

Transport Planning Society

European Transport Conference 2021

Invitation to join the UK's Transport Planning Society special session on 'Growing and improving transport planning skills across Europe'

What is transport planning?

Transport planning is not a common term in every European country. This is because it is often covered under (civil or traffic) engineering or under (town or spatial) planning, and because it often includes a very wide range of technical disciplines.

In the UK, we define transport planning as being about preparing, assessing, and implementing policies, plans and projects to improve and manage our transport systems. There is a need for transport planning on a local, regional, national, and international level. It involves understanding the link between transport and land use, in particular the future shape of our towns and cities, and the activities which people want to undertake to meet quality of life objectives. It is critical to the future of the economy, the state of our environment and how we tackle climate change. It is also about changing people's attitudes towards travel to encourage use of sustainable modes, often replacing journeys by car.

Transport planners have to consider what the future will be like and recognise that their actions as transport planners will help to shape it. They have to devise ways to address some of the most serious and complex problems facing us all. At different times they will have to think like a behavioural psychologist, a civil engineer, a vehicle engineer, a development planner, a computer analyst, an environmental scientist, a social scientist, a fitness expert, and at least two sorts of economist. They have to be able to work across disciplines, make transparent decisions, and combine objectivity, political sensitivity, and an affinity with numbers with excellent communication skills to communicate complex issues to the public, to key stakeholders, and to politicians.

Background to this session

The Transport Planning Society is the professional body for transport planners in the UK and Ireland. It has been instrumental in designing training and qualifications for transport planners there (and its members elsewhere) and is the only professional body in Europe to offer a professional qualification uniquely for transport planners (awarded jointly with the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation)¹.

At ETC in 2020, the TPS held a Special Session on 'Growing and improving transport planning skills in Europe'. It included presentations on:

- Transport planning as a profession and the role of professional bodies

¹ See Chapter 5 of the [TPS State of the Nations Report](#).

- Transport planning skills development in the UK and Ireland.

This generated an interesting discussion on the different perceptions of transport planning in European countries and whether the skills of those practicing would be strengthened by better recognition of the profession and improved pan-European networking focused on transport planning.

Invitation to join the session

As transport moves ever more centre stage in supporting social, economic, environmental, health and climate objectives, it is vital that we have professional transport planners equipped with all the training and skills needed to serve society's expectations. And it is equally vital that these skills are updated regularly and that those that are active in the transport planning profession are recognised with an appropriate professional accreditation, as is the case in many other fields such as law, engineering and accounting.

So how do we ensure that the profession is suitably trained to deliver the solutions that society demands and deserves?

Deep consideration has been given to this in the UK but we want to share experience across Europe and explore the lessons to be learned and how more pan-European collaboration on growing and improving transport planning skills would be helpful, through the Association of European Transport (AET).

The overall objective is to stimulate thinking and debate on how to create and maintain a pan-European transport planning profession that best serves the ever-changing needs of society.

The theme therefore continues to be: *'Growing and improving transport planning skills in Europe'*.

Our call is:

'Following our Special Session on this topic last year, we invite transport practitioners and academics from across Europe to share how transport planning is regarded and structured in your country/region, how skills are developed and recognized, and your thoughts on how transport planning could be improved through better (international) collaboration, networking, training and skills development. This might include who identifies as a transport planner, what a transport planner does in each country, other professions that are engaged in transport planning, relevant university courses available, resources for further professional development, and the need for or absence of professional recognition.'

The session would be approximately two hours and we would welcome panelists to share thoughts on the above topic with the audience and then discuss this with the other panel members. There is no need for a formal presentation or paper to be submitted, although we may request some written notes after the event for reporting purposes.

We welcome expressions of interest from practitioners, academics, researchers, and anyone else with an interest in the development of transport planning skills in Europe. And we would be happy to discuss further if you have any queries. Please contact us at info@tps.org.uk.