobility landscape, we are putting ourselves on the map. The new innovation campus Living Tomorrow invites you to experience the latest innovations as well as top-level international collaborations - and that's exactly what we need. We have to bring together stakeholders from different sectors to innovate and to shape the future. Only through this joint effort can we achieve a safe, sustainable and inclusive future for all."

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES TAILORED TO YOUR CONFERENCE

You already read it on the previous pages: with innovative projects, Flanders is helping to shape the future of mobility. Yet this innovation is not the exclusive privilege of large-scale initiatives at sector level. Local projects on a human scale can also have an important positive impact. And positive impact, that is exactly what we in Flanders strive for with your conference: making a difference in people's lives, thus underlining the relevance of your association. On these pages you will discover a small anthology of initiatives.

Get to your conference quickly and sustainably with Hoppin

A flexible and efficient commute to an event or conference - that's what you want for your delegates, right? This is possible with Hoppin, a system of combi mobility with flexible means of transport. Between the 2,000 Hoppin points in the network you can travel from A to B without any loss of time, through combined use of bicycle (or shared bicycle), car (or shared car), train, tram or bus. Sustainable transport solutions are encouraged as much as possible.



The Longest Bike Chain: sustainable together on two wheels

Flanders is a cycling country. The two-wheeler is often the nicest - and smoothest - way for your delegates to reach the venue. To encourage the sustainable mobility development of Flanders, the Fietsersbond - an association representing the interests of all cyclists - often organises high-profile initiatives. The Longest Bike Chain is a great illustration of this. The initiative unites the Belgian cycling community and highlights the accessibility of the various major cities.



Green Stop Walks: step from your conference straight into nature

All conference participants enjoy getting a bit of fresh air. This is possible in Flanders, thanks to the Green Stop Walks. Even from the heart of the city you are in the middle of a nature reserve or a picturesque village in the blink of an eye. You take public transport to Green Stop A, make your walk to Green Stop B, where you take public transport back to your hotel. The ideal way to have a keynote, workshop or session in the heart of nature!







BRUGES



THE IDEAL VENUE FOR YOUR CONFERENCE IN MOBILITY AND LOGISTICS... SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES

In the early Middle Ages, Bruges was the most important seaport in Europe. Today, the newly merged Port of Antwerp-Bruges (see also page 20) is a prominent gateway to European markets. The port ships nearly 3 million new cars each year. That makes it the largest car port in the world. Zeebrugge is also crucial for energy supply. You will find natural gas terminals from Fluxys, Gassco and Interconnector here.

Mobility in Bruges is also sustainable. The city values cycling highly and is building an impressive bicycle infrastructure. By 2030, 60% of all travel in the city should be done by two-wheeler.

Bruges is easily accessible by car, train, plane or ship. Through Brussels Airport from +300 destinations worldwide. Once you arrive, all locations and catering facilities are within walking distance in a green environment with fresh air. This is a great asset for your conference, event or incentive in our city.

**Would you like more information about
your conference in Bruges?**

Visit Bruges Convention Bureau
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WELCOME TO **FLANDERS**, WORLD LEADER IN **LOGISTICS**

Flanders is a logistics heavyweight. According to the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, the region ranks third worldwide. Its favourable strategic location - 60% of Europe's purchasing power is within a radius of 500 kilometres - and extensive infrastructure make Flanders the gateway to Europe.

That gateway is mainly on the water, with no fewer than three international seaports: Port of Antwerp-Bruges, North Sea Port and Port of Ostend. The thousands of containers that enter our country every day via container ships travel to over 650 European distribution centres (EDCs).

THE REST OF THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Flanders has 1,395 kilometres of navigable inland waterways and one of the densest road and rail networks in the world. This allows goods and people to easily find their way to other parts of Europe and the rest of the world.

Those are pretty impressive numbers. They make Flanders a world leader in logistics, and consequently a perfect location for your conference on this theme. **VISITFLANDERS** Convention Bureau welcomes your association or PCO.



Would you like more figures on Flanders as a world logistics centre?
Visit the website of FIT.

www.flandersinvestmentandtrade.com/invest/en/sectors/smart-logistics

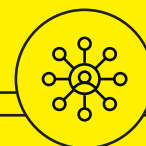
THIS IS HOW VISITFLANDERS CONVENTION BUREAU SUPPORTS YOUR CONFERENCE

Your conference on logistics finds its natural biotope in Flanders. Government, science and business join forces to support your association or PCO. The result is strong support for the organisation of your conference. This support is reinforced by the extensive services offered free of charge by VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau.

We are happy to find you local partners who will help shape your conference. The Legacy Makers - internationally renowned experts in numerous fields - will help shape the positive impact of your conference on society. You can also count on our help for an exciting social programme, as you can read on the next page.

