



Unlocking EU Funds For Cycling Investments

A GUIDE TO 2021-2027 PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS - ITALY



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EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

The European Cyclists' Federation is the umbrella federation for national cycling organisations (organisations that promote bicycle use in the context of mobility) throughout Europe. With 69 members across more than 40 countries, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) unites cyclists' associations giving them a voice on the European and international level. Our aim is to get more people cycling more often by influencing policy and budgets in favour of more cycling.

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**More
and better
cycling for all**

1. Foreword

Dear Reader,

Now is a crunch time for the future of European regions. With the current financial period 2014 – 2020 coming to an end, we must draw a new vision of regional policy. We have to answer these questions: What cities, towns and villages do we want to live in? How do we want to safeguard the safety and well-being of our citizens? How can we ensure that the bold investments outlined today will bring the greatest possible economic and social benefits? These were never simple questions, but today the answer is even more difficult. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has shaken the whole world, has presented us with completely new challenges. The health and safety of our citizens have become a top priority.

What is more, the need to adapt our investments to the requirements of the Green Deal poses further challenges. The European Union aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest. This is undoubtedly a very ambitious goal and the EU has unlocked unprecedented financial resources to help us achieve it. We must all be ready to seize this opportunity.

Bearing in mind the experience of many European regions, we believe that an ambitious cycling policy is the best response to both of these challenges: public health and climate protection. More people cycling on the roads of our regions mean lower greenhouse gas emissions, lower noise levels and better air quality, but also greater physical activity for citizens, better health and, what is particularly important in the present circumstances, much lower risk of infection while commuting compared to other means of transport.

In the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), approximately EUR 700 million was allocated to cycling. This was only 1% of the EU's total spending on transport measures during that period. During the 2014-2020 MFF, the EU has invested almost three times this amount, about 2 billion EUR, in walking and cycling projects. As much as

this increase is very welcome, it still makes only a small fraction of the total transport budget. That is why we want this number to triple again and unlock investments of 6 billion EUR in the next 2021–2027 MFF.

However, in order to achieve this aim we need your active cooperation. Thus, we encourage you to include pro-cycling objectives in the programming documents for the new European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund. In this guide you will find the information about the benefits of cycling investments in Italy and all the necessary knowledge on how to add them into Italy's partnership agreement with the EU and into the specific operational programmes for your regions.

Today, you have the power to decide about the future shape of your regions and Europe. We hope that this guide will help you make truly beneficial investment decisions.

Best regards,



Jill Warren
ECF co-CEO



Morten Kabell
ECF co-CEO

2. Executive summary

The ultimate goal of this Guide is to support authorities responsible for drafting programming documents and citizens interested in dynamic and sustainable development of their regions on their way to obtain substantial European funding for excellent and beneficial cycling investments.

2021 marks the beginning of a new 7-year financial period in the European Union, called the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). After the unprecedented crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU will focus now on the economic recovery without losing sight of the need to protect citizens' health and to pursue ambitious Green Deal objectives. The new 2021–2027 MFF and regulations concerning the European Structural and Investment Funds are based on these very principles.

The ECF believes that bold and visionary investments in cycling transport and tourism are the best way to achieve the above goals and trigger dynamic economic growth of regions, while respecting the natural environment as well as health and well-being of citizens. This belief is based on many years of field experience, hard economic data and scientific research on the health and environmental benefits of active and sustainable mobility.

To fully confirm this thesis, Chapter 3 will outline the significance of cycling in the new budget perspective and Chapter 4 will review the general benefits from cycle-related investments.

Chapter 5 will discuss the importance of cycling for the implementation of the European Commission's country-specific recommendations and for fulfilling the obligations of the National Climate and Energy Plans, and shows an analysis of the external costs of motorized transport as presented in the 2020 European Semester country reports. Chapter 6 will describe how the EU regulations translate to specific investments.

Chapter 7 will provide the collection of inspiring investments funded through ERDF and finally, in Chapter 8 we present a selection of good practice provisions included in programming documents of the European countries who succeeded in obtaining significant amounts of European funds for cycling investments in the 2014–2020 financial period.

The exemplary wordings of pro-cycling objectives included in successful programming documents can be used directly or can serve as a source of inspiration for even bolder projects and objectives by others.



