

STARGATE

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STARGATE: ACCELERATING GREENER AVIATION

The urge to take climate action and evolve towards a net zero carbon economy has never been clearer. Now that the aviation industry is facing major challenges, it is the ideal momentum to accelerate its green transformation and evolve towards multimodal hubs for sustainable and smart mobility. Brussels Airport grasped the opportunity to join forces with other airports, airlines, operational partners, academics and experienced consultancy agencies across Europe to exchange knowledge and invest in innovations for a more sustainable aviation. Hence the birth of the ambitious ‘Stargate’ project, selected by the European Commission to implement over thirty projects in the coming five years.

“Sustainability has been a cornerstone of our airport activities for more than ten years now,” Arnaud Feist, CEO Brussels Airport Company, explains. *“For the last two years, the COVID-19 crisis seriously shook our global economy. Individuals, companies and governments started rethinking our societal patterns: how we live, work, think and the way we travel. However, aviation remains indispensable to connect people and transport valuable goods across the world. Airports create wellbeing, welfare and fuel our economy with new opportunities – but if we want a bright future, it must be a sustainable one. This is why Brussels Airport took the initiative to submit the progressive Stargate programme together with 21 partners, following the call of the European Commission. We are pleased that our project received a 24.8 million euros grant within the European Green Deal, a strong signal for us to roll up our sleeves, put our heads together and start working on innovative solutions that make a difference – in the short and in the long term.”*

It is safe to say that there is no quick fix – neither will we reach substantial change or impact if we cannot overcome divergent motives through a holistic approach. Leveraging the connection between each link in the air transport supply chain implies a giant opportunity for greening our industry. *“Resolving the complex challenges climate change and other societal evolutions thrown at us requires a shared belief, effort and persistence: we want to show sustainable aviation is possible and happening.”* This is precisely where the strength of the Stargate project intervenes: its collaborative spirit, incorporated thanks to the consortium of a diverse group of partnerships, both in terms of expertise and geographic distribution within Europe. Each of these airport partners, universities, mobility or energy partners and local governments provide added value through their specific expertise and power to apply changes in a particular field. *“The fellow airports will be the first to roll out the solutions that prove successful at Brussels Airport,”* Feist adds. *“In the coming five years, we will learn from each other and we plan to spread this knowledge to a broader audience, setting a new ‘green’ standard for our industry.”*

“We are fully aware that there is a difficult road ahead towards a net zero carbon aviation,” confirms Christel Vandenhouten, Head of Sustainable Development at Brussels Airport Company. Air transportation of the future needs to cut Greenhouse Gas Emissions drastically and rise to the challenge of searching, testing and developing alternative energy sources. In order to improve the living quality of our surroundings, we need to reduce noise and improve the air quality. Vandenhouten continues: *“With Stargate, we set up projects that strive to overcome current obstacles. We focus on promising technical innovations, but we also develop*

economic business models to implement them and to promote the use of sustainable alternatives: whether it is the production of Sustainable Aviation Fuels at our airport for partner airlines or the stimulation of eco-friendly ways of transportation for our passengers, our employees and our neighbours. In order to not only invent solutions but put them into practice and ensure continuous improvement, we need everyone aboard. In terms of green energy supply, we value once more the connection with our local environment. We believe out-of-the-box thinking and courageous acting are the key to success, which is why we explore the possibility to cooperate with households nearby to share a solar panel park, as well as the idea of collecting organic waste (fruit & vegetables, garden waste, food waste, ...) to turn local waste into green energy.”