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**NATIONAL CYCLING POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORT**

**Policy Note and Declaration**

*This document will be examined under item 4 "Points for approval: National Cycling Policies for Sustainable Urban Transport" of the draft Agenda for the Ljubljana Council of Ministers.*

*Ministers are invited to consider the Policy Note and adopt the Declaration.*

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## NATIONAL CYCLING POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORT

### POLICY NOTE

#### INTRODUCTION

*Cycling is increasingly recognised as a clean, sustainable mode of urban travel.*

The objective of this report is to provide an overview of policies at the national level for promoting cycling, which is increasingly recognised as a clean, sustainable mode of transport in urban areas. The report is based on information obtained from 21 ECMT Member and Associate Member countries in 2002 and 2003.

While the growing trend in car use continues, the level of bicycle use seems generally stable with only minor fluctuations. The modal share of cycling trips, though varying from country to country, is roughly 5 to 10% of all trips in Western Europe and approximately 1 to 5% in Central and Eastern European countries. Two countries stand out with much higher modal shares for cycling: the Netherlands (27%) and Denmark (18%). Japan's cycling modal share is also noteworthy at 14%. Cycling's share in North American cities, although growing in importance, remains fairly low.

*Benefits and barriers of cycling...*

Cycling can have many advantages as a short-distance means of travel in urban areas: it is environmentally friendly – without emissions and noise nuisance; provides cost-effective mobility, and offers an opportunity for health and physical fitness by regular exercise.

On the other hand, there are both real and perceived barriers to bicycle use that – with the exception of a few countries – keep cycling somewhat in the margins of urban travel. These barriers include vulnerability in accidents with motorised traffic, bicycle theft, increasing travel distances due to urban sprawl, perceived low social status, weather and topology.

#### THE POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

*Cycling policy needs integration and coordination with other policies.*

Cycling policies and measures alone cannot bring about sustainable travel in cities. They are, however, an important element of a comprehensive package of policy tools designed to improve the sustainability of the whole transport network. Integration and coherence between cycling policies and other policies addressing land use, environment, physical health and finance are

essential. This requires co-ordination among various levels of government and sectors, with input from cycling stakeholders – including national, regional and local governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, cycling associations and the bicycle manufacturing industry.

*National-level commitment is important in setting the right policy framework.*

While regional and local authorities bear the primary responsibility for detailed planning and implementation of cycling policies, national-level commitment is important in setting the right legal, regulatory and financial framework so that successful implementation of cycling initiatives can take place.

## **NATIONAL CYCLING POLICIES AND PLANS**

*More countries are developing national cycling plans, strategies and policies.*

An increasing number of countries are developing national cycling plans, strategies and policies. The approach to cycling on a national level varies from country to country: some countries have a separate, specific plan for cycling promotion at a national level, while others include cycling policies in national transport, environment or health plans. In many countries, cycling remains the exclusive responsibility of regional and local authorities with limited commitment at a national level.

Cycling policy objectives draw from various sectors including transport, land-use, safety, environment, and health. The cycling policy and planning process therefore involves input from the wide range of cycling stakeholders mentioned above -- governmental bodies at all levels, non-governmental organisations, cycling associations and the bicycle manufacturing industry. In a number of countries the Ministry of Transport has a leading role in co-operation and co-ordination with relevant bodies in the policy planning process.

## **CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE POLICY-MAKING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL**

*There are still challenges ahead.*

Although a number of countries are making progress in promoting cycling travel, difficulties persist in the process of planning and implementing cycling promotion policies.

First, cycling remains somewhat marginal in transport policy discussions in many countries, and national budgetary allocation reflects this status. Second, as cycling policies draw from a wide range of objectives and involve many actors, lack of co-ordination, both horizontally and vertically, may cause biased policy planning and roadblocks to implementation. Third, safety fears arise from cyclists' vulnerability to motorised traffic. Fourth, technical understanding is not always adequate and, consequently, the design of transport infrastructure -- even cycling-specific infrastructure -- is often flawed or of poor quality. Fifth, scarcity of road space makes it difficult to provide adequate bicycle infrastructure. Finally, cycling often carries with it a somewhat skewed image -- often perceived only as a sport, leisure, or children's activity rather than a mode of transport.