3. The significance of cycling for the new budget perspective 2021 – 2027

3.1. The priorities for the new budget

The 2021–2027 EU budget has been the subject of heated disputes among European policymakers. The amount, sources of financing and the division of funds between various EU programs were debated. Only two principles remained undisputed: that the new EU financial policy must tackle unprecedented health and economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and that it must contribute towards making Europe a pioneer in responsible and sustainable transformation so that it can meet the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal.

In order to achieve these aims, it was decided that at least 30% of the EU budget must be allocated to climate policies. Additionally, projects that will improve the health of European citizens and protect them from the spread of the COVID-19 virus will be favoured. These are key criteria which must be taken into account by all Member States who want to benefit fully from a new budget deal.

Cycling is a perfect solution for both these concerns. First, it is the only means of transport whose investments can be recorded a full 100% in support both of climate change as well as environmental objectives.¹ These are two indicators that enable the European Commission to monitor whether the necessary thresholds, i.e. a minimum of at least 30% investments in climate protection, are respected by the beneficiaries. In other words: Significant EU investments in cycling allow countries and regions to meet environment-and climate friendly spending thresholds, leaving the remaining money for other vital projects outside these policy areas.

Second, cycling is one of the safest means of transport during the COVID-19 pandemic. It almost automatically keeps you at the minimum physical distance recommended by virologists. Furthermore, it has an excellent track record of preventing physical and mental illnesses², which have been taking an increasing toll through periods of recurrent lockdowns, social restrictions and isolation.

¹ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument; Annex 1; point 075, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A375%3AFIN>.

² N. Panozzo, *Keep Cycling during the Coronavirus Outbreak*, March 27th, 2020, available to: <https://ecf.com/news-and-events/news/keep-cycling-during-coronavirus-outbreak>.

COVID-19 and Transport Policy

The pandemic has drastically changed mobility patterns. Some of these changes are transitory but others will have long effects and shape the future of urban transport, becoming the “new normal”. There is no doubt that European regions have to react to this revolution and influence its development by acting swiftly to reinforce positive trends (such as calmed motorized traffic and increased interest in active mobility, including cycling) and mitigate negative ones (e.g. the loss of public transport ridership).

Many European cities have already taken up this challenge. As many as a third of Europe's capitals, including Brussels, Rome and Berlin, decided to close road sections to car traffic or reallocate road space in order to create temporary bicycle paths instead. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 more than 2.300 km of new pop-up bike lines and other pro-cycling measures have been announced across Europe, committing new investments of more than 1 billion EUR.³ This demonstrates how urgently European cities wish to see investments in active and sustainable mobility. The mobility schemes must be rethought regarding our future in light of COVID-19 and the lasting solution must be worked out to answer the major shift in working environment, school mobility, urban logistics and modal choices.

Both states and regions should focus their efforts on keeping the strategic transport documents, like demand analysis, traffic forecasts, sustainable urban mobility plans, and cycling strategies up-to-date and on considering how ERDF funding can support the implementation of their new transport policies which will accommodate the ongoing transformations.

3.2. EU funding programmes 2021 – 2027

This Guide is primarily focused on obtaining funds for bicycle investments from the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. However, these are not the only sources of funding that can be used for developing zero-emission transport infrastructure in regions. Below we present the proposed breakdown of the EU resources for the 2021–2027 financial period. We have selected the programmes which in our opinion can be used to get funds for cycle projects. Please note that these numbers can still change, as the legislative process to adopt the new EU budget has not concluded yet.

