
Smart Cities as a centre of innovation: Accelerating mobility of tomorrow

Leuven, Belgium (2 May 2018) – Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commission's Vice-President for the Energy Union, officially kicks-off And& Summit & Festival from inside VEDECOM's driverless car.

The world is moving fast into a new reality where mobility has a whole new meaning. Driving may no longer be about holding the wheel but about sitting back and reading a book. Driverless vehicles with advanced connectivity systems are set to change the way we move, work and live.

As mobility is crossing this new, digital frontier, the European Commission will soon table a communication "On the road to automated mobility: an EU strategy for mobility of the future". The ambition is to make the EU a global leader in the deployment of key technologies and infrastructure to boost our competitiveness, improve road safety, reduce emissions and put an end to congestions.

In this context, Vice President Šefčovič "drove" an autonomous car in the streets of Leuven to officially start And& Summit & Festival that brings together thinkers, inventors, entrepreneurs, citizens and artists to discuss various aspects of future city life.

Maroš Šefčovič said: "*European cities – like Leuven – are becoming incubators for new clean technologies. They are often the first ones to dare testing and implementing them. The city of Leuven is a perfect example of this, as it is set to become climate neutral by 2030.*"

The event takes place on the day the European Commission presented its proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. "*Therefore, we have no choice but to make it modern,*" said Maroš Šefčovič. He added: "*We want to see at least 25% of the EU budget devoted to climate action. By strengthening this link, we are taking a strategic approach – to live up to our commitments under the Paris Agreement and to accelerate an unprecedented modernisation of the entire EU economy.*"

VEDECOM, a French Institute for Energy Transition and pioneer in new mobility, responds to the challenges posed by the electrical and autonomous vehicle and mobility in the future. VEDECOM wants to boost the emergence of the levels 4 and 5 applications to propose safer and more efficient mobility solutions (Level 4 for passenger cars – Level 5 for "robot-taxis"). The aim of VEDECOM is to develop disruptive technologies with transversal vision and application, all the while fostering durable, safe, efficient and approachable forms of mobility.

Luc Marbach CEO, ITE VEDECOM “*For VEDECOM, this means gearing up for the worldwide changes to come in the field of transport by making individual, autonomous, shared, responsible and sustainable mobility a reality.*”

Johan Merlevede, Managing Director **Leuven MindGate**: “*A significant number of the more than 300 high-tech companies and research organizations from Leuven are directly or indirectly involved in R&D solutions for autonomous vehicles. Leuven Mindgate's inventors, innovators and entrepreneurs, are an open community of curious individuals, who are always looking for new R&D collaborations and cross over possibilities, also in the field of autonomous vehicles.*”

Fully autonomous vehicles will depend on a creative and intelligent combination of different technologies –advanced vision systems, radar, LIDAR, wireless network technologies ... – and underlying algorithms and software.

“*We want to highlight Leuven MindGate as a premier destination for High-Tech and Creativity where innovation and interdisciplinary research collaborations flourish,*” stresses **Mohamed Ridouani** (Deputy Mayor, City of Leuven).

The European Commission, VEDECOM and Leuven MindGate invite you to learn more on the European Commission’s plans for mobility and energy, tackling air pollution in Europe’s cities: Moving away from fossil fuels, embracing renewables and pushing for decentralized energy, going away from rigid centralized structures to digital and smart grid solutions and making this the backbone of the new modern economy in Europe. [Link to website EC](#)

Link to the broadcast of the self-driving event in Leuven :

<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanCommission/videos/1759802770733862/>

About VEDECOM

VEDECOM is an Institute for Energy Transition dedicated to individual, carbon-free and sustainable mobility. It was established in 2014 as part of the French governmental plan "Investment for the future". The aim is to develop by disruptive technologies and by a transversal overview of uses, a more sustainable, safer, more efficient and more affordable mobility and provide major competitive benefits for our members and ecosystem in the international market. <http://www.vedecom.fr/>

Key figures by the end 2017 : 175 employees, 15 R&D projects, 8 European projects (Autopilot, AutoMate, Adas&me, Esprit, Opticities, Fabric ...), 50 members and partners, 3 fields of research, 1 training program and 160 publications, 28 patents, 69 theses, 18 software programs deposited by the end of 2017.

About Leuven MindGate

The Leuven MindGate region is home to world-renowned knowledge institutes, technology platforms and high-tech companies, creating a favorable setting for knowledge-driven entrepreneurship and innovation. Leuven Mindgate strengthens these assets by setting up R&D-cooperation, attracting international talent, fostering entrepreneurship and raising investment capital. Over 250 companies, leading knowledge institutions, and the city of Leuven have joined forces in this unique collaboration.

www.leuvenmindgate.be



Luc Marbach, CEO, VEDECOM

With a degree from the “Ecole Centrale de Paris” Luc Marbach has 31 years of experience in the automotive industry with PSA Group.

After 10 years spent in production, he went towards the conception and the project management of programs. Lately, he negotiated an important project of international partnership.

In October 2016, he became the CEO of the “Institute for Energy Transition” (ITE VEDECOM).



Johan Merlevede, Managing Director, Leuven MindGate

Johan Merlevede is the Managing Director of Leuven MindGate. Leuven MindGate is a cooperative platform founded by 29 leading partners of the ecosystem of Leuven, situated near Brussels in Belgium. Leuven MindGate concentrates the strengths of more than 250 companies, knowledge institutes and local government to fuel the economic and societal development of the region, with high-tech, health and creativity as main drivers.



Mohamed Ridouani (Deputy Mayor, City of Leuven)

Mohamed Ridouani is deputy mayor of the city of Leuven, responsible for Education, Economy, Sustainability and Urban Development.

As deputy mayor, Ridouani succeeded in bringing people and organizations together, within the different fields of his office. He's the inspirer of Leuven 2030, in which more than 300 companies, organizations and citizens are united to turn Leuven into a sustainable, carbon neutral city. Leuven was awarded the 2018 European Green Leaf Award by the European Commission. Leuven has placed a strong focus on climate change, introducing a number of actions to achieve its goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. One example of this is the reinvestment of gains made from energy efficiency into new measures for green energy. Public participation features strongly in its climate and energy projects.

To brand and boost Leuven's image as the world's hotspot for health, technology and creativity, Ridouani is one of the main champions of Leuven MindGate, a collaboration of over 250 companies, research institutions, and the city of Leuven.