



Why do cities need low-emission zones (LEZs)?

Low-emission zones are a tried and tested solution to curb air pollution, Europe's biggest environmental health risk. Well-designed LEZs can also reduce climate-damaging emissions, make cities more liveable and boost the local economy.

How successful are low-emission zones?

There is strong evidence for their positive impact

LEZs reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations by **around 20%** in a wide range of conditions. In some cases, such as in central London, **reductions can reach up to 46%**.

There are also climate benefits: London's 'Ultra Low Emission Zone' reduced CO₂ emissions by **800,000 tons** between 2019 and 2022, which equals the annual emissions of more than **600,000 cars**. [1]

Additional benefits include accelerating fleet renewal and the shift to cleaner transport options. LEZs can also curb motorised traffic (e.g. by 3% to 9% in central London) and help reduce congestion, car ownership and noise.

LEZs can also have a positive impact on the local economy. Madrid's original zone was linked to an **8.6% rise in retail sales** in the city centre.



There are more than 320 low-emission zones in Europe...and counting

The number of active LEZs in Europe grew from **228 in 2019 to 320 in 2022 (+40%)**. Their number is expected to rise by **another 58% by 2025**.

By 2025, 27 cities are set to either expand or tighten existing LEZs, and **at least 35 cities** plan to introduce zero-emission zones by 2030.

The largest LEZ in the world is London's 'Ultra Low Emission Zone'. It covers all of London's boroughs and the City of London, with 9 million inhabitants.

More than 320 European cities have active LEZs. By 2030, at least 35 of these plan to advance their efforts by introducing zero-emission zones (ZEZs).



How to design low-emission zones?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to LEZs, but proven recipes exist.

7 ingredients for success

The recipe for a successful LEZ includes seven basic ingredients:

- ✓ A clear definition of objectives, area, scope, and timeline
- ✓ A vision for zero-emission urban mobility
- ✓ Thorough and extensive communication
- ✓ Effective and fair enforcement strategies
- ✓ Monitoring schemes
- ✓ Targeted support for the most vulnerable
- ✓ Complementary measures to promote active and public transport



Win-Win: how to ensure a fast and fair transition

Cities must ensure a fast and fair transition to clean, healthy and inclusive mobility, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

Five policies have proven particularly successful:

- ✓ scrappage schemes for polluting vehicles
- ✓ reduced costs for bicycle purchases
- ✓ reduced public transport fares
- ✓ shared mobility hubs
- ✓ social leasing schemes for electric vehicles