Many countries are working to better understand these barriers. The national governments in a number of countries have been instrumental in overcoming these difficulties through the development of national policies and plans for the promotion of cycling, through financial support to local and regional authorities, and via national public awareness and communications initiatives, among others.

### **HOW CAN NATIONAL LEVEL COMMITMENT BE HELPFUL?**

In the Netherlands and Denmark, the bicycle is one of the principal means of travel in cities, thanks at least in part to their national governments' strong, long-term, support for cycling.

*The national government can help local implementation of cycling policies by providing a policy framework and financial support.*

Inquiries to local authorities carried out in the context of the ECMT study revealed that national government can help implementation of cycling policies in local areas in a number of ways, including by establishing a national policy framework or strategy that sets out the necessary legal and regulatory instruments for safe and efficient bicycle use; and by providing adequate financial support – especially for cycling infrastructure development and facilities. It should be noted that investments for cycling infrastructure and facilities can be considerably less costly than those for other types of transport infrastructure (e.g. for motorised transport, public transport).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

A national cycling policy approach – be it a separate document or elements of a more general transport policy plan – can be a powerful tool for national governments to encourage cycling in urban areas. Tailored to a country's specific circumstances, a national policy framework can provide a common, integrated basis for the long-term development and implementation of cycling policies among various sectors and levels of government.

*A national cycling policy framework can be a powerful tool.*

A national cycling policy framework can:

- articulate common objectives, goals, and a set of specific, integrated, co-ordinated actions among the different national Ministries and agencies (horizontally), as well as among national, regional and local authorities (vertically), and in partnership with industry, cycling associations and other stakeholders;
- demonstrate political will and commitment at the national level, thereby pushing cycling policies higher up on the policy agenda;
- raise awareness and “de-marginalise” cycling as a sustainable mode of transport;
- provide a basis for the monitoring and evaluation of cycling policy implementation by national, regional and local authorities.

## NATIONAL CYCLING POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORT

### DRAFT DECLARATION

The Ministers of ECMT Member and Associate Member Countries meeting in Ljubljana on 26 and 27 May 2004:

- NOTE the findings of the report on *National Cycling Policies for Sustainable Urban Transport* CM(2004)26 as summarised in the Policy Note accompanying this Declaration;
- RECALL the *Key Messages to Governments on Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies*, approved by Ministers at their Lisbon Council in 2001, in particular, the recommendation that national governments establish a supportive national policy framework for sustainable urban travel;
- AGREE that policies and measures to promote cycling are *an integral part* of urban transport policy alongside those designed to promote public transport, manage car use and integrate land use and transport planning;
- RECOGNISE that the following national policy actions can promote cycling and facilitate implementation of cycling measures in urban areas:
  - establishing an integrated national cycling policy framework with clear goals, actions, and targets in co-ordination with other national level administrations and agencies, regional and local authorities, cycling associations and bicycle manufacturers;
  - proposing legislation, regulations, and guidelines for the development and implementation of cycling policies at regional and local levels;
  - using financial and other instruments to encourage and facilitate cycling initiatives by regional/local authorities;
  - improving safety for cyclists by encouraging the reduction of speed and volume of motorised traffic where necessary;
  - conducting research on cycling policies and measures and making knowledge available to local authorities and other relevant stakeholders;
  - improving data collection on cycling travel and cyclists behaviour, so that there is better understanding of the status, trends and potential of cycling;
  - monitoring progress towards goals and quantitative targets and evaluating progress in implementing cycling policies;
- ASK Deputies to review progress and exchange experience on implementing these ideas for cycling policies in countries and report back to Ministers in due time.