



**Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Proposing a European Declaration on Cycling
(Own-initiative opinion)**

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

1. welcomes the publication of the European Declaration on Cycling: common guidelines are needed, along with urgent action to promote cycling, especially in urban areas, and, with the emergence of electric bikes, increasingly in rural areas too, as a key contribution to decarbonising the transport system;
2. stresses that the transport network forms a cohesive whole and that it requires coordination in planning at national, regional and local level. In order to create the conditions for achieving the objectives of sustainable urban environments and a higher modal share for cycling, the national level needs to support a transition in cities. The EU should establish mechanisms to ensure that national-level planning in the Member States supports the transition in cities, for example in relation to the TEN-T urban nodes;
3. stresses the problems that could arise if the European Declaration on Cycling is not formally adopted by the end of the current term;
4. points out that regions and cities are best placed to implement the objectives of this Declaration, with the welcome support of the Member States. To this end, and in light of the subsidiarity principle, the European Commission's future strategies should be supportive in nature and identify possible funding opportunities; calls for regions and cities to be involved in the Commission's work and, in view of the above, drawing up the future strategies drafted by the European Commission: proposes that the European Committee of the Regions sign the declaration as a clear sign that it will be involved in the implementation phase;
5. stresses that private motorised traffic, besides numerous advantages for the users, entails many negative externalities, both globally – with greenhouse gas emissions, resources being used to produce an ever-increasing number of vehicles – and locally – with the emission of pollutants (particulates, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxides, which have a major impact on human health), the high levels of congestion that diminish and deplete the public space, giving it over to motor vehicles (whether moving or stationary), the slowing down of public transport vehicles to the point that they become inefficient and therefore underused, and accidents whose victims are primarily so-called vulnerable users, when in reality the 'vulnerable users' are the people who live in the public space;

6. points out that the current dependence on non-renewable energy sources makes global economies vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices and disruption of the supply of these commodities. Stresses the need for the EU and Member States to take steps to promote electric vehicles and carbon-free alternative fuels in transport. Electrification of private cars, air transport, public transport and heavy-duty transport, and solutions for new zero-emission transport modes, play an important role here. Stresses also that, despite the increasing penetration rate of electric vehicles, a significant proportion of the European vehicle fleet is still made up of internal combustion cars, which is due to the relatively high prices of electric vehicles and other factors such as scarcity of charging stations and other EV infrastructure, as well as limited consumer confidence concerning the electric vehicles' reliability, especially in extreme weather conditions;

7. notes that the COP28 agreement adopted on 13 December 2023 provides for 'transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science';

8. stresses that it is crucial that the European support focuses particularly on cities to achieve the 2050 climate neutrality targets set out in the European Green Deal and in line with the European Union's commitments under the COP21 Paris Agreements. Sufficient resources must also be allocated for new measures within existing EU programmes and national funding;

9. notes that European cities are home to 75 % of the EU's population. Globally, cities use more than 65 % of the world's energy, generating over 70 % of CO₂ emissions;

The benefits of cycling policies

10. stresses that the benefits of policies to promote cycling as a means of travel, leisure, exploration and knowledge have been studied and widely recognised in scientific, sociological and epidemiological spheres;

11. stresses that cycling is an active means of transport that promotes a healthy lifestyle for individuals, reducing stress levels and having a positive impact on the cardiovascular system;

12. notes that cycling helps to build more cohesive communities in society. It helps to create public spaces that are welcoming for people of all ages and all abilities in terms of movement, encourages people to meet and connect, and brings more people into neighbourhoods, making them more vibrant and safe;

13. points out that designing cycling-friendly cities could lead to safer and more liveable and accessible cities for all user groups. Cycling is also an affordable and accessible means of transport that can reduce socio-economic disparities in access to transport, enabling a larger number of people to travel economically and efficiently and providing transport to people without a car and driving licence and living in rural areas around urban areas;

14. stresses the vital, direct contribution that promoting cycling can make to combating air pollution. Widespread cycling decreases dependence on motorised means of transport, helping to reduce road congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel consumption, and promoting sustainable urban development;

15. points out that cycling not only helps to improve urban environments socially and environmentally, but also has a beneficial economic impact at both sectoral and local levels;

16. points out that, at sectoral level, the cycling ecosystem currently accounts for around 1 million jobs, which could scale up to 2 million jobs by 2030, as highlighted by the European Parliament in its resolution on *Developing an EU cycling strategy* ⁽¹⁾;

(1) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0058_EN.html.