Logistics expert Tuya Beyers and Mobility expert Milo Vergucht are happy to tell you more about this unique service.

- › meet interesting new partners
- › create legacy with your conference
- › get the technology needed for a hybrid conference
- › organise a successful conference
- › receive a tailor-made experience programme
- › obtain support with your project proposal
- › provide an inspirational visit for your decision-makers



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DISCOVER THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE SUPPLY CHAIN

A TOP TIP FOR YOUR CONFERENCE'S SOCIAL PROGRAMME

You already read it on the previous page: at VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau we want to support your association in every possible way. By taking part in the social programme of your delegates, for example. Our suggestions then fit perfectly within the theme of your conference.

For example, a visit to the Log!Ville logistics demonstration centre is definitely worthwhile. Your delegates will be immersed in the logistics of the future with the power of visualisation and digital storytelling. The demonstration centre houses the latest technological developments for the supply chain. Log!Ville is an initiative of VIL and opened its doors two years ago.



LIESBETH GEYSELS
Log!Ville

“As a spearhead logistics cluster, VIL has been giving companies insight into the latest logistics technologies and solutions for years. In Log!Ville, 2,500 square metres of innovation are on display and companies can use them themselves,” says Liesbeth Geysels, General Director of VIL and Log!Ville. “Automation, digitalisation and sustainable development of the logistics ecosystem are central. Together with professional partners, each leading in their field, Log!Ville inspires entrepreneurs to embrace innovation in logistics. Log!Ville also features an ultra-modern meeting centre. It is the ideal setting for innovative collaboration between startups, companies and knowledge institutions. The perfect environment for knowledge sharing and co-creation.”



THE STANDARD BEARERS OF LOGISTICS IN FLANDERS: **THE WORLD PORTS**

Nowhere is a conference more at home than at a venue that excels in the conference domain. There you will find not only the experts who help build a high-quality programme, but also the interested audience who will make your organisation a success.

A conference on logistics is therefore completely at home in Flanders. The northern region of Belgium is a world player in your domain, partly due to the presence of two world ports. In this article, we would like to introduce both main players on the logistics scene to you briefly.

PORT OF ANTWERP-BRUGES: **SUSTAINABILITY IS KEY FOR EUROPE'S SECOND** **LARGEST PORT**

Over a thousand maritime connections worldwide make this port the beating heart of international world trade and industry. At the same time, Port of Antwerp-Bruges is a major player in sustainability and innovation. By focusing on the import and production of green energy, the port makes a crucial contribution to a climate-neutral European economy.

Port of Antwerp-Bruges is also leading the way in mobility. Digital applications - such as smart asphalt and an inland navigation application - monitor and improve the traffic situation in and around the port. The port is also investing in autonomous inland waterway vessels to create a modal shift to innovative and sustainable freight transport.

The Port House is the headquarters of Port of Antwerp-Bruges. The design by Zaha Hadid Architects combines the historic fire station with a modern superstructure. The result is an iconic eye-catcher, an unforgettable setting for your event or conference.



Certified Pick Up allows real-time monitoring of every container entering and leaving the port.

NXTPORT

THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS SUSTAINABLE

Time is of the essence in the logistics sector. That's why NxtPort - a Flemish company specialising in digitalising processes for the port community - is building the next digital link in the Port of Antwerp-Bruges port infrastructure. The goal: to develop digital platforms to make the port faster, safer and more efficient.

One of NxtPort's innovations is Certified Pick Up. This platform guarantees secure and transparent processing of incoming containers, which then leave the port by rail, barge or

road. The application provides access to customs information, among other things, and allows real-time monitoring of each container. The validated release process and biometric authentication provide the necessary strict security.

Certified Pick Up also has a positive effect on the environment. After all, higher efficiency reduces waste and emissions. Thus, NxtPort is also making an important contribution to making logistics greener and more sustainable.



The direct rail connection with China makes North Sea Port a crucial link in the global supply chain.

NORTH SEA PORT: LOGISTICAL VERSATILITY AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY ARE ASSETS

This multimodal port brings together the ports of Ghent and Terneuzen-Vlissingen. The result of this cooperation is not just a transshipment point, but a lively meeting place for world trade, with trading partners from all continents.

Unique to North Sea Port is its multimodal efficiency. Different modes of transport - from inland waterways via railroads to pipelines and highways - are seamlessly combined. Companies can always select the most appropriate mode of transport, saving time and money.

North Sea Port has direct access to the North Sea - and thus to the rest of the world. An even greater asset is the direct and fixed rail connection with the economic giant China. This makes the port a crucial link in the global supply chain.