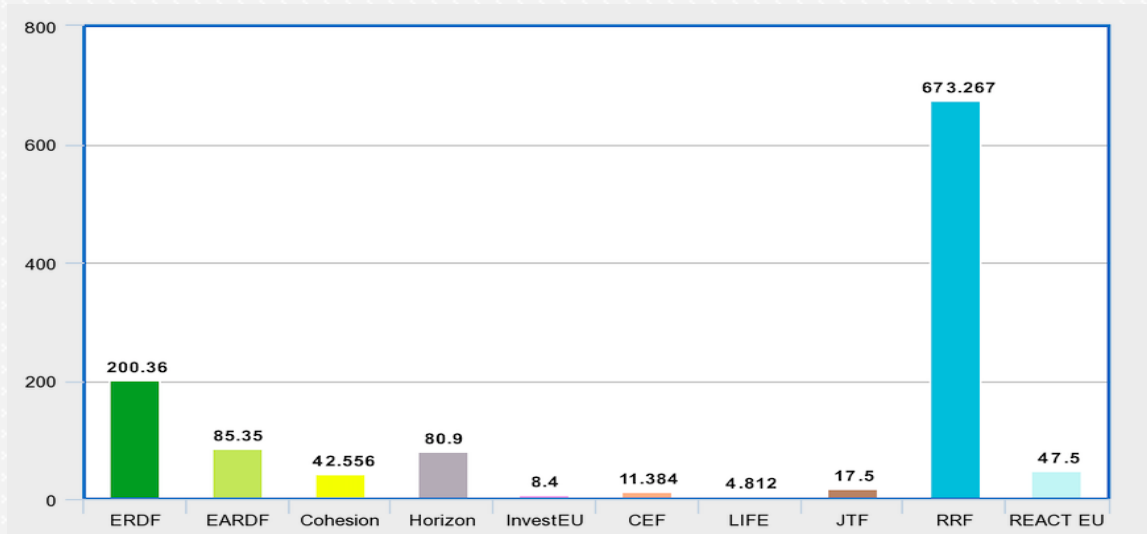


Chart 1: Comparison of the budgets of selected EU programmes.

³ COVID-19 Cycling Measures Tracker, ECF, October 2020, available at: <https://ecf.com/dashboard>.

Programme		Purpose	2018 prices (in million EUR)
European Regional Development Fund		Development and structural adjustment of regional economies	200,360
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development		Vibrancy and economic viability of rural communities.	85,350
Cohesion Fund		Reducing economic and social disparities among EU countries and promoting sustainable development.	42,556
Of which contribution to the Connecting Europe Facility - Transport			10,000
Horizon Europe		Research and innovation.	80,900
InvestEU Fund		Sustainable infrastructure; Research, innovation and digitization; Small and medium-size enterprises; Social investments and skills Strategic European investments.	8,400
Connecting Europe Facility - Transport		Investments in building new transport infrastructure in Europe along the TEN-T (Trans-European Network – Transport) or rehabilitating and upgrading the existing one.	11,384
LIFE		Environment and climate action.	4,812
Just Transition Fund		Support for EU regions most affected by the transition to a low carbon economy.	17.500
Next Generation EU	Recovery and Resilience Facility	Support for EU countries to come out of the economic crisis.	673,267
	REACT EU	Additional resources for ERDF, European Social Funds and European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived.	47,500

Table 1: Comparison of the budgets of selected EU programmes

A few words on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Few countries currently use the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as a source of funding for cycling investments. But in fact, it can be used for substantial infrastructure cycling projects located on or crossing rural areas. For example, France used the EAFRD to build a network of several hundred kilometres of tourist bicycle routes, which are now a dynamically growing source of income for local agritourism, gastronomy and other accompanying services.⁴ An excellent example of this is the Burgundy Vineyards cycling route. Funds from the EAFRD can also be allocated to the construction of bicycle parking lots at local railway stations, safe bicycle paths connecting suburban municipalities with the metropolis, small-scale tourist routes in naturally valuable areas, mountain bike trails and many more!

