

VISION 2050

A LONG-TERM
STRATEGY FOR
FLANDERS



Flanders
State of the Art



In March 2016, the Government of Flanders presented its new strategic outlook for the future: “Vision 2050: a long term strategy for Flanders.”

In order to design and implement effective means of managing the societal changes ahead, governments need to be able to place current transformative developments within a broader context, one which entails far-reaching implications, the so-called “megatrends” and their potential implications. In March 2016, the Government of Flanders presented its new strategic outlook for the future: “Vision 2050: a long-term strategy for Flanders”. This forward-looking policy document sets out a vision for an inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected region that creates prosperity and well-being for its citizens in a smart, innovative and sustainable manner.

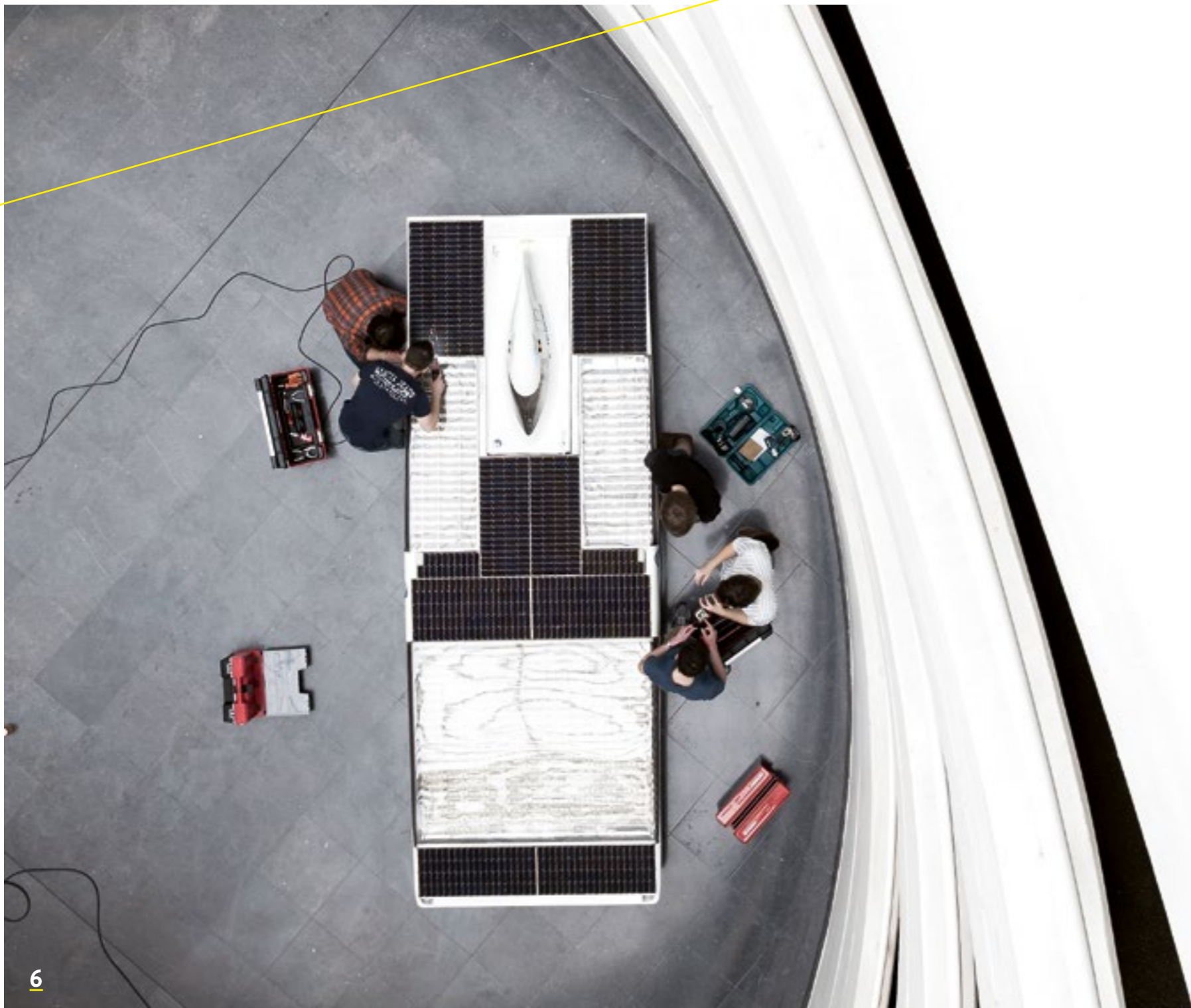
Vision 2050 provides a strategic response to the new opportunities and challenges Flanders is facing. This long-term strategy aims to accelerate some of the essential societal transformations (e.g. transitions) and will require radical innovations to the way we live, work and enjoy life. Innovation is both a source for and possible key response in tackling societal challenges, should they be broadly conceived of technological, social, environmental, economic and institutional terms. The scale and direction of innovation is determined by a mix of factors, many of which regionally-specific, though this is increasingly less so as economies and societies become more globalised.