17. notes that promoting cycling as a means of transport can generate widespread prosperity locally: investing in cycling infrastructure stimulates local employment by creating key jobs in designing, building and maintaining cycle paths and bicycles themselves. Promoting cycling tourism can also help to increase tourism flows and diversify them, making them more sustainable, directly benefiting local businesses and creating jobs of a kind that cannot be relocated;

Cycling infrastructure

18. points out that one of the main problems is the deployment, quality and connection of the infrastructure network specifically dedicated to bicycles. There is often a lack of cycling infrastructure connected up in continuous routes where particular care has been taken to design the intersections – the main points where vehicles using our roads cross each other– and where the necessary level of separation between bicycle users and vehicle flows has been ensured. With a view to integrating the cycling infrastructure network and improving how it works, the operators of local, regional and national infrastructure need to work together with shared objectives;

19. stresses that cycling infrastructure means solutions which, according to the context, provide for different levels of separation between cyclists and other road users, insists that this means dedicated cycle lanes, either fully separated from the road or protected by curbs, which should be preferred, where possible, to cycle lanes merely marked out by signage;

20. recalls that in some Member States the high level of fragmentation of land ownership represents a serious obstacle to projecting complex projects of cycling infrastructure;

21. stresses that safety is a major barrier to the spread of cycling as a means of transport accessible to all types of users;

22. states that making roads safer makes it possible to unlock the potential of cycling, as well as of walking, public transport and other shared mobility options, including for those areas that are more tourism-oriented. Well-functioning transport chains contribute to smooth mobility;

23. recalls that the absence of secure parking spaces for bicycles in both public spaces within urban areas and private residential buildings discourages individuals from choosing bicycles for their mobility needs;

24. stresses that cities can implement local cycling infrastructure projects, including by drawing on the support of international networks that have for decades been rethinking public spaces to make them more sustainable, higher quality and better to live in;

25. underlines that women are still underrepresented in transport planning and are more likely to be deterred by traffic-related safety risks; points out in this respect that due to the fact that women unfortunately still bear the majority of care work, particularly for children, the need for specialised bike equipment (e.g. cargo bike, longtails, children bike seats) puts them at a disadvantaged position and makes the need for separated cycling lanes even more important;

26. stresses that the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 provides EUR 3,2 billion (EU funds) for investments in cycling infrastructure, plus EUR 1,25 billion of national co-financing, making a total of around EUR 4,5 billion ^(?), with the aim of building 12 000 km of cycling routes by 2027;

27. stresses that it is crucial for local public administrations to have the financial resources, but also the human capital and procedural adjustments necessary to deploy these resources in functional, tangible projects;

^(?) https://ecf.com/system/files/ECF_Policy_Brief_EU_Structural_Funds_for_Cycling_Investments.pdf.

28. encourages the development of indicative and supportive guidelines on quality requirements for infrastructure for vulnerable road users in order to improve the quality of cycling infrastructure in each Member State, as laid down in the Road Infrastructure Safety Management Directive; steps to maintain, preserve and repair cycle paths should be planned throughout the year;
29. points to the need to put in place a 'safe active mobility strategy' to encourage an EU response to the challenges of making walking and cycling safe ^(?);
30. calls on the European Commission to endeavour to facilitate investment in the mobility of people in the new cohesion policy. Everyday mobility and, in particular, cycling infrastructure are a visible investment that can reconnect European citizens with EU policies;
31. recommends, furthermore, that the European Commission develop Horizon Europe funding to innovate in the area of planning and implementing cycling infrastructure;
32. welcomes the provisional agreement reached on 18 December 2023 between the European Parliament and the European Council on the revision of the TEN-T Regulation, and reiterates that active mobility infrastructure (both pedestrian and cycling) should be eligible for co-financing under this mechanism, as this infrastructure increases the interoperability of the transport system;