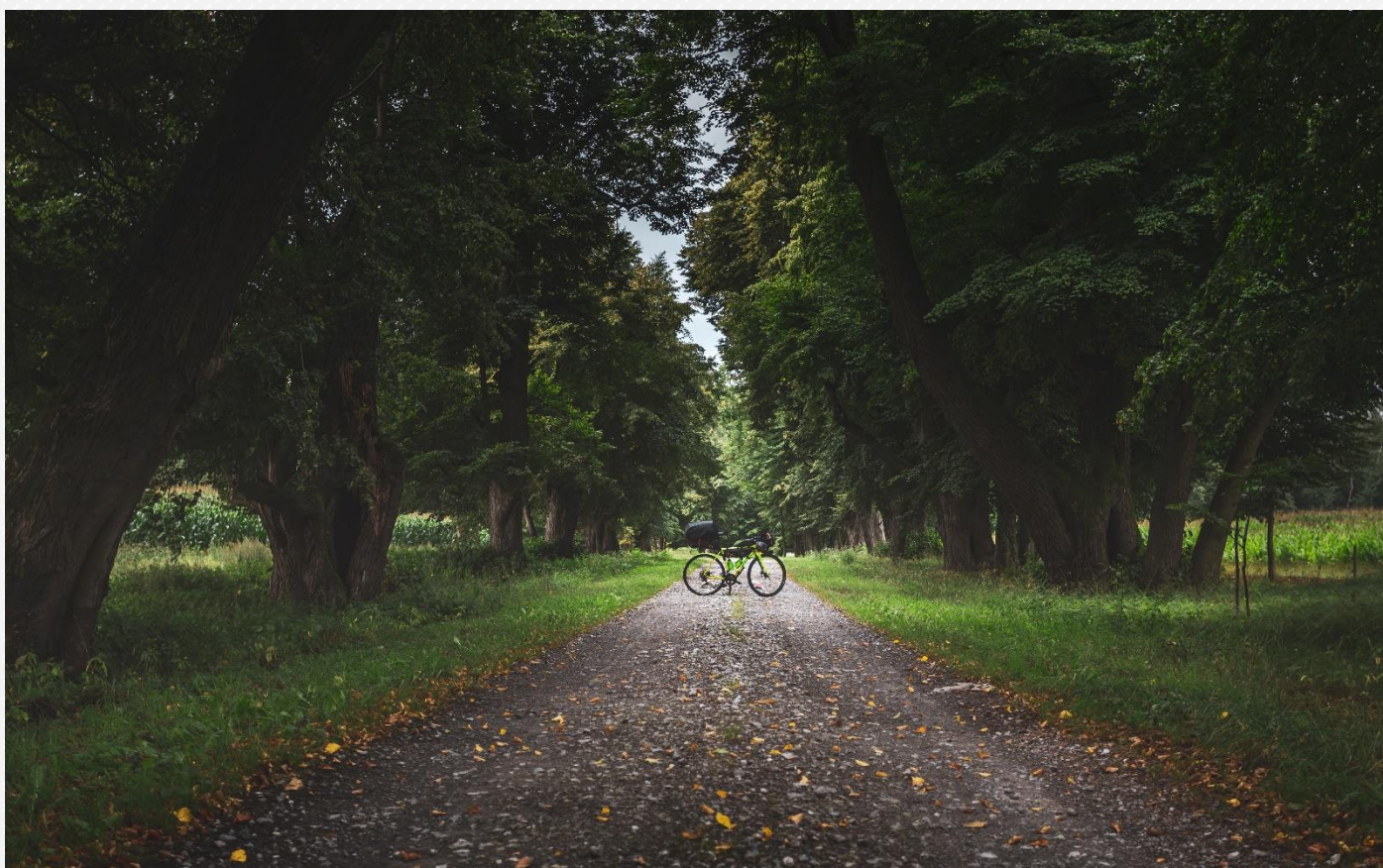
⁴ Programme Opérationnel FEDER-FSE Bourgogne 2014-2020, available at: https://www.europe-bfc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Programme_2014FR16M0OP014_7_1_fr.pdf.

3.3. The Recovery and Resilience Facility

EUR 750 billion will be allocated to Member States through grants and loans in the Next Generation EU to address the economic crisis caused by the Corona crisis. The largest single fund is the Recovery and Resilience Fund with a budget of EUR 672.5 billion. At least 37% of these investments must be used to support climate action.

On 17 September 2020, the European Commission issued a Communication and guidance to Member States on how to spend the money through the national recovery plans. 70% needs to be committed by 2022, the remaining 30% by the end of 2023. The national draft recovery and resilience plans can be submitted from 15 October 2020 onwards and the final plans have to be agreed with the European Commission by 30 April 2021.

The European Commission does not set any sector-specific targets. However, the Communication lists 7 'flagship projects', including on 'recharge und refuel'. Cycling was not explicitly mentioned but could fall under the wider framework of 'sustainable and smart mobility'.⁵



⁵Investing in sustainable mobility can also strongly support the recovery. Measures addressing transport can bring significant greenhouse gas emission reductions and improvements to air quality, while fostering productivity growth. In designing their national recovery and resilience plans, Member States should consider such measures as investing in public transport and in infrastructure that supports the shift towards more sustainable and smart mobility, including seamless and efficient European multimodal networks as well as upgrading Trans-European Transport Network networks for passengers and freight. ...], in: COM(2020) 575 final The Communication on "Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition: Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people" COM(2020) 562 final makes a specific reference to cycling.