LEUVEN

A ROCK-SOLID BASE OF ENTREPRENEURS, RESEARCHERS AND POLICY MAKERS

You can also read about it in the interview with mobility expert Tim Asperges (see page 30): Leuven is a city that puts sustainable mobility at the forefront. This is part of the drive towards a climate-neutral city.

The TOKEN living lab project illustrated Leuven’s innovative approach to this. Via blockchain technologies, local suppliers of sustainable food were given access to the city and its parking lots in a dynamic and sustainable way.

To realise the ambitious plans in the field of mobility and logistics, the city has a unique asset: the presence of the university. The KU Leuven Institute for Mobility is active in research areas such as Transport infrastructure and public space, supply chain and logistics and environment and health. The Leuven company imec (see also page 4), which was involved in the TOKEN project, is also a world player in this field.

These assets make Leuven an exciting biotope for your association active in mobility and logistics. Entrepreneurs, researchers and policy makers together create a strong support base for a successful conference.

Would you like more information about your conference in Leuven?

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Cobots are ideal for use alongside humans.

INNOVATION IS THE ENGINE OF THE LOGISTICS FUTURE

KRISTOF DE SMEDT ON THE TRENDS OF TOMORROW



KRISTOF DE SMEDT
[Log!Ville](#)

“The best way to predict the future is to create it,” according to a well-known proverb. In the mobility and logistics sector too, innovation is often the driving force behind progress. One expert who knows all about this is Kristof De Smedt, Innovation Ambassador at Log!Ville. This innovation hub is a meeting place for startups, companies and knowledge institutions active in supply chain.

Log!Ville’s experience centre is happy to open its doors to visitors - your conference delegates, for example - interested in the future of the industry. And that future looks spectacular, says Kristof De Smedt. Because the logistics sector is at a crossroads, having to adapt to a rapidly changing world.



EVER GIVEN AND THE SUEZ CANAL BLOCKADE

"There are big changes ahead in logistics. Electric vehicles, self-propelled ships, smart lockers, drones, AMRs, AGVs, connectivity, cobots and robots, I am looking with amazement at the evolutions we will see in the next few years. Many of these are not even things of the faraway future. A lot of new technologies already exist that make logistics more efficient, safer, faster, more sustainable and cheaper."

Despite all these innovations, major players in the sector often take a wait-and-see attitude. A missed opportunity, thinks Kristof Desmedt.

"When in 2021 the ship Ever Given blocked the Suez Canal for several days, it became clear how vulnerable the global supply chain was. We had to

"I look with amazement at the evolutions we will see in the next few years."

rethink our approach and move away from single sourcing. Diversification and different production and transportation methods and locations are key. That means we now have to address issues that have remained unchanged for forty years. Innovation is indispensable. In Log!Ville we show companies what exists and what is possible in the short and long term."

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES: THE EVOLUTION IS FAST

Log!Ville works closely with companies - large corporations as well as SMEs and startups at the forefront of logistics innovation - to demonstrate market-mature but not yet mainstream technologies and get them implemented. Kristof De Smedt:

"We see four themes in the challenges ahead: time, space, resources and people. For example, there is a worldwide shortage of forklift operators, and even with the best will in the world, we cannot solve that. AMRs - autonomous mobile robots - and autonomous forklifts are therefore a possible, safe and efficient solution."

THE TREND OF CONNECTIVITY AND DATA COLLECTION

Drones also fit within that narrative. Kristof De Smedt: *"Drones can be used, for example, for last-mile deliveries of packages, obviously not in a densely populated area like Flanders. But also for inventory management in warehouses. Currently such an inventory count is often done manually and production is at a standstill at that moment. Just imagine the time savings such a self-learning drone could bring - especially if we connect it to the Internet or other devices: during the weekend or at night, it criss-crosses the warehouse, collects data, and early in the morning you'll find an overview of the stock with any problems on your desk. That connectivity and data collection are trends we're feeling throughout the industry, by the way."*

The port of Antwerp already deploys drones, which it uses to conduct inspections. *"The port uses a partner company's drones; it hires the drones and pays the partner per flight. With those drones, the port checks the waterways. It also uses the drones to inspect bridges, roads or roofs. A quick and convenient way to gather a lot of information. About existing infrastructure, but also geographically or topographically."*

DIGITAL TWINNING, A DIGITAL MAP OF THE ENTIRE PROCESS

Smart vehicles are only truly smart when they learn on their own and when we equip them with sensors and other ways to gather information. Kristof De Smedt: *"In learning, we can also help them, by providing such a vehicle with all the data through a digital twin. Too often, companies still choose a cleaning machine or forklift based on the information the manufacturer gives them. Is that the best machine in your warehouse or company? Much more efficient is to use a digital twin - the virtual representation of a system or process - to test such a machine. And if it is approved, train it accordingly. Then it is immediately deployable and works optimally."*

Not only can vehicles be trained in such a digital twin, robots and cobots can also be set up optimally this way, said Kristof De Smedt.