Motorised mobility

33. notes that the large number of cars in our cities means that the network of small roads is full of through traffic, cars looking for parking, as well as cars parked either legally or – in the worst cases – illegally;
34. regrets that in many Member States the local and regional authorities were not duly involved in the preparation of the national recovery and resilience plans and calls for development of cycling infrastructures. Stresses, therefore, the necessity to involve cities and regions in preparation of any EU programmes aimed at supporting the cycling infrastructure in line with the principles of partnership and multilevel governance;
35. recommends that the construction of cycling routes, as defined in strategic documents, be approached as projects with high priority. In matters of property and legal settlement, these projects should have greater flexibility, similar to the approach taken with road infrastructure projects;
36. suggests creating a European scheme for the development/update of cycling concepts at the regional level, where regions and cities can exchange on their practices. These concepts would reflect priorities defined in the Declaration on Cycling, which regions, cities, municipalities, developers, cycling associations, and other stakeholders would follow when building cycling routes;
37. stresses that cities can introduce solutions that bring synergies in the area of cycling, with pedestrianisation projects, especially for roads on which there are education establishments or which, because of their historical nature or layout or functional characteristics, are naturally candidates for being closed off from motorised traffic;
38. notes that currently, the most polluting transport modes in cities, i.e. individual petrol and diesel vehicles, occupy the largest part of public space dedicated to mobility; requests urgently that the European Commission encourages, through new financing, local authorities to give this space back to more active mobility such as walking or cycling and strong and well-structured and integrated public transport, as well as the transition to zero-emission vehicles;

^(?) *The new Urban Mobility Framework*, rapporteur: Linda Gaasch (LU/Greens), adopted in October 2022.

39. points out that, in European cities, cycling infrastructure separated from other vehicle flows is a key measure to improve the safety of all types of users, but that this approach can be applied in a limited number of roads. For this reason, points out that in some locations measures may be necessary to be implemented to reduce the speed and flow of motorised vehicles;

40. stresses that a renewed approach to the allocation of road space in urban areas will have the most decisive impact on the safety of vulnerable road users, while also encouraging behavioural change and reducing both air and noise pollution, as well as congestion;

41. stresses, therefore, that further action that can help to reduce the number of cars on the road in cities and promote cycling and walking must entail creating restricted traffic zones of varying size and scope, from simply creating areas where non-residents are denied access, to establishing genuine low/zero emission zones where the most polluting vehicle classes are prevented from entering. Stresses, moreover, that, in cities, it is essential to check for and penalise parking violations and, more generally, all improper behaviour in the use and exploitation of public space;

42. notes that, in addition to private motorised traffic, the growth of e-commerce and home deliveries can exert ever-increasing pressure in terms of pollution, traffic and use of public space by last-mile logistics. Logistics companies must pool their last-mile services, avoiding unnecessarily multiple or pointlessly attempted deliveries, as well as the traffic caused by delivery vehicles. Many good examples in cities show that this can be done;

43. stresses that urban logistics can benefit from introducing the various forms and types of cycling, (in terms of both assisted pedalling and load capacity) in order to make last-mile logistics more sustainable;

44. underlines the significant role of speeding in approximately 30 % of fatal road crashes and as an aggravating factor in most crashes; therefore calls on the Commission to recommend the implementation of safe speed limits across all road types, in particular in residential areas and areas where a high number of cyclists and pedestrians are present;

45. points out that, in addition to local administrations creating areas that prohibit or restrict the access of motorised vehicles, efforts should be made at EU level to facilitate tools such as CountEmissionsEU being used by private delivery companies to make the CO₂-eq impact of their purchases transparent to users, thus helping to guide their behaviour and choices;

The contribution of intermodality

46. points out that in suburban areas, the high number of collision points between car traffic, cyclists and pedestrians, the lack of infrastructure connections between urban centres around large cities and public transport stations, the lack of secure parking at these stations, the difficulties involved in transporting bicycles on trains and underground lines, the lack of integrated pricing between the various mobility systems (bike sharing, public transport, bicycle racks) make intermodality difficult, often unsafe and, in practice, an inefficient transport option in terms of time and cost;

47. notes that it is crucial to establish multi-level governance and effective cooperation between national governments, local and regional authorities and transport operators and other stakeholders, in order to find efficient solutions for multimodal transport; safe bicycle parking areas and the possibility to transport bicycles in buses and trains makes easier to combine different means of transport;

48. stresses the need to design streets for low speeds, better safety and visibility of the most vulnerable users of the public space; highlights the effectiveness of infrastructure traffic calming, as well as nudging measures;

49. stresses the fundamental importance of providing infrastructure not only to those living in cities, but also to all those visiting them, such as commuters, tourists, recreation, shopping and occasional visitors. Cycling can be increased through digitally available cycling maps and signposting;

50. stresses that, in this regard, national governments, local and regional authorities, transport operators, and other stakeholders should implement sharing services with specific prices for non-systematic users, set up secure bicycle parking at local public transport interchange stations, secure bicycle transport, and invest in integrating pricing between the various mobility services – local public transport operators and shared mobility operators – with a view to implementing Mobility as a Service (MaaS), which can provide joined-up access to a package of mobility services;