4. General benefits from cycling-related investments

Current levels of cycling produce benefits of 150 billion EUR per year for the EU Member States. More than 90 billion EUR of these benefits are positive externalities for the environment, public health and the mobility system. In comparison, a recent study by the European Commission estimated the negative externalities, i.e. the costs for the environment, health and mobility, of motorised road transport at 800 billion EUR per year.⁶ Investments in cycle projects also have very advantageous benefit-cost ratios and are excellent value for money. About 650,000 jobs are associated with the cycling economy.⁷

IN A NUTSHELL



150,000,000,000

Cycling contribution to European economy per year (in Euro)



5.5%

Expected annual growth rate of the bicycle market through 2022



650,000

Jobs in Europe that are currently associated with the cycling economy



50%

Recommended increase of bicycle usage by 2030

The benefits of cycling appear not only in specific, isolated fields like transport or environmental policy, but also in many other areas where the EU has competences, such as industrial policy, employment, tourism, public health and social affairs. Most European countries still have a lot of potential to reach higher levels of cycling. To increase the number of people cycling and decrease the negative externalities of motorised road transport, we need not only an integrated European policy framework, but also adequate funding.

The aggregated financial benefits from cycling for all the EU Member States, including Italy, are presented below. Full details are provided in the annex at the end of the guide.

⁶ Handbook on the external costs of transport, European Commission, January 2019, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/studies/internalisation-handbook-isbn-978-92-79-96917-1.pdf>.

⁷ The benefits of cycling. Unlocking their potential for Europe, ECF, December 2018, available at: <https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/TheBenefitsOfCycling2018.pdf>.

Which benefits can we measure today?

Benefit	Estimated Value (billion euros)
CO2 emissions savings	0.6 – 5.6
Reduction of air pollution	0.435
Reduction of noise pollution	0.3
Fuel savings	4.0
Longer and healthier lives	73
Less sickness absence at the workplace	5
Bicycle market	13,2
Cycle tourism	44
Easing of road congestion	6,8
Saving on construction and maintenance costs for road infrastructure for motorised vehicles	2,9
Total annual benefits	150 - 155 bn euros

Table 2: (source: *The benefits of cycling. Unlocking their potential for Europe*⁸)

⁸ Ibid. p. 4.

5. Country specific evaluation: Italy

Substantial investments in cycling bring not only the above-mentioned benefits. They are also an excellent response to the specific challenges faced by Italy. To show how the development of cycling may contribute towards addressing Italy's specific economic and environmental problems, we screened three important kinds of documents:

 **2020 European Semester Country Reports**

 **2020 European Semester Country Specific Recommendations**

 **National Energy and Climate Plans**

The obligations and recommendations included in these documents have a significant impact on the structure of expenditure from EU funds in the Member States.

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23%

Share of greenhouse gas emissions caused by road traffic



6.8%

Share of national GDP lost on negative transport externalities



55%

Emissions reduction by 2030 promised in the National Energy and Climate Plan



35

Number of urban sustainable mobility plans approved at the end of 2019

5.1. 2020 European Semester Country Reports

Annual country reports, prepared by the European Commission (EC), cover all areas of macroeconomic or social importance and take stock of the country's budgetary situation. They assess the progress made by each EU country in addressing the issues identified in the previous year's EU recommendations. The country reports also contribute to the monitoring of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the EC, the new aim of the European community – competitive sustainability – fully reflects the ambition of the Green Deal and rests on four dimensions: environmental sustainability, productivity gains, fairness and macroeconomic stability. An approach that unites these four dimensions will lead to solutions that ensure the economy works for people and the planet. The assessments presented in country reports should help to ensure the translation of these objectives into concrete policies at Member States' level.

