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EUROCITIES statement towards an EU strategy on cycling

March 2017

An EU cycling strategy will be a useful tool to help coordinate efforts throughout the EU, provide guidance and best practices. Strategic leadership on cycling by the European Commission is an important step towards a more sustainable, liveable and competitive Europe. It will also be important to get the balance right between providing guidance on cycling and leaving cities the flexibility to implement strategies adapted to the local circumstances and needs.

Most EU cities actively promote soft modes and public transport in their urban mobility planning strategies; they already incorporate cycling into many areas of policy (mobility and traffic of course, but also health, spatial planning, tourism, etc.). Evidence from many cities and projects, such as CREATE¹, namely the quantitative and qualitative analysis carried out in Copenhagen, Berlin, London, Paris and Vienna, show that cycling and active modes policies implemented since the late 90s resulted in less congested city environments.

Cycling contributes to liveable cities². For the EU strategy to support cities in reaching a better quality of life for their citizens and have a positive impact, we recommend it builds on three strands:

1. Set of EU guidelines supporting and promoting cycling

EU guidelines on cycling for member states, regions and cities would help the promotion and adoption of cycling. We recommend the guidelines address the following:

- **cycling infrastructure**

The Commission should help support the development of European guidance documents for the provision of safe, attractive and comfortable cycling infrastructure including cycling lanes and bicycle parking. Similar guidelines already exist in the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK, Germany and the Flemish Region for example and they have contributed to the development of cycling in these countries. The guidelines should also take into account the variety of transport cultures, based on local good practices. Challenges vary in cities and more sparsely populated areas, and from city to city due to differing structures and preconditions.

¹ www.create-mobility.eu

² Please see annex at the end of this paper

With the fast growing popularity of e-bikes, cycling is also becoming a real alternative for longer distances, increasing the potential for bicycle commuting in metropolitan areas. This means that many cities might need to redesign their cycle infrastructure in order to establish corridors e.g. cycle highways that are linked with cycling networks at intercity/regional level. EU guidelines should address the increasing popularity of e-bikes and also help achieve a modal shift towards cycling for longer distances in city and city-regions. Even for distances over 5km, cycling is a fast, safe and comfortable transport mode, if appropriate infrastructure, such as a well-connected core network of cycle lanes and super cycle highways, is offered. The Commission should also suggest guidelines on how to best support cities and regions to implement super cycle highways.

Taking into consideration that many cities are located on the EUROVELO³ network, EU guidelines on cycling infrastructure can also contribute to the development of a European cycling network that is more coherent and of consistent quality.

- **road safety and training on cycling**

We would welcome a stronger focus on Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) in EU mobility strategies, with separate strategies for cyclists and pedestrians. VRUs represent an increasing proportion of deaths in urban areas.

We support the review of the EU road safety strategy and the setting of EU targets for reducing serious injuries. It is also important that the EU vehicle type approval framework takes account of urban environment, through changes to the General Safety Regulation to mandate direct vision requirements from Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).

We advise against mandatory cycle helmet laws. Evidence suggests that it will deter people from cycling⁴. Instead, we support the current EU policy that encourages the use of cycle helmets without making them obligatory.

Cycling will only develop if people feel safe when using this mode of transport. This means safe infrastructure but also educating children from an early age to help them build confidence, to understand the rules of the road and safety recommendations for cyclists. EU guidance on what this training could involve would be useful.

- **cycling in sustainable urban mobility plans**

Cycling should be addressed from the beginning of the planning phase and mainstreamed in all aspects of urban mobility planning, including prioritising traffic flows for active transport users. It is about building new cycle-friendly communities by working with project developers and local stakeholders through the planning process to ensure that new developments also incorporate adequate networks of high quality cycling routes connecting to key services, local amenities and the wider strategic cycle network.

‘Cycling speed’ streets, where cars are a guest and cycling is the default mode, are increasingly seen in cities, and EU support on how to mainstream this throughout Europe would be welcome. This could also include a wider discussion on the international framework and regulations for traffic and road signs, and the demands from increasing bicycle traffic.

New EU projects on sustainable urban mobility plans, including SUMP-UP, GO-SUMP, PROSPERITY and SUITS provide an opportunity for training and best practice exchange on how cycling can be optimised through urban mobility planning.

