Old dog, new tricks

Written by Christophe Najdovski on 16 September 2019 in News

Despite having been part of our lives for many years, bicycles offer one of the best tools for delivering a healthier, cleaner and environmentally-friendlier future for Europe.

The 2020s will be the decade that redefines mobility. For more than 15 years, the European Mobility Week campaign has demonstrated the bottom-up demand from European cities to create a sustainable mobility ecosystem.

The bicycle is one of the best tools available to decision makers to deliver that sustainable future.
The European Cyclists’ Federation (ECF) welcomes the European Commission’s choice to focus this year’s campaign on the theme of ‘Safe Walking and Cycling’, an essential condition for unlocking the full potential of this modest, yet noble, mobility option.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that we have until 2030 to significantly reduce the environmental impact of our transport systems and reach the sustainable development goals of the Paris Agreement.

Meeting these goals, and potentially mitigating the devastating effects of climate change, will require the mass-scale integration of low-carbon solutions into our current and future transport systems.

Although the bicycle is hardly a new transport solution, after walking, it still represents the most environmentally-friendly mode of transport.

The current level of bicycle use in Europe saves an annual 16 million tonnes of CO2(e). For context, that is the equivalent of the entire annual CO2(e) emissions of Croatia.

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Doubling the rate of cycling would decrease emissions savings by a further 7m tonnes of CO2(e) annually.

During the 2019 election campaign for the European Parliament, the ECF called for candidates to sign our “Cycling for All” pledge.

Through this pledge, 75 MEPs have committed to actively promote cycling policies on the EU legislative agenda during the next five years.

The ECF has also developed four major policy goals to improve the share of cycling in European mobility systems by 2030.

First, cycling must be treated as an equal partner in the mobility system, with users paying for the full external costs of their mobility choices, and the wider societal benefits of active mobility being fully absorbed.

Second, cycle use in the EU should increase by 50 percent by 2030, with cycling’s share of the transport modal split being at least 12 percent.

Third, fatalities and serious injuries among cyclists should be halved by 2030.

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Last, €3bn should be invested in cycling projects in the EU’s 2021-2027 budget and €6bn in the next.

Creating safer and more-accessible spaces for regular bicycle use not only contributes to the health of the environment, it also goes a long way towards developing healthier societies.

The inherent increased physical activity from cycling brings major health benefits, preventing over 18,000 premature deaths each year.

Cycling also lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain forms of cancer, reducing the economic burden on health systems by an estimated €52bn annually.

Cities hold a key position in realising the social, environmental and health benefits of cycling, but their efforts must be supported by a strong commitment to building a greener, safer and healthier Europe for all.

The election of a new Parliament and the appointment of the EU Commission represent an excellent opportunity for legislators to turn words into action.

**About the author**

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