Vision 2050 is supported by several key areas of action initiated by the Government of Flanders: the seven transition priorities. The implementation of these transition priorities is cross-sectoral and in collaboration with innovators, entrepreneurs and stakeholders. Bringing these transitions into action through collaborative partnerships will offer tremendous opportunities for citizens, organisations and companies that turn the goal of sustainability into a strategy.



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**POLICY
CONTEXT**



We live in a world in constant motion. Goods, capital, labour, knowledge and data are traveling globally at a faster pace than ever before. Global change processes in our hyper-connected societies are rewriting the way in which local communities, regions or nation-states create prosperity and well-being. In this world, the acceleration of change is one of the few constants. Understanding how megatrends impact citizens is an essential requirement for governments to effectively design and implement policies addressing the societal changes ahead. These trends should not be regarded as generally negative forces but as opportunities to shape society with a view to the future. It is for this very reason that the Government of Flanders developed the Vision 2050.

While the future is open and crystal balls cannot predict how our world is changing, 2050 is not some unimaginable distant future. Those born today will be 35 in 2050. Using a long-term time perspective will allow us to better envisage the challenges ahead and the related options for shaping our societies today.

Disruptive changes are a major challenge for any organisation or government.

Most of the global drivers of change are recognized and described as today's trends: world population growth, urbanisation, an aging population, climate change, growing demand for water and energy, digitalisation, diversification and individualisation of society, inequality in health and prosperity, etc. These are global trends that will dominate the political and societal debate both now and in the years to come. Describing the impact these trends will have on a certain region or policy domain, however, is a more daunting challenge. For example, disruptive innovations such as lab-on-chip technology, nano-robotics, the internet of things or artificial intelligence have the potential to transform societal and economic systems beyond our current understanding. These disruptive changes are a major

challenge for any organisation or government. We must investigate how a government can anticipate change in a way that allows it to contribute to the long-term prosperity and well-being of its citizens.

In 2015, a literature review was conducted to assess the relevant megatrends and how Flanders relates to them. This trend assessment constitutes the first part of Vision 2050 and addresses the following issues:

- **Demographical trends:** population growth, ageing and rejuvenation of the population, migration.
- **Scientific and technological trends:** the emergence of disruptive and exponential technologies, driven by science and innovation.
- **Ecological trends:** climate change and the burden on natural resources.
- **Economic trends:** disruptions due to technological breakthroughs, shift of the world's economic centre to the East, industrial transformations, new relationships between producers and consumers.
- **Political and administrative trends:** changing geopolitical relationships, transformation of governments and institutions.
- **Social trends:** individualisation and diversity.

Based on this trend analysis, we organised several stakeholder dialogues to discuss and start formulating a vision for Flanders.




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**VISION
2050**

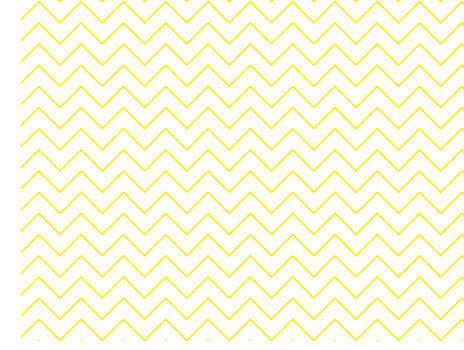


Forward thinking is vital for any planning or policy activity to meet future challenges proactively. For more than 25 years, the Government of Flanders has been developing future visions to strengthen policy coherence and guide innovation initiatives.

Most recently, in March 2016, Flanders published its new strategic outlook: “Vision 2050: a long-term strategy for Flanders” to also incorporate sustainability as a strategic change principle. Vision 2050 sees Flanders as an inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected region that creates prosperity and well-being for its citizens in a smart, innovative and sustainable manner.

In Vision 2050, the Government of Flanders regards knowledge and talent as the driving forces behind progress and innovation, where all citizens will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and to continuously develop their talents, to gain cultural and social knowledge and to develop new skills, competences and attitudes.

The future vision also projects a globally connected region that manages materials in a smart way, ensures prosperity and health with significantly less resources and materials than today. It entails a low-carbon, sustainable, reliable and affordable energy system and a robust water system which is able to mitigate environmental shocks



The Flanders that we envision by 2050 ensures access to sufficient, safe, balanced, healthy and affordable nutrition by way of a sustainable food chain.

The mobility system is optimised to provide quick, accessible, safe and affordable services with internationally connected hubs such as ports, airports and high-speed train stations at its foundation.

Urban centres as well as rural villages provide the work, housing and leisure in a multi-functional, smart, and environmentally responsible way.

Flanders provides its citizens with accessible and high-quality healthcare services that are sustainably financed. Both physical and mental well-being are key societal values.

