

Starting up

- Are electric scooters popular in the town or city where you live? What do you think of them?
- Do you think electric scooters will be a key form of urban transport system for the future?
If not them, then what?

Reading

Electric scooters are becoming very popular in some cities. Read the article to find out more.

Reading comprehension

Read the article again and answer the questions below.

- 1 What kind of company is Bird?
- 2 Where is Bird based?
- 3 What is Bird planning to do?
- 4 How many e-scooter rental companies are already operating in Paris? What are the three mentioned in the article?
- 5 What are e-scooters called in French?
- 6 What do the Paris authorities think about e-scooters in Paris?
- 7 Are there any widely applied regulations about how e-scooters should be used in cities?
- 8 Where is Bird's European HQ?
- 9 What would stop e-scooter rental companies such as Bird becoming profitable?
- 10 What is La French Tech and what are its goals?

Bird chooses Paris for electric scooter hub in Europe

Electric scooter sharing *start-up* Bird plans to open its largest European *hub* in Paris and hire 1,000 people over the next two years, *underlining* its *backing* for one of the world's biggest scooter markets despite a regulatory *crackdown*.

Los Angeles-based Bird's current presence in Paris is a service centre where its fleet of e-scooters are serviced and it employs about 100 people. Business functions and areas ranging from operations and government partnerships to legal, marketing and communications will be based at the new French hub, Bird said on Thursday.

The number of so-called *trotinettes*, or e-scooters, offered for rent in Paris by a dozen companies such as Lime, Bird and Tier is forecast to rise from 15,000 to about 40,000 by the end of the year.

This has resulted in the French capital's mayor Anne Hidalgo vowing to crack down on the "anarchy" caused by their sudden *proliferation* on its streets. Small rivals such as Bolt, Wind and Ufo have recently been decreasing their presence in Paris, and Germany has also emerged as a new *battleground* in Europe's scooter wars.

Cities are yet to agree on how to regulate scooters, with areas such as helmet laws and where scooters' users should ride the vehicles remaining unresolved.

"When we launched in Paris nearly a year ago we were *blown away* by how quickly Parisians took to our service," said Bird's founder and chief executive Travis VanderZanden in a statement. "The adoption signalled a need and desire for an alternative to cars."

He added: "The city really is a global leader in the fight against climate change and we want to help them achieve their goals by committing even further to the city."

Bird's European headquarters are in Amsterdam and it is *gearing up* to launch in more than 50 cities across Europe this summer.

The rise in electric scooter companies such as Bird, which achieved a \$2bn valuation little more than a year after it launched, comes as they try to prove to investors that they can turn a profit. Some investors have expressed concerns that e-scooter rentals can never be profitable, because companies have to invest so much in buying, maintaining and charging their fleets.

Meanwhile, French authorities have been trying to *lure* tech companies to invest in the country through measures such as tax breaks and a special French tech visa for entrepreneurs.

Kat Borlongan, director of La French Tech, a government-led group to *bolster* the French tech ecosystem, said: "It's great that start-ups *scaling* as quickly as Bird understand what France has become: a country where some of the world's most ambitious tech companies can grow and scale."



Vocabulary 1

Look at the words and phrases in *italics* in the article. If you are unfamiliar with them, try to work out their meaning from the context. Then match them with these definitions.

- 1 support
- 2 attract
- 3 growing, expanding
- 4 a new company
- 5 amazed
- 6 emphasising, confirming
- 7 a place that people are competing for
- 8 to make stronger
- 9 central part of an organisation's activity
- 10 preparing
- 11 a sudden increase in number
- 12 strong action by the authorities to stop a particular activity

Vocabulary 2

Complete these sentences using words and phrases from Vocabulary 1.

- 1 The aim of La French Tech is to _____ the technology sector in France by _____ technology companies to invest in the country.
- 2 The CEO of e-scooter _____ Bird said he was amazed and completely ' _____ ' by the enthusiasm of Parisians for electric scooters.
- 3 Bird is _____ to launch its e-scooters in more than 50 cities in Europe this year.
- 4 Bird plans to make Paris its largest European _____ for its e-scooter business, _____ its strong _____ for the Paris scooter market.
- 5 But the _____ of thousands of scooters on its streets has led the mayor of Paris to begin a _____ on the use of scooters.
- 6 The quick expansion of Bird in Europe is a good example of a start-up _____ and growing really quickly.
- 7 After Paris, the next _____ for dominance in the e-scooter market will be Germany.

Grammar – compound nouns

There are a lot of compound nouns in the article, including the subject of the article itself – *electric scooters*. Compound nouns are nouns made from two words. They can be written as two words or just one word. The most common compound nouns are formed by noun + noun, adjective + noun, and verb + adjective

Look through the article and see how many you can find. There are fifteen in total. Then combine one word from Column A with one from Column B to make the compound nouns in the article.

A	B
1 scooter	a centre
2 crack	b visa
3 business	c laws
4 service	d breaks
5 government	e companies
6 battle	f ecosystem
7 scooter	g companies
8 helmet	h partnerships
9 climate	i down
10 e-scooter	j wars
11 scooter	k change
12 tax	l ground
13 tech	m markets
14 tech	n functions
15 tech	o rentals

Discussion

In some countries, such as the UK, riding an electric scooter on the road, even in cycle-lanes, is forbidden; nor are they allowed on the pavement. The only place they can be ridden is on private land, with the permission of the landowner. Riders currently face a £300 fixed-penalty notice and six points on their driving licence for using e-scooters. Clearly this is not the case in cities such as Paris.

What is your opinion about the use of e-scooters in towns and cities? Should they be allowed?

If so, what regulations should they have to comply with – use of helmets, use of cycle-lanes only, maximum speed, minimum age-limits, licensing and insurance?

ANSWER KEY

Reading comprehension

- 1 A start-up for electric scooter sharing.
- 2 Los Angeles
- 3 It plans to open its largest European hub in Paris and to hire 1000 people over the next two years.
- 4 A dozen. The three mentioned are Lime, Bird and Tier.
- 5 Trotinettes
- 6 They are worried about the 'anarchy' of 40,000 e-scooters being used in Paris and have said they will start to regulate how they are used.
- 7 Not at the moment it seems.
- 8 Amsterdam
- 9 The large amount they have to invest in buying, maintaining and charging their fleets.
- 10 La French Tech is a government-led group to encourage and support investments in technology in France.

Vocabulary 1

- | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 backing | 5 blown away | 9 hub |
| 2 lure | 6 underlining | 10 gearing up |
| 3 scaling | 7 battleground | 11 proliferation |
| 4 start-up | 8 bolster | 12 crackdown |

Vocabulary 2

- 1 bolster ... luring
- 2 start-up ... blown away
- 3 gearing up
- 4 hub ... underlining ... backing
- 5 proliferation ... crackdown
- 6 scaling
- 7 battleground

Grammar

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 e / g / j / m | 6 l | 11 e / g / j / m |
| 2 i | 7 e / g / j / m | 12 d |
| 3 n | 8 c | 13 b / e / f / g |
| 4 a | 9 k | 14 b / e / f / g |
| 5 h | 10 o | 15 b / e / f / g |

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