

READY FOR EVS?

The Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) sets legally binding targets for the deployment of **EV recharging stations**. Cities and regions are key enablers of **AFIR** implementation, but they need support from national and supranational levels, including funding and capacity-building. How can the Sustainable Transport Forum help public authorities?

The number of electric vehicles (EVs) in Europe is rapidly increasing, with the European Green Deal projecting around 30 million EVs on European roads by 2030. To support this growth and alleviate drivers' range anxiety, a comprehensive network of EV recharging infrastructure is essential. To address the 'chicken and egg' challenge, the EU published Regulation (EU) 2023/1804 in September 2023, known as the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure (AFIR). This regulation sets legally binding national and EU-wide targets for the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, including EV recharging stations.

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EV charging station in Munich
Marc Heckner



Key targets include:

- Fleet-based targets, with a total power output of at least 1.3 kW for each battery electric car or van and 0.8 kW for each plug-in hybrid;
- Distance-based targets, with the installation of a fast-charging pool every 60 km in each direction of travel by 2025 along the core TEN-T network and by 2030 along the comprehensive TEN-T network.

The role of cities and regions

Cities and regions are pivotal in implementing the AFIR. The deployment of EV recharging infrastructure must indeed align with urban parking, planning, and sustainable mobility strategies to encourage a modal shift from private cars to active travel, public transport, or shared mobility. Within this frame, local and regional authorities will need proper support from national and supranational levels of governance, including funding and capacity-building.

For cities beginning their EV recharging deployment process, several questions arise:

- On ownership and management: Should this network be publicly owned or managed by private operators?
- On tender and procurement processes: How can future-proof tender and procurement processes be structured?
- On revenue sharing: What portion of operational revenue should be shared with public authorities?
- On parking policies: Should cities provide 'free' parking spaces for EVs, and how does this align with car-free zone policies?
- On space management: How can cities avoid creating additional barriers for pedestrians when placing EV chargers, given the scarcity of public space?



- On permitting procedures: How can permitting procedures and timings be streamlined?
- On funding: Who will finance the deployment of EV recharging infrastructure?

STF Plenary

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The Sustainable Transport Forum

One of the European Commission's (EC) key initiatives for providing capacity-building tools for public authorities is the Sustainable Transport Forum (STF). This expert group assists the Commission in implementing AFIR through structured dialogue, the exchange of technical knowledge, and cooperation and coordination between Union Member States and relevant public and private stakeholders.

Within the STF, a sub-group focused on public authorities' best practices for supporting the deployment of recharging infrastructure was established in 2021. This sub-group includes POLIS members Barcelona, Rotterdam, Stuttgart, Ljubljana, Lisbon, Gothenburg, Cork, Antwerp, Budapest, Prague, Thessaloniki, Lille Metropole and Baden-Württemberg, as well as other relevant organisations.

Specific Task Forces, proposed by either the Commission or sub-group members, have been set up to develop recommendations and best practice examples to support public authorities in various areas, such as:

- Streamlining permitting and grid connection procedures: This guide identifies maps and assesses the challenges in obtaining environmental permits and grid connections for EV recharging infrastructure;
- Developing common templates, tools, decision trees and standard contracts for public authorities: The objective is to create a standardised set of grounding knowledge to support public authorities and accelerate the rollout of recharging infrastructure;
- Recharging infrastructure for specialised and captive fleets: This is a set of recommendations for deploying recharging infrastructure for fleets with predictable driving and refuelling patterns, such as taxis, ride-hailing services, and urban logistics;
- Updating the SUMP Electrification Topic Guide: This guide will incorporate the latest developments in e-mobility in SUMPs, updating the 2019 ELTIS Guidelines and co-creatively including new important references from both frontrunner and less advanced cities in the process of SUMP electrification.
- Accessibility of recharging stations: These guidelines will ensure EV recharging infrastructure is accessible to all users, including people with disabilities and the elderly, focusing on the design of the EV recharger and the surrounding areas and parking spaces.
- Fire safety of recharging points: This guide addresses fire safety concerns for recharging points in covered parking garages, which is an emerging issue for both EV users and public authorities.

Additionally, the STF is now revising the 2020 STF Handbook, providing updated practical guidelines for public authorities that plan to organise tendering procedures for the deployment or operation of EV recharging infrastructure.

EAF0: The go-to for city practitioners and other policymakers

The guidance and recommendations from the STF sub-group are disseminated and exchanged via a dedicated platform for policymakers on the European Alternative Fuels Observatory (EAF0), which serves as the European Commission's primary reference portal for information on alternative fuel infrastructure and vehicles across Europe. It aims to provide high-quality, easily accessible data to public authorities, consumers, and the EU to support the transition to zero-emission mobility.

While the EAF0 document repository is continuously updated with new documents and best practices, there is still progress to be made in ensuring these resources reach their main audience: city practitioners. This was highlighted in a recent POLIS Clean Vehicles & Air Quality Working Group meeting, where POLIS members acknowledged the value of STF Guidelines but also noted areas of improvement, including the need for enhanced dissemination and communication, as well as a reinforced focus on concrete solutions and practical examples for future STF documents.

The way ahead

Established in 2015 following the adoption of Directive 2014/94/EU on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, the Sustainable Transport Forum took a significant step forward by establishing the Public Authorities sub-group. This initiative ensures that the voices of the cities and regions are heard in the planning and



implementation of EV recharging infrastructure in Europe. Over the past few years, this sub-group has been quite active, producing several valuable reports aimed at supporting these authorities through recommendations and knowledge sharing. However, recent policy developments may necessitate future adjustments.

Gabriela Barrera, Project Manager on Electromobility from POLIS member MOBI-VUB, notes, 'Now that AFIR has entered into force, it may be time to consider a more bottom-up approach to reflect and identify the support needed in a fast-changing electric mobility ecosystem.'

Future improvements should also focus on fostering further knowledge-based exchanges with local and regional policymakers. Initiatives such as the EAFO consumer monitor will better support public authorities in identifying current and future needs for EV adoption and creating the enabling conditions for a successful e-mobility transition:

'We know that public authorities play a key role in promoting electric mobility towards BEV 'believers' and BEV 'sceptic' citizens. On the other hand, the EAFO Consumer Monitor provides key information about their challenges and needs. Bringing these two aspects together can translate into more tailored recommendations, and therefore, a wider outreach,' says Gabriela Barrera from MOBI-VUB.

EV charging in the Netherlands

Michael Fousert