51. calls for the strengthening of multimodal hubs to provide for smooth transfers between different modes of transport, including improving accessibility for active mobility and the provision of secure parking facilities for bicycles, in order to ensure a faster and more effective transfer of people and goods;

The role of legislation

52. stresses that the rules governing the design and use of the public space and roads of European cities, regions and municipalities should be framed by legislative instruments that also take into account the new, urgent needs in terms of promoting active and light mobility;

53. stresses that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are important in any action at EU level. There are major differences across Europe in terms of access to cycling and how well-developed, suitable or necessary cycling networks are;

54. stresses the contribution that local authorities can make in calling on regional, national and EU legislators to change these rules and bring them more into line with the challenges posed at EU and world level in relation to promoting cycling;

55. proposes, to this end, that a review of regulatory frameworks for cycling should be carried out by Member States and shared at European level in order to set, first in a transition phase, indicative European minimum standards, for example for the design and quality of cycling infrastructure, while complying with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. This exercise should take into account local land use and the appropriateness of solutions for different transport environments, such as densely and loosely built-up areas;

The importance of data

56. points out that the lack of data collection campaigns, which take into account complex multimodal, systematic or occasional chains, often involving those users who use means other than cars to reach their destination, is not helping to properly capture the potential demand for cycling in urban and suburban areas;

57. points out that, while data collection methods are in general increasingly automated, this is not the case for cycling, where manual counts or, at least, specially installed sensory devices, are often used. There should be greater use of digital counters and the data they collect in transport plans;

58. stresses that specific data collection campaigns for the construction of modal origin-destination matrices are crucial in order to better understand the dynamics of travel within urban areas and thus better plan and programme the measures needed to promote cycling;

59. stresses the importance of involving private entities in order to benefit from the large volumes of data collected, for example, via the GPS signals from mobile devices, and stresses the role of the European Union in building such forms of collaboration;

60. stresses that, in the context of TEN-T reporting, the European Union should ensure that it provides the necessary tools to enable local and regional authorities to effectively report on cycling indicators;

Awareness and compliance with the rules

61. notes that, in order to ensure that people can safely coexist in and use a shared public space, the EU must increase awareness of and compliance with the rules by all road users; to this end, stresses the particular importance of road education and safety training specifically aimed at creating behavioural patterns, particularly among the school-age population;

62. stresses that it is essential to improve the technological features of motorised vehicles, especially larger vehicles, both those newly registered ⁽⁴⁾ and those already in use, to equip them with sensors capable of detecting vulnerable road users and alerting drivers to interactions;

63. points out that personal safety equipment such as cycling helmets ⁽⁵⁾, lights, bells and retro-reflective clothing make cycling safer;

64. points out that cities have to work on training and information, at the various levels and with the various tools at their disposal, with programmes for road education in schools to promote active mobility, a public space culture and a focus on the needs of the most vulnerable users, and encourages the implementation of awareness-raising measures designed for the younger generations;

65. stresses that cities and all other competent authorities must also take action with targeted awareness campaigns on compliance with the rules and on road safety, as well as with training courses for heavy-duty vehicle drivers who are travelling in increasingly congested roads that are increasingly being used by active mobility users;

66. calls on cities, regions and the Member States to encourage the use of cycling in the provision of public services, such as in the work of the police;

67. calls on the European Commission to promote the idea of establishing a European car-free day, at least one Sunday per year, to raise awareness of alternative mobility solutions;

68. calls on the European Commission to step up its support for cycling by giving more publicity to 3 June, the date chosen for World Cycling Day, and to consider designating a European Year of Cycling in the coming years.

Brussels, 17 April 2024.

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions
Vasco ALVES CORDEIRO

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/2144 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2019 on type-approval requirements for motor vehicles and their trailers, and systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles, as regards their general safety and the protection of vehicle occupants and vulnerable road users, amending Regulation (EU) 2018/858 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulations (EC) No 78/2009, (EC) No 79/2009 and (EC) No 661/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulations (EC) No 631/2009, (EU) No 406/2010, (EU) No 672/2010, (EU) No 1003/2010, (EU) No 1005/2010, (EU) No 1008/2010, (EU) No 1009/2010, (EU) No 19/2011, (EU) No 109/2011, (EU) No 458/2011, (EU) No 65/2012, (EU) No 130/2012, (EU) No 347/2012, (EU) No 351/2012, (EU) No 1230/2012 and (EU) 2015/166 (OJ L 325, 16.12.2019, p. 1).

⁽⁵⁾ https://road-safety.transport.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/Road%20Safety%20thematic%20report%20Serious%20injuries_final.pdf.