A drone at work for inventory management in a warehouse.

“In the automotive industry, large robots have been running for some time. But we can also engage so-called cobots in smaller business environments. These ‘collaborative robots’ are easy to operate and are ideal for use alongside humans. For example, to take over repetitive work in a safe and efficient manner. They are also quick to set

“Today we notice a positive outlook toward cobots”

up and can be used flexibly: one day for task X, the next day for task Y. Where people used to be reluctant towards these cobots, we now notice a more positive outlook. Labour is expensive and cobots also require an investment, but it pays off quickly. The production process can run around the clock, and for many companies, deploying cobots is a way to keep producing locally.”

CITY LOGISTICS AND FREIGHT TRANSPORT: IT CAN BE BETTER

A lot of freight transportation to, from and through the city could be more efficient. This can be done using zero emission vans and bicycle logistics, but also by setting up city perimeter warehouses.

“When I drive through town in the morning, there are vans and large trucks parked here and there. All come to make deliveries, sometimes even to

the same retail and hospitality outlets. We can optimise that, too, by having them deliver all the packages to one of those city-edge warehouses and having one internal supplier deliver everything.”

“About 50% of the containers are driving around empty. We need to see how we can address this better. Several projects have already been started for this, unfortunately without success so far. The bundling of goods flows would be a perfect solution, but the practice of the past 15 years shows that this has not succeeded so far.”

MIXED FUELS ARE THE FUTURE

“A final important trend is that of fuels. With the Paris Climate Agreement and FIT for 55, fossil fuels need to be eliminated. Opting fully for battery-electric is not feasible for heavy-duty long-distance transportation. We are therefore looking at all alternatives and also including hydrogen and e-fuels as fuels of the future.”

You see, the future of logistics looks exciting. In Flanders, we are at the forefront of innovative developments. Expertise abounds, and it is within reach.

HUMANS AND TECHNOLOGY JOIN HANDS AT **SIRRIS**



“Sirris is not just another innovation centre. We want to be a catalyst for change in the industry. We are here to help companies stay ahead of the technology curve and create a more sustainable, efficient future.”