³ <http://www.eurovelo.org/>

⁴ <http://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/4/3/170.full>

- **promotion of cycling**

Effective promotion is needed to ensure that more people will cycle more often. It is important that the potential benefits in terms of health, economy, accessibility and environment and social inclusion are communicated better at all levels. Considering that promotional activities and permanent measures related to cycling are a key aspect of the European Mobility Week campaign - including the so-called 'Mobility Actions' that are registered on the campaign website throughout the year - we strongly encourage the Commission to maintain the current level of political and financial support for future editions. Further activities promoting exchange of best practice and expertise, but also communication activities on the cross-cutting benefits of cycling, should be more strongly supported by EU funds.

- **cycling as part of an intelligent and multimodal transport system**

When used in combination with other transport modes, the potential of cycling can be substantially increased. This implies that the transport system as a whole should allow for better connectivity of cycling with other transport modes and services. Public transport and interchanges should be designed in such a way that cyclists can easily switch or combine transport modes. At the same time, the introduction of new ITS technologies provides an opportunity for traffic managers, planners and operators to better monitor bicycle traffic and to better tailor the transport services and infrastructure to the needs of cyclists.

- **cycling for urban freight transport**

The upcoming Commission guidelines on urban logistics should include the potential of cargo bicycles and promote a shift towards cycle-logistics deliveries in urban areas. Sustainable urban freight and city logistics are central to the European economy, but they face a number of economic and environmental challenges. Cargo cycles have the potential to make city logistics more sustainable. There have been several EU projects on this topic already, but more can be done in providing guidance to cities that want to introduce cargo bikes.

- **support local economy through cycling**

Economic activities linked to cycling should be supported and promoted, also at EU level, e.g. cyclo-tourism. This is a flourishing sector that deserves to be made more visible and mainstreamed. Cycling should be recognised as an economic factor of dynamism in cities, as explained in the European Parliament report on 'Cycling mobility in the EU'⁵.

Being an affordable means of transport, cycling can also contribute to a more cohesive city. It gives people that are financially or socially disadvantaged better access to jobs, health care and social services. In response to the refugee crisis, many of our members - including Vienna, Berlin and Ghent - have set up cycling schemes to effectively improve the physical - and social - mobility of migrants. The renting and repairing of bicycles is also an important sector within the social economy: many public bicycle schemes successfully engage long-term unemployed to help them develop professional skills and attitudes and get them back to work.

⁵ [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/557013/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)557013_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/557013/EPRS_BRI(2015)557013_EN.pdf)

2. Further support for exchange of best practice

- **EU to facilitate access and promotion of best practice**

The Commission should continue to facilitate the collection and access to best practice, case studies, reports, and funding possibilities on cycling. EU portal websites and programmes on sustainable urban mobility such as Eltis and CIVITAS could be further developed to include more guidance, tools and case studies on cycling, and to support peer-to-peer exchange between cycling experts and urban practitioners.

We have long promoted best practice and capacity building on cycling to our members. We have also previously played an active role in providing a platform for European cycling experts and EU cycling projects such as CHAMP to present their findings and offer advice to urban transport planners and policy makers from across Europe, and we are planning to continue our activities in this field.

3. Adequate financial support

- **dedicated funding and financing in favour of cycling**

More EU funding instruments should be mobilised to increase mode share for cycling. We believe the EU should allocate more funding to and support financing for cycling and other sustainable modes, to eventually reach a level playing field with financing and funding modes currently available for clean cars. This would contribute to providing better alternatives to cars and support a shift towards more sustainable modes in cities.

This should be streamlined across the relevant EU funding and financing schemes and would help cities address the issue of congestion and air quality.

Research on the potential benefits of cycling and evolving tools for estimating national economic effects, for example with regards to cycling infrastructure investments, would be another area with significant potential.

- **specific focus on cycling infrastructure, road safety, multimodality and e-bikes**

EU financial support is needed for the introduction of road safety measures alongside the promotion of walking and cycling, making infrastructure and vehicles safer.

Ways of boosting the e-bikes market would also be welcome. The Commission should invest more in research and development for e-bikes and related infrastructure. New generations of e-bikes can be a real alternative to cars in cities and EU incentives to develop this sector could help.

Innovative cycling and bike-sharing schemes should also be mainstreamed in EU-funded R&D schemes, especially regarding journey-planning, ticketing and parking.

Concluding remarks

We welcome all previous EU actions on cycling and hope that these will be enhanced in the future, including through an EU strategy. The benefits of cycling in cities reaches far beyond the immediate advantages related to mobility. The positive impacts on public health, environment, climate, social cohesion and the local economy are also important. We remain committed to working in partnership with the European institutions to help steer the EU towards more sustainable urban mobility, with a better quality of life for all our citizens.