Finally, Flanders has a dynamic government which, together with all stakeholders including citizens, generates ecological and social added value, engages in efficient political decision-making and responds to societal challenges.

The future vision should be a source of inspiration for all people in Flanders. The Government of Flanders will work closely with all societal stakeholders in order to fulfil Vision 2050.

All of these developments are going to take place against the larger backdrop of a new economy, a more inclusive society, and the coming to terms with our planet’s ecological potential and boundaries.

Vision 2050 sees Flanders as an inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected region.



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**KEY AREAS
OF ACTION:
TRANSITION
PRIORITIES**

In order to facilitate
Vision 2050, the
Government of
Flanders selected seven
transition priorities:



Circular Economy

In a circular economy we're more efficient with raw materials, energy, water, space and food by closing cycles in a smart manner. Natural resources are reused wherever possible. Smartly-designed products based on biodegradable and recyclable materials will form the basis of smart material cycles, in order to create less waste and reduce resource consumption.



Smart living

It is more comfortable to live where 80 % of people's daily needs are within walking and biking distance. The proximity and interweaving of functions maximises comfort and convenience. New housing and infrastructure must respond to such needs; optimal use of ICT ensures smart and sustainable buildings, neighbourhoods and cities.



Industry 4.0

Flanders strives to become a leader in new technologies and concepts in industry 4.0 such as 3D printing, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, robotics and other innovations. In so doing, it can strengthen its competitiveness and maintain prosperity in a rapidly changing world.



Lifelong learning and a dynamic professional career

Talent and knowledge are the driving forces behind progress and innovation. For this reason, no talent should remain unused in our society. Flanders will stimulate the development of competences and talent by responding to the demand for new skills in a changing economy and society, and provide everyone with the opportunity to fully develop their potential.



Healthcare and welfare

Flanders must give young people every opportunity, with the best possible start and support, but it also needs to provide its ageing population with an adequate quality of life through the use of innovation. We need to invest in a new model of care which is patient/client-centred and is tailored to the needs of society.



Transport and mobility

Flanders is working on a smoother, safer and more environmentally friendly transport system, which is why technological innovations in transportation and logistics must be embedded quickly to increase accessibility within Flanders and thus reduce their environmental impact.



Energy

Flanders focuses on the transition to a low carbon, sustainable, reliable and affordable energy system. That system maximises the use of renewables and provides a realistic energy mix.



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GOVERNANCE MODEL



The transition space encompasses partnerships, platforms, learning communities and experiments that will be created around the transitions.


In order to implement Vision 2050 and tackle these complex issues, the Government of Flanders has developed a new governance model inspired by transition management principles: focus on system innovation, take into account a long-term perspective, involve stakeholders in the transition process and learn from experiments and innovative initiatives. Adaptive governance practices are needed to ensure a long-term approach and to promote cooperation. Past experiences from Flanders in Action, the predecessor to Vision 2050, and other experimental transition projects were taken into account. With these principles and past experiences in mind, a governance structure was created. This structure includes a transition space for each priority and a cross-thematic transition platform. This is coordinated by the Chairman's Board of the Flemish administration.

For each transition a **transition space** will be set up. The transition space encompasses partnerships, platforms (online and offline), learning communities and experiments that will be created around the transitions. In this transition space the following actors play an important role: the transition manager, the responsible ministers and external stakeholders. Two responsible ministers were designated for each transition. Besides the ministers responsible, transition managers within the Flemish public administration were appointed. The transition managers are the operational leaders of the transition and help determine the specific approach and structure of the transition process. In addition, multi-actor governance with shared ownership is essential for achieving the transitions. The governance model also responds to this by providing, in addition to a transition manager from the Flemish public administration, a counterpart from external stakeholders, who makes the essential connection to society, as a representative of the transition space. New practices addressing societal needs will be explored in the transition arenas together with the stakeholders.



To ensure the relevant exchange of ideas and practices, the transition managers collaborate in a designated transition platform to share experiences and expertise, and reflect upon the transition processes. Part of this **transition platform** is the coordinating role of the Public Governance department and the Chancellery. This department will provide an annual report on the progress of the transitions, will monitor the long-term vision with a committee of experts on sustainable development, and will provide support to the transition managers. In cooperation with the academia, with experts inside and outside the government, and with innovation coaches it wants to support the transition managers in developing and implementing the transitions. This support can mean, for example: provision of an experimental space, examining solutions to regulatory obstacles and alternative forms of financing, the use of foresight and scenarios and behavioural insights. It is crucial to create a shared vision with the stakeholders for each transition.

The Chairman's Board of the Flemish public administration is committed to playing an active role. Together with the representatives of the transition spaces, they will coordinate progress of the transitions, consistency with the long-term vision, the relationship between the transitions, and remedial actions for recurring problems and opportunities. We believe that the cross-fertilisation between ideas and people embedded in the appropriate governance model is crucial to accelerating essential societal transformations for an inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected region that creates prosperity and well-being for its citizens.



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Flanders

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