Country report – Italy

The following problems have been identified by the European Commission as the main obstacles for effective and sustainable development of Italy:

- 🚲 Sustainability-related reforms and investment represent an opportunity for Italy. It is on track to reach its 2020 climate and energy targets, although more efforts are needed for longer-term goals. Transport emissions have increased strongly over the last five years and constitutes a key challenge for reaching the 2030 target. On the other hand, air quality, sustainable mobility, climate adaptation, prevention of hydrogeological and seismic risks, and water and waste management also remain challenges.⁹
- 🚲 Three infringements are open for air pollution against Italy. It is estimated that 3.3% of the Italian population (2.0 million inhabitants) lives in areas where EU air quality standards are exceeded. Particularly severe concerns are raised about significant negative health impacts of fine particulate matter levels but the health burden (in terms of years of life lost) for other indicators (O3, NO2) is also above the EU average. Air pollution also affects soils, vegetation surfaces and waters, with the Po Valley having some of the highest exceedances in 2016. Decarbonising transport is key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that the cost of transport externalities amounted to 6.8% of Italy's GDP in 2016. In 2017, transport accounted for 23% of these emissions, due to road traffic (over 80 % of trips made by private car) and inefficient combustion.¹⁰

The following solutions have been recognized by the EC as effective tools to address these challenges:

- 🚲 Improving energy efficiency in the building sector, promoting sustainable transport, circular economy in lagging regions and climate risk prevention is key for Italy's green transition. Investments in energy efficiency in (residential) real estate are needed to achieve climate change targets. Investment in sustainable transport can contribute to reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality.¹¹
- 🚲 There is a potential for developing sustainable urban mobility. Italy has started adopting urban sustainable mobility plans (PUMS). Their approval by October 2020 is a pre-requisite for accessing national funds and loans. By the end of 2019, 35 PUMS were approved (with only two metropolitan cities — Bologna and Genoa), 35 were finalised but not yet approved and 88 were under preparation.¹²

ECF RECOMMENDATION

⁹ 2020 European Semester: Country Report – Italy, p. 6, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1584543810241&uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0511>

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 60.

¹² Ibid., p. 62.

Remember that you can use the above analysis as a part of a diagnosis which should be included in your 2021-2027 Partnership Agreement with the European Union and will justify your investments plan.

Keep in mind that the challenges highlighted by the European Commission can be addressed through significant and continuous investments in cycling projects.

5.2. 2020 European semester country-specific recommendations

Based on the country reports, the Commission provides each country with a set of country-specific recommendations (CSRs), which are then approved by the European Council. CSRs focus on what can realistically be achieved over the next 12-18 months. In general, the recommendations adapt priorities identified at the EU level to the national level and provide policy guidance tailored to each EU country on how to boost growth, while maintaining sound public finances.

In this year's CSRs, the EC focused on two central areas. First, it emphasized that Member States have to focus on the measures to restart economic activity in a safe way. Second, it noted that in restarting the economy, Member States should concentrate on a recovery strategy that sets the path for the green and digital transition in line with the European Green Deal.

CSRs are much more concise documents than country reports. They do not provide their addressees with extensive analysis of socioeconomic situations. Instead, they include a few general guidelines, leaving the states relatively free to choose the means of their implementation.

This does not mean, however, that states can disregard the commission's instructions. On the contrary, the implementation of CSRs is listed as one of the main criteria for awarding European funds. This does not mean, however, that states can disregard the commission's instructions. On the contrary, the implementation of CSR is listed as one of the main criteria for awarding European funds.

Country Specific Recommendations - Italy

In 2020 the EC made the following recommendations for Italy:

- 🚲 Italy should focus investment on the green and digital transition, in particular on clean and efficient production and use of energy, research and innovation, sustainable public transport, waste and water management as well as reinforced digital infrastructure to ensure the provision of essential services (Point 3).¹³
- 🚲 Investment in support of the green transition will be particularly important to support recovery and increase future resilience. (...) Green deal investments are also key for reducing the impact on human health from air pollution in Italian cities, especially in the Po Basin. For instance, implementing sustainable mobility initiatives, such as renewal of local public buses, represents an example to address both congestion and air pollution. (...) Addressing environmental and climate change challenges, such as hydrological risks, sustainable urban mobility, energy efficiency, circular economy and industrial transformation, represent an opportunity to improve productivity while avoiding unsustainable practices. At the same time, investing into such projects can contribute to creating jobs and sustaining the post-crisis recovery (Recital 21).¹⁴

¹³ 2020 European Semester: Country-Specific Recommendations – Italy, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1591720698631&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0512>.

¹⁴ Ibid

ECF OPINION

It follows from the above recommendations that all projects involving investments in cycling infrastructure should be more than welcome by the EC, which is entitled to evaluate Member States' programming documents regarding the allocation of funds from the EU programmes.

