

Challenges and pitfalls while establishing a H₂ mobility plan for Belgium

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Keywords: Power-to-H₂, Power-to-mobility, NIP, TEN-T, Belgium

Within the framework of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Project "HIT-2-Corridors", Belgium was asked to deliver, by the end of 2015, a National Implementation Plan (NIP) for H₂ mobility. Knowing the political reality of Belgium, which is based on a complicated network of regional governments and legislations, the establishment of such a NIP turned out to be quite a challenge.

First of all, policy priorities in the Flanders and Walloon regions were found to be diverging rather than converging, both with respect to specific fossil-free mobility issues (independent of H₂) as with respect to the general use of H₂ technologies (independent of the mobility question). It was therefore decided quite early in the process to separate the subtasks related to each of the regions, and to streamline these regional efforts rather with the neighboring countries, i.e. the Netherlands for Flanders and France for Wallonia.

Secondly, these differences in political sensitivities also forced different viewpoints on the locations and the development of a refueling infrastructure. Stand-alone hydrogen refueling stations (HRS) were opted for in Flanders, while the historically strong industrial roots of Wallonia turned out to be more appropriate for linking the locations of the HRS to strategic sites for simultaneously developing Power-to-H₂ concepts.

Finally, while disseminating the preliminary outcomes of the Belgian NIP among professional organizations and industrial partners, it surprisingly turned out that both Flemish and Walloon companies were very eager to interact and collaborate, sometimes even beyond the initial scope of H₂ mobility. This allowed in the end also (much) more and significant strategic funding to be released by local and regional authorities, hence completely inverting the "Not in my backyard" (Nimby) attitude into a PLimby one ("PLease in my backyard").