

Sail to the COP
summarized: our
journey, thinktank and
results.

Sail to the COP Executive summary

Sailing think tank

Sail to the COP was born out of a collective worry for the future of our planet. Efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions are far from what is required to address the severity of the climate crisis. The project was initiated with the mission to bring young people to places where their future is decided, namely the 25th UN Climate Conference (COP) in Santiago, Chile. We recognize that the travel sector must urgently transition in order to limit the disastrous effects to our planet and its people.

By means of a two-month sailing think tank, our group of 36 young changemakers set sail toward COP25. This annual climate conference hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an effort to address global greenhouse gas emissions. It intends to bring together world leaders to discuss how to adapt and mitigate climate change. On our way we heard that the conference was moved to Madrid, Spain, due to political unrest and social uprising in Chile. Our ship was unable to return to Europe in time to attend the conference. We continued our journey to Martinique to attend COP25 virtually while recruiting a group of 20 representatives to carry our message further. From the 2nd to the 13th of December 2019, the Sail to the COP team worked on bringing our demands and calls for action to COP25 both online and on the ground.

Two months earlier, on the 2nd of October 2019, we stepped on board the sailing ship Regina Maris and commenced the think tank shortly after adjusting to life at sea. Neatly structured to fit within the sailing legs, we went through the various phases of the think tank over the course of 8 weeks.

Problems & opportunities

Four main issues within the travel industry were discerned, namely: unfair policies favouring aviation over climate-friendly travel alternatives; a strong lobby for the aviation industry; lack of cooperation between countries and businesses; lack of awareness of environmental impacts and issues of social injustice.

In the phase following the problem analysis, we turned the identified issues into actionable opportunities for change. The variety of opportunities was then grouped into topics, leading to the formation of five corresponding working groups: Innovation, Climate Justice, Culture & Media, Policy, and Education.

Vision

In order to arrive at an ideal future of travel, personal ideas and ideologies were brainstormed and explored. By means of careful reformulation, the outcomes were used to create a communal vision, representing the collective mindset of our group. It considers aspects of all the afore-mentioned themes and proposes a set of guidelines and goals to strive for. Our vision is the following:

We imagine a world, in which travel demand is reduced and travelling is always meaningful. We dream of a reality in which all relevant actors cooperate and take bold action, fostering a fair and sustainable travel industry. We envision a future in which travel is a force for good and does no harm to the travellers themselves, the communities that welcome them and the environment.

Solutions

Numerous solutions were distilled from the web of opportunities during the last leg of sailing. Our solutions include:

Policy

NDC Enhancement

It's time for ambition. National climate commitments, formally called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), barely include measures on emission reduction in the travel and aviation industries. We have developed proposals for the travel sector to be included in every NDC for 2020.

EU Policy

EU – Stop Favouring Aviation! Through lenient policies and state aid, the EU favours the aviation industry over its public transportation counterparts. Benefits through tax exemptions and free carbon emission allowances need to be halted.

ICAO in line with Paris Agreement

ICAO's 'Green Growth Strategy'. The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA) by the UN-body ICAO, is not in line with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. We demand reforms to CORSA and inform citizens through a podcast.

Innovation

Tikls

Travel unique – be surprised. Tikls presents an app and a website allowing users to book surprise holiday packages for authentic, local travel experiences.

VirtualCOP

Game to the COP. VirtualCOP or 'vCOP' is an RPG (Role Playing Game)-style virtual conference experience, designed to increase the accessibility, inclusivity and positive impact of UNFCCC events. vCOP allows virtual access to events, negotiations, expositions, etc., and is accessible from any laptop or desktop computer with an adequate internet connection.

Rail to the COP

From sail to rail. A campaign born on the Atlantic, Rail to the COP returns home to ramp up day and night trains in Europe. Next stop: COP26 in Glasgow.

GoWare

Plan – Book – Go Green. GoWare is a sustainable work-travel tool for planning, monitoring and reporting business trips. The software assists searching for travel itineraries and monitors various metrics (such as distance, emissions, cost, time, efficient working time, and comfort). A reporting functionality helps companies to stay on track with their sustainability goals.

ModuRail

Make night trains the new norm for travel. ModuRail provides completely rebuilt and upcycled night trains combined with a fully scalable leasing solution to get people who fly within Europe back on the track.

Aeroship

The Renaissance of Aviation Airships largely disappeared after the emergence of airplanes and a number of tragic accidents crashed the demand. With increased interest in sustainable travel alternatives, advances in new safer materials and hydrogen storage technologies, airships may once again rise to the occasion!

Media & Culture

Ridiculously Cheap Flights

Positive framing instead of shaming. By highlighting the positive aspects of fair and sustainable travel instead of shaming certain behaviour, we contribute to upcoming travel narratives. With the social and environmental impacts of travel choices at their core, these narratives embrace the gains of responsible travel. We support travellers in their transition toward conscious travel decisions.

Lobbying Aviation Advertisements

Change what we see. Mass-advertisement on air travel is currently shaping our travel narratives. Our lobby against air travel advertisements, incentive schemes, and frequent flyer programmes will help create and support new narratives for responsible travel.

Confession Sessions

Sail to the COP exposed. In the video series Confession Sessions, the participants of Sail to the COP open up and 'get naked' about past travel behaviour. They share personal stories and reflect on their experiences.

Education

ExPlane

ExPlane your travel policies. We believe universities should serve as role models within our society when it comes to fair and sustainable travel. ExPlane is a platform that includes a toolkit, a network, and a mentorship program to support staff and students demanding change within their own institution.

Massive Open Online Course

Learn More – Travel Less. Behaviour change starts with awareness. We will make this first step accessible through a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). Through a partnership with a university, we will create an educational programme on fair and sustainable travel, available for everyone.

Climate Justice

Just Travel? - Campaign

It's not just travel. *Just Travel?* combines urgent climate action with movements of social justice. By campaigning for a Europe-wide kerosene tax and using the funds for investments in public transportation, *Just Travel?* urges the development of a socially-just travel industry.

Stories of resilience and resistance

Hear the unheard. Uncovering personal experiences, each story in this handbook relates to the injustices of the travel industry. Hear the voices of the marginalized, learn about the exploitative practices of the industry, and get inspired by stories of resilience and resistance.

Demands

One specific output of the think tank is a set of policy demands addressed to the Conference of the Parties and European countries in particular. They are collected on a one-pager and spread by our representatives at COP25 in Madrid. By means of these demands and through future campaigns, action-based events and (virtually) attending sessions at COP25, we aim to make our voices heard in our mission toward fair and sustainable travel.

The project intends to culminate with the ending of COP25, while the solutions will still be developed, and campaigns continued. Being a rather unusual experience, the journey is integral to the outcomes of this project. We turned a dream into reality – one that we experienced together yet all as individuals.