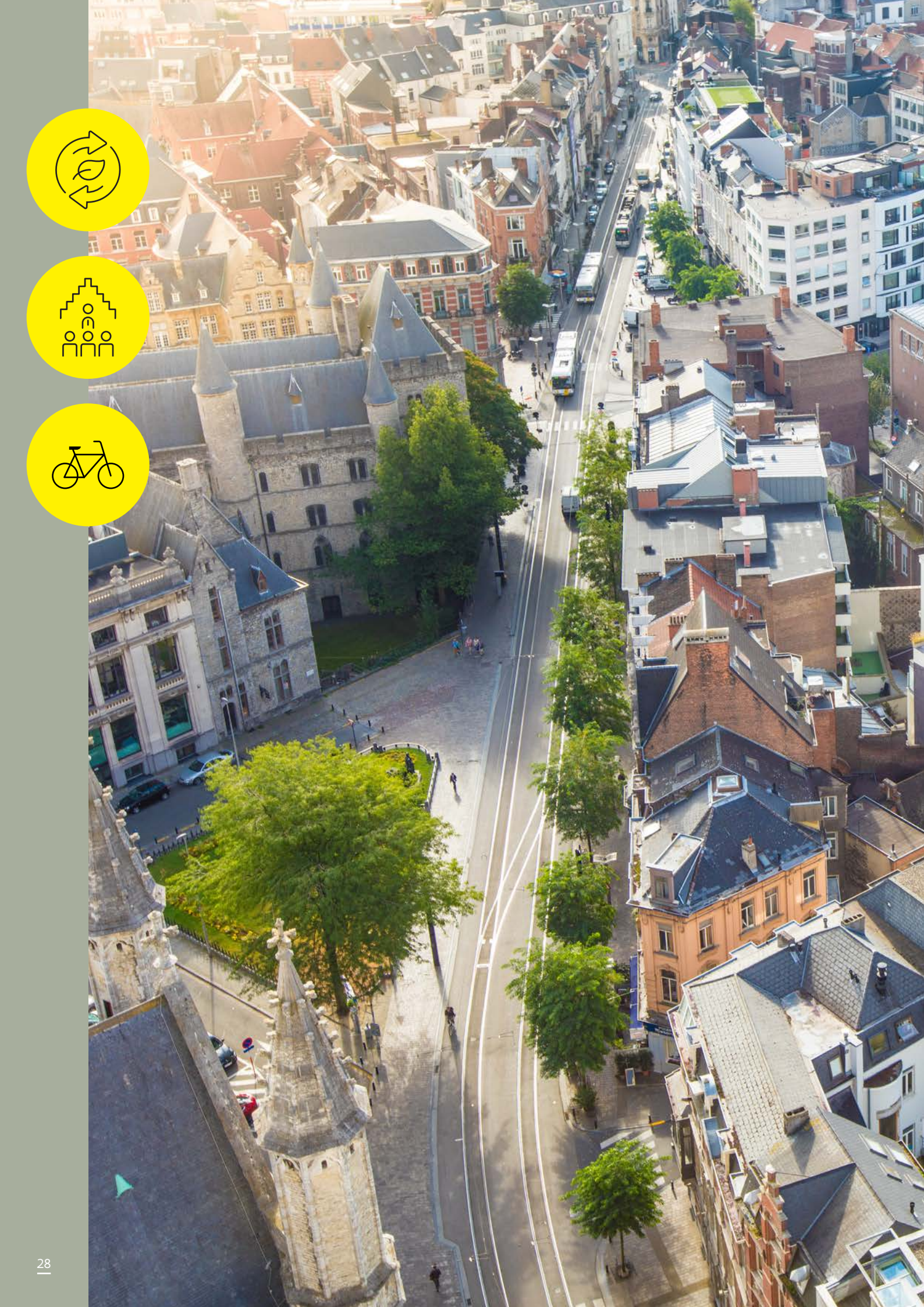
Jan Kempeneers, Sirris

In his trends for the future, Kristof De Smedt also mentions cobots: “collaborative robots” that work with humans, taking over tasks that are repetitive, heavy or dangerous. Non-profit organisation Sirris - a multidisciplinary team of 150 experts and over 200 partners - is conducting research into these applications, with the goal of creating a human-centred work environment. After all, cobots can provide more efficient work and greater safety on the work and production floor, says Jan Kempeneers, Principal Engineer Smart and Digital Factory at Sirris.

“In the automotive sector, robots have long been used to perform heavy or dangerous operations. Cobots can do the same for lightweight applications, with one big difference: they work much more easily and flexibly. In a few minutes, you can program a cobot to perform task X one day and task Y the next. This way, cobots can be used for multiple tasks and switch quickly between different production lines. Moreover, they work around the clock, significantly increasing production capacity. The cooperation between man and machine thus opens up new possibilities. While a cobot takes on routine work, humans can deal with more complex tasks.”



“The cooperation between humans and machines opens up new possibilities.”





WHY PEOPLE JUST LIKE YOU CHOOSE FLANDERS AS A LOCATION

A region that can fill 40 pages on mobility and logistics is at home in this field. So it goes without saying that Flanders welcomes your conference within this theme with open arms.

You can tell by these testimonials, recorded from the mouths of people just like you: conference organisers looking for a location that impresses their delegates.





Because the city is an interesting testing ground for innovation in sustainable and smart mobility.

POLIS
29 - 30 NOVEMBER 2023, LEUVEN



TIM ASPERGES
President POLIS

POLIS is a European association focusing on sustainable mobility in European cities. Its annual conferences bring together many experts, policy makers and stakeholders. In 2023, Leuven will be the host city. On the programme: a wide range of topics, from smart city logistics via dynamic traffic management, public transport and parking policy to bicycle mobility.

Leuven is an ideal location for a conference within this theme. The city breathes sustainability, also in terms of mobility. Thanks to an ambitious traffic circulation plan and well-functioning partial mobility services at more than 40 mobility hubs, bicycle use in the city centre rose from 34% to 48%. Moreover, Leuven is particularly centrally located, making it an ideal location for a conference focusing on sustainable mobility. Tim Asperges, mobility advisor for the City of Leuven, explains.

CLIMATE NEUTRAL BY 2030

“All over Europe, cities - large and smaller - are re-distributing their public space. Leuven has become a frontrunner in this in recent years. Out of necessity, too, because we want to keep our ever-growing city accessible in the future.”

“Consequently, there is a lot of interest in our approach from abroad. In 2016, we made the inner city car-free, with a far-reaching circulation plan that focused on the redistribution of public space for the various modes of transport. This is all part of our goal of becoming a climate-neutral city by 2030. Vzw Leuven 2030 - a partnership of Leuven’s

knowledge institutions, residents, businesses and the city - was one of the driving forces behind this plan. The adjustments that have been made fit completely within our climate objective and also make our city centre more accessible. The fear that visitors would ignore Leuven has now disappeared. Leuven became more attractive and we see that in the number of visitors.”

