

EUROPEAN CYCLING DECLARATION

Background

Over the past few years, the EU has seen a considerable increase in cycling driven by citizens across the continent who are willing to use a more environmentally friendly mode of transport in the context of a growing awareness of climate change and air pollution. The COVID-19 crisis, the rising challenges of congestion in European cities, and the soaring cost of energy in recent times have made cycling more attractive and more relevant than ever in the EU's history.

While Member States, Regions and local authorities are making considerable efforts through investments and plans to support cycling, an EU-wide approach is still lacking. Despite several international calls over the last decade (such as the Luxemburg Declaration (2015), the EU Cycling Strategy (2017), the Graz Declaration (2018), the Benelux Declaration (2020), and the WHO/UNECE Pan-European Masterplan for Cycling Promotion (2021)), the EU still hasn't delivered a vision for cycling in Europe.

We, the signatory ministers, would like to recall the advantages of cycling as a sustainable, efficient, and modern mode of transport with a high positive impact on the economy, and therefore call on the European Commission to launch a proper action plan at EU level to foster its use.

Cycling is sustainable

- Bicycles are zero emission vehicles;
- The shift to sustainable and smart mobility is one of the main means by which the European Green Deal will achieve its objective of climate neutrality. As the sector is responsible for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, a 90% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2050;
- Cycling saves emissions equalling more than 16 million tons of CO₂ equivalents per year across the EU;
- Air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe, causing around 400 000 premature deaths per year. An increase in cycling contributes to a reduction in air and noise pollution and thereby has a positive impact on public health.

Cycling is efficient

- In urban areas with proper cycling infrastructure, bicycles are by far the fastest and most reliable mode of transport. Cyclists know no congestion;
- In Europe, half of all car journeys are shorter than 5km and over 30% are shorter than 3 km, these journeys could easily be made by cycling, walking, or a combination thereof;

- Every kilometer travelled by car incurs external costs to society whereas travelling by bicycle has a positive effect on externalities;
- Employees that regularly cycle to work have on average 1.3 days less sickness absence per year;
- Studies show that cargo bikes could replace 20% of vans in urban areas;
- In the context of growing scarcity of mineral and energy resources, bicycles, being on average 100 times lighter than a passenger car, are the most efficient way to transport one passenger on short distances;
- Furthermore, cycling infrastructure (lanes and parking) needs less space and raw materials than road infrastructure per person transported, which improves the environmental impact of cycling even further.

Cycling brings positive impact on the economy

- Cycling within Europe produces global benefits of 150 billion euros per year of which 90 billion euros are positive externalities for the environment, public health and the mobility system;
- Approximately 750,000 jobs are linked to cycling in the pan-European region. If the modal share of cycling were to increase, it would create a substantial amount of additional jobs;
- The value of the bicycle market in Europe was estimated at 13.2 billion euros in 2016;
- The estimated yearly EU benefits of bicycle tourism are around 44 billion euros;
- The value of the fuel savings brought by cycling is almost 4 billion euros a year;
- Cycling, as a physical activity, contributes to healthier lives by helping to prevent a large number of severe and chronic diseases (such as cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes (type 2), cancers... and even depression), and therefore has a positive impact on social security systems across the EU;
- Cycling is good for local businesses. Customers coming by bicycle spend more than those coming by car. Per square meter, cycle parking delivers retail spending 5 times higher than the same area of car parking.

The competent Ministers, Call upon the European Commission to

- Develop and implement an EU level strategic policy on cycling based on the comprehensive EU Cycling Strategy. Such EU policy should (1) list all the goals within EU competence that would benefit from an increase in cycling's modal share, (2) identify EU policy and funding instruments that are already mobilized or that should be mobilized to increase cycling's mode share and to foster cycling related employment in the EU, and (3) include cycling in the above EU policies and funding instruments;
- Allocate more EU funding to bicycle policy, for example under the European Green Deal;
- Prioritize the bicycle in new initiatives such as the Climate Pact, the new upcoming EU Smart and sustainable transport strategy and the new EU Urban Mobility Strategy;
- Take into consideration the issue of bicycle theft, and aim for a harmonized approach regarding national strategies against that phenomenon.

- Assess the added value of a proposal for passenger rights on maritime vessels and coaches and busses allowing for bicycle carriage and other related bicycle-friendly services, similar to the EU Rail Passengers Rights and Obligations Regulation;
- Designate 2024 as the European Year of Cycling, as a showcase of Europe's cultural heritage and role as a global leader in cycling. This would highlight cycling's enormous potential for positive impact on achieving the goals in the European Green Deal.
- Instruct Eurostat to develop knowledge and statistics on cycling and other active modes of transport.
- Take cycling into account in TEN-T networks and projects in order to produce a positive effect on cycling and avoid projects that deteriorate cycling infrastructure or practice.

The competent Ministers, Call upon the EU Member States to:

- Provide the European Commission with data on active mobility in order to come to a clear overview of the actual situation on bicycle use at EU level;
- Assess where traffic regulations could be made more bicycle friendly;
- Make available adequate budgets for cycling infrastructure and traffic calming measures;
- Increase the availability of high quality and safe bicycle-infrastructure, including more dense networks of safe bike lanes on the entire road network and safe bicycle parking (outdoors and in buildings with minimum capacities) based on EU best practices;
- Set-up ambitious campaigns to simulate cycling and raise citizens' awareness on its benefits;
- Facilitate speed limit reductions, including the extension of 30 km/h speed limits within urban areas and the implementation of shared spaces with priority for pedestrians and cyclists with reduced speed limits of 20 km/h;
- Take into consideration the issue of bicycle theft and aim for a harmonized approach regarding national strategies against this phenomenon;
- Support the existing transnational development processes for cycling promotion in the WHO/UNECE THE PEP Partnership Active Mobility and the UNECE Cycling Expert Group.

Signatories