



BENELUX UNION'S NO-REGRETS PAPER ON ELECTRIC AVIATION

The growth of the aviation sector worldwide and within Europe has been significant over the last two decades. According to data from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) the number of flights at EU27+EFTA airports increased by 15% between 2005 and 2019 to 9.3 million, while passenger kilometres nearly doubled.¹ This growth has enabled the aviation industry to create more jobs and opportunities for the European Single Market, directly employing 1.4-2 million people and indirectly supporting 4.7-5.5 million jobs.² At the same time the consistent rise of passenger flights can potentially challenge the EU's long-term emission reduction targets. In order to address the need for sustainable air travel, the Benelux countries have started exploring innovative solutions such as electric aviation.³ The relative short distances between regional airports, makes the Benelux region an ideal testing ground for this new mode of aviation.

Electric aviation is a brand new technology that has already proven its added value in a number of applications such as for educational purposes. Indeed, since May '21 the E-flight Academy has kickstarted its electric aviation program where the first electric airplanes are used for teaching manoeuvres to student pilots at commercial airliners and the Armed Forces. More leading examples of electric aviation can be found in Maastricht Airport⁴ and Antwerp Airport.⁵ Other regions of Europe are seeing the potential of electric aviation as well e.g. in Scandinavia where the Nordic regional cooperation has issued its ten-year regional outlook on the future perspectives for electric aviation.⁶ Moreover at the EU level, there has been a strong political signal from the European Parliament calling on the European Commission to create a policy framework to support electric aircraft technologies.⁷ The Benelux countries support this call for action by the European Parliament on electric aviation.

¹ [European Aviation Environmental Report 2022 \(EASA\)](#)

² [Employment numbers, aviation sector \(European Commission\)](#)

³ [Benelux and North Rhine-Westphalia are exploring electric flying \(Benelux Union\)](#)

⁴ [Europe's first international electric flight \(MAA\)](#)

⁵ [Deurne Airport presents the first electric aircraft \(VRT\)](#)

⁶ [Ten-year Regional Outlook: Future Perspectives for Electric Aviation in the Nordic Region \(Nordic Council\)](#)

⁷ [Report on electric aviation – a solution for short and mid-range flights \(European Parliament\)](#)

The Benelux countries acknowledge:

- The need for a shift to sustainable aviation in general, including electric aviation
- The presence of both knowledge and skills in this region to facilitate such a transition
- The need for a thriving and innovative ecosystem within the Benelux region, facilitating cross border pilot projects for electric aviation
- The importance of emission free aviation for intra-Benelux travel
- The importance of local airports in the development of electric aviation

The Benelux countries moreover pledge to:

- Investigate the potential of cross border regional usage of e-flying in terms of CO₂ reduction, connecting (remote) regions and economic potential
- Facilitate through the Benelux Working Group discussions regarding the joint implementation of new EU rules or guidelines with regards to sustainable aviation
- Bring together national and regional supervisory organisations on a regular basis
- Facilitate cross-border test flights within the Benelux region
- Look for synergies with operators in the field of electric aviation
- Use the Benelux Union as a platform to open the dialogue with stakeholders, from policymakers at different governing levels to the aviation sector as a whole
- Continue discussions at the Benelux ministerial level, on Working Group level but also at a higher level, for example through the annual Benelux Directors-General Committee for Transport

The Benelux Union's aim is to deepen and develop cooperation between its three member states so that it can continue to play a leading role within the European Union and strengthen and improve cross-border cooperation at all levels (Article 2, Benelux Union Treaty).⁸ We see it as our joint mission to take a leading role to make cross-border mobility more sustainable through new technologies such as electric aviation and play an inspiring role in this regard, acting as frontrunners within the European Union.

⁸ [Benelux Union Treaty \(2008\)](#)