“In addition, we have installed hubs for shared mobility - the so-called Hoppin points (see page 13, ed.). This upgrade in shared mobility serves mainly to offer an alternative to private car ownership, allowing us to greatly reduce the parking pressure on the streets. And what turns out to be the case: Leuven



As a midsized city, Leuven is an attractive testing ground for the congress.

residents are fans of shared mobility; in our city, car ownership is the lowest of all Flemish central cities. Logical, when you can borrow a shared bike, shared car or shared cargo bike anywhere and anytime. We also keep a tight rein on the concessions: only providers of part-mobility that meet a number of quality requirements and abide by the rules - we don't want 'scatter bikes' on every street corner or in every canal here - get a permit."

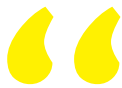
THE MIDSIZED CITY AS A TESTING GROUND FOR INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

"The collaboration with research institutions also makes Leuven a place where experimentation is possible, ranging from dynamic access control and dynamic parking management to smart urban distribution, clustering of partial mobility services, autonomous driving and 'citizen science' applications where citizens are involved in mobility policy through technology, such as with TelRaam sensors. In this way, we can make optimal use of the scarce public space available in our city for numerous target groups and space requirements. Our openness to innovations resulted

in the selection of Leuven as European iCapital: the most innovative city in Europe."

"A few years ago, Leuven became a member of the POLIS cities network. Every two years a president is elected from among all members, and until recently this was usually the European metropolises, such as Madrid, Paris and Amsterdam. But because midsized cities are very attractive testing grounds - and also strongly in the majority within Europe - Leuven got the chairmanship."

"Midsized cities do not face the same problems as, say, a region like Île de France. We do not have to think about new tram or metro lines or airport accessibility. Midsized cities have other challenges and are interesting testing grounds for new technologies: self-driving cars, access control, e-mobility - things that are perhaps less easy to test out in big cities. And with that presidency also came the task of organising the POLIS Congress."



Because our conference requires local engagement to make it a success.



**EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CONFERENCE (ETC)
18 - 20 SEPTEMBER 2024 AND 17 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2025
ANTWERP**

"The European Transport Conference moves location every two years and in selecting a conference city, we look for certain attributes. The city needs to have good accessibility by rail and air with links to major destinations throughout Europe, offer an attractive ambience, have availability of affordable hotel rooms for several hundred delegates and offer a suitable conference venue for ten parallel seminars and large plenaries. Above all, the conference requires local engagement to make it a success. All these attributes are found in Antwerp where our close partnership with VISITFLANDERS and the University of Antwerp promises to deliver an excellent conference with both a local flavour and international outlook."



Because cycling has become a big part of the DNA of Bruges.



**UCI MOBILITY AND BIKE CITY FORUM
25 - 26 OCTOBER 2023
BRUGES**

"The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) has chosen Bruges as the location for its Forum because cycling, as a form of sustainable mobility, has become a big part of Bruges' DNA. The city encourages visitors to discover UNESCO World Heritage City and Bruges' woodlands and wetlands by bicycle. Bruges also hosts several sporting events, such as the Tour of Flanders and the World Cycling Championships. Bringing together cycling leaders, advocates, mobility experts, National Federations, industry representatives and policy makers in Bruges to exchange on the future of active mobility is the perfect opportunity to maintain the city's cycling legacy".



HERMANN MAIER
President Association for
European Transport



DIRK DE FAUW
Mayor of the City of Bruges





Because of the impressive commitment to cycling over the last decade.



FILIP WATTEEUW
Alderman for Mobility

VELO-CITY
18 - 21 JUNE 2024
GHENT



“Velo-city is not just a conference, it is a statement. Velo-city 2024 is the perfect opportunity to highlight all the work we have done for cyclists in the last few years, and to celebrate all the people who cycle in Ghent.”

“The European Cycling Federation named Ghent as a remarkable cycling city that has shown an impressive commitment to cycling over the last decade, implementing progressive policies and innovative measures that have transformed its urban space and resulted in significantly more people using bicycles as their go-to mode of transport.”

“Velo-city is like no other event when it comes to cycling. Normally attracting over 1,400 delegates from more than 60 countries, it is the world’s

leading knowledge exchange platform for supporters, cities, decision-makers, academics and industry leaders to meet and share progressive policy and enterprise ideas that ultimately shape the future of cycling.”

“Ghent is widely regarded as a cycling stronghold thanks to a series of dramatic changes implemented over the last decade which saw the introduction of effective pro-cycling mobility measures year by year.”







MOBILITY IN FLANDERS IS ALSO INCLUSIVE

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A region that values mobility must involve as many people as possible in that endeavour. This means that mobility must also be inclusive. In Flanders, we base this on the Universal Design principle. Our conference venues must enable a group of delegates that is as large and diverse as possible to attend. That naturally includes people who are less mobile.

Of course, the infrastructure - such as doors, halls, ramps, elevators and adapted toilets - is crucial in this regard. Yet the concept of accessibility is still too often limited to this spatial or physical dimension. Inclusive mobility also includes good communication, additional facilities, customer friendliness, service and logical signage.

Does the venue for your conference meet the highest criteria of accessibility? To find out, VISITFLANDERS Convention Bureau developed a comprehensive checklist. The more boxes you can check, the more accessible the conference you are organising.

THE M-LABEL: FOR VENUES THAT SUCCEED WITH FLYING COLOURS

Venues that meet accessibility requirements receive a special seal of approval: the M-label. The following pages will introduce you to two Flanders Heritage Venues that have been awarded this coveted recognition. In addition to their unique story and exceptional architectural value, both locations have an extra asset to offer: the guarantee that everyone has access to the building. Not only wheelchair users, but also people with a hearing or visual impairment.



Scan this QR code to
download the free
checklist.



BRUGES MEETING & CONVENTION CENTRE: A LANDMARK FOR THE CITY

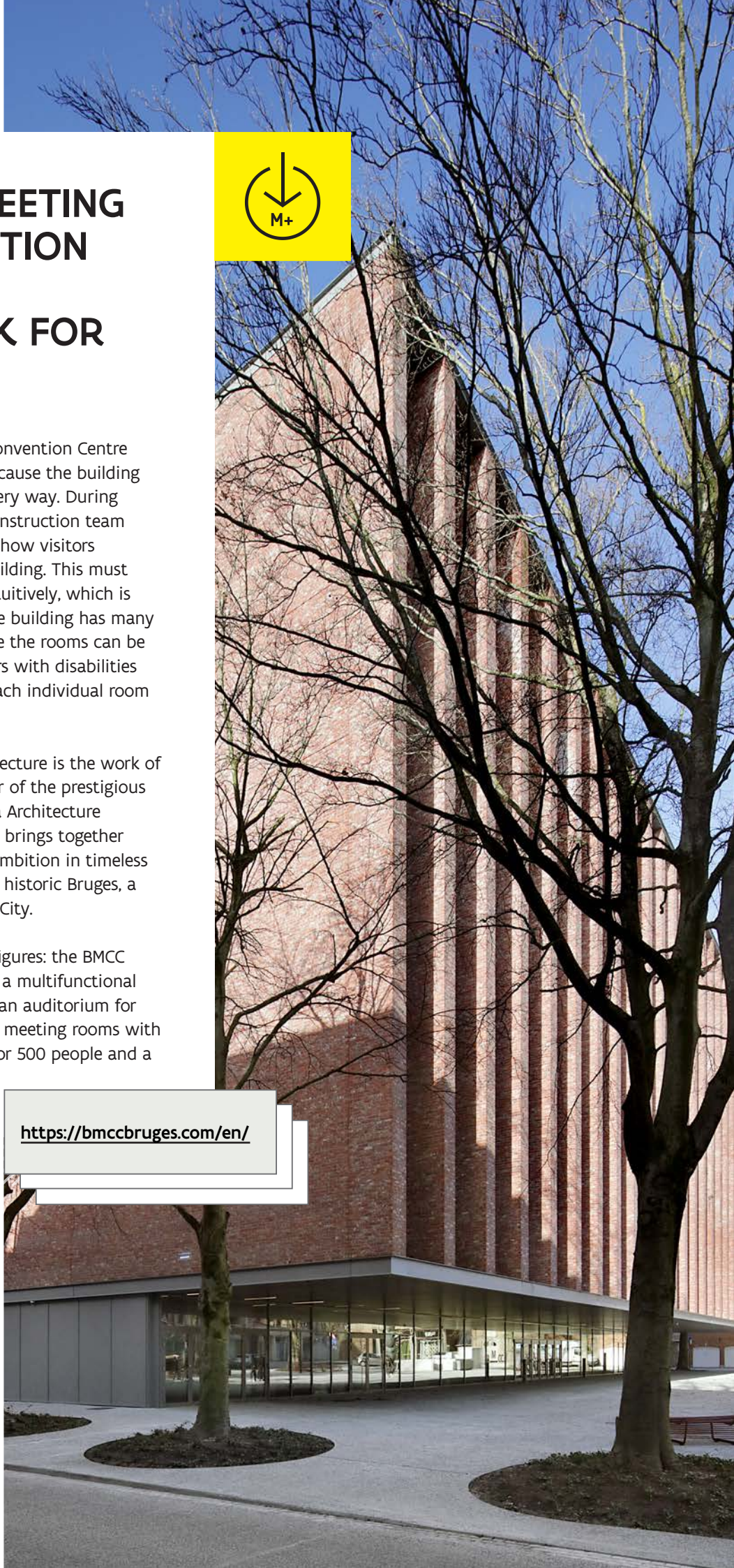


The Bruges Meeting & Convention Centre received the M+ label because the building is easily accessible in every way. During the design phase, the construction team thought carefully about how visitors circulate through the building. This must proceed logically and intuitively, which is no easy task because the building has many level differences. Because the rooms can be rented separately, visitors with disabilities must be able to reach each individual room easily.

The extraordinary architecture is the work of Souto de Moura - winner of the prestigious Pritzker Prize - and Meta Architecture Bureau. The architecture brings together modesty, strength and ambition in timeless space, all in the heart of historic Bruges, a UNESCO World Heritage City.

Some other impressive figures: the BMCC offers your organisation a multifunctional event space of 4,500m², an auditorium for 516 people with foyer, 12 meeting rooms with foyer, a catering space for 500 people and a VIP room for 90 people.

<https://bmccbruges.com/en/>





THOR CENTRAL: A LIVELY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SITE

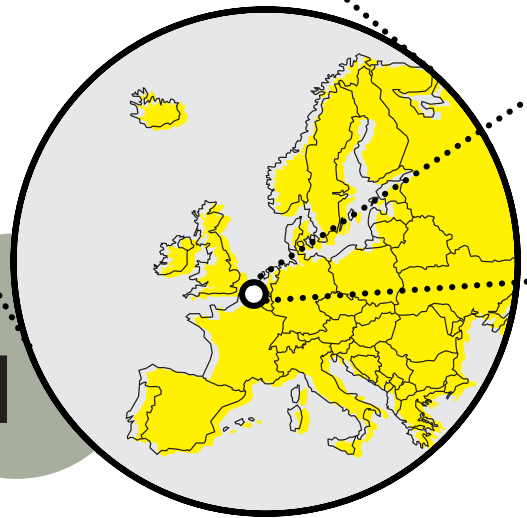
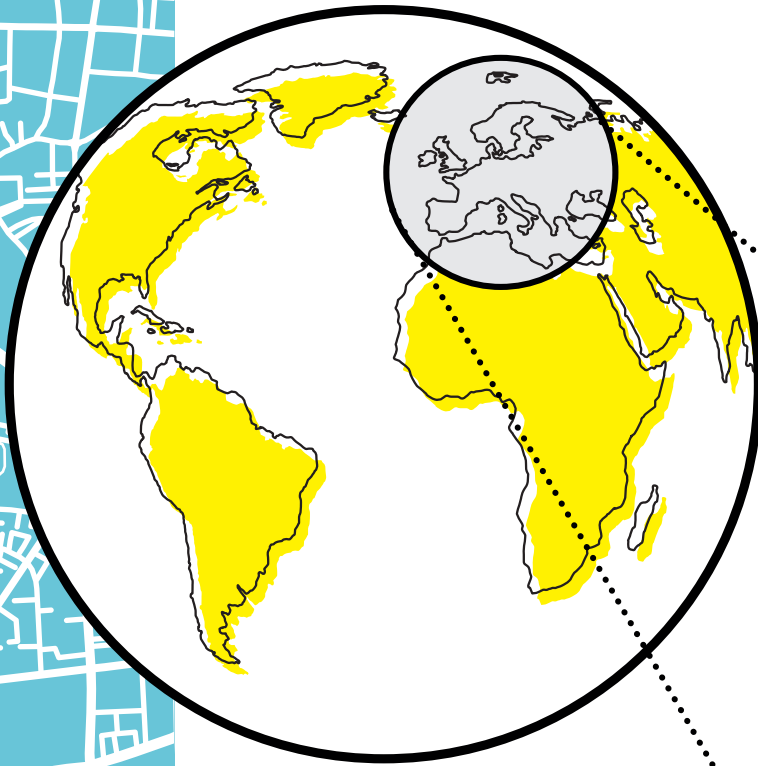
Thor Central is located in a former coal mine, where generations of miners once worked, digging up millions of tonnes of coal. As soon as you arrive, you notice why this conference venue was M-labelled. The reception desk has a lowered section where wheelchair users can manoeuvre themselves under the desk.

This smart accessibility translates throughout the building, including adapted doors and toilets, stairs with studs for the blind and visually impaired and an ingenious system that allows the hard of hearing to hear only the speaker during a presentation, without disturbing ambient noise.

Even in catering, inclusiveness is the motto, with low tables, low buffets and catering offerings for every diet or faith.

<https://www.thorcentral.be/en>





EUROPE

FLANDERS: EASY TO REACH FOR
DELEGATES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Want to know more about Mobility & Logistics?



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