5.3. National Energy and Climate Plans

Member States recently had to submit their final National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) which will be key reference documents for implementing climate and energy policies in the Member States, including elements of macro-economic relevance that are monitored in the European Semester.

The system is built on a so called 'iterative process' between each Member States and the Commission. This means that if the Commission sees that a country has not pledged high enough contributions in its final NECP (or update) to deliver towards the EU targets, or if at any (check) point in time a country is falling off track in delivering towards those targets, it can issue recommendations to the Member State and ask them to get back on track.¹⁵

The final NECPs were submitted against the overall EU Energy and Climate Target 2030 of reducing CO2 emissions by 40% compared to 1990. However, as part of the European Green Deal, on 16 September 2020 the European Commission announced to raise the GHG emission reduction target 2030 from minus 40% to minus 55%. This target still has to be confirmed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, however it is very likely that Member States will have to go back to the drawing board and bring their NECPs in line with a new 2030 target. This also means new opportunities for cycling.

National Energy and Climate Plan - Italy

In its NECP, Italy has made following commitments related to cycling:

- 🚲 To launch a program for promotion of alternative mobility which puts in place instruments for encouraging:
 - development of mobility for cyclists through cycle paths
 - promotion of shared mobility (bike, car and motorbike sharing with low or zero emissions)
 - integration between sustainable mobility services (for example, parking structures for bicycles or car and bike sharing services close to public transport stops) and interchange parking.¹⁶

ECF RECOMMENDATION

All of the goals set out in your NECP can be co-funded through the EU funds. ECF advises to include theming documents.

¹⁵ National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), Climate Action Network Europe, available at: <http://www.caneurope.org/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps>.

¹⁶ Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan – Italy, p. 188, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/it_final_necp_main_en.pdf



6. From EU Regulation to specific investments: the essentials

Understanding the benefits of cycling investments and having a bold future-oriented mobility vision in place for your state or region are keys to success. But equally important is to understand process and the ability to translate this vision into the specific provisions in your programming documents. Only in this way you can secure the EU funds necessary to turn your plans into reality.

Below, we outline the process starting from the EU regulations all the way down to the specific investments. First, we present the most important information about the new ERDF and the Cohesion Fund regulations. Then, we provide an overview of the structure of programming documents in which Member States and Regions declare how they want to spend resources from European funds.

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30%

Minimum share of the European Regional Development Fund that must be invested in climate objectives



2,041 billion

Estimated amount of funds allocated to cycling in operational programmes for the 2014-2020 period (in Euro)

6.1. Revision of the relevant EU Regulations

Common Provisions Regulations

According to the European Commission, the fragmentation of the rules governing the various EU funds implemented in partnership with the Member States has overcomplicated the work of the authorities managing programmes and discouraged businesses and entrepreneurs from applying for different sources of the EU funding.¹⁷ This prompted the Commission to develop the common regulative framework covering the most important EU funds. The new regulation is called the Common Provisions

¹⁷ Common Provisions Regulation for the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument. Legislative Train Schedule, available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-new-boost-for-jobs-growth-and-investment/file-mff-common-provisions-regulation>.

Regulation applying for the ERDF, European Social Fund+, the Cohesion Fund, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Asylum and Migration Fund, Internal Security Fund, Border Management and Visa Instrument.

What is especially important is that the CPR establishes the coefficient for the calculation of support for climate change and environment objectives. Cycling investments are 100% compliant with both these goals. The coefficients are used by the EC to track Member States' progress towards the fulfilment of Green Deal obligations.

Regulation on the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund

Crucially, the new ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation states that at least 30% of the ERDF and 37% of the Cohesion Fund must be devoted to climate objectives.

Additionally, the Regulation sets five new policy objectives (PO) for the ERDF resources:

- 🚲 A smarter Europe through innovation, digitisation, industrial change and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (PO 1), which includes:
 - (i) enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies;
 - (ii) reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments;
 - (iii) enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs and
 - (iv) developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship;
- 🚲 a greener, low-carbon Europe, investing in energy transition, renewable energy and the fight against climate change (PO 2), which includes:
 - (i) promoting energy efficiency measures;
 - (ii) promoting renewable energy;
 - (iii) developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level;
 - (iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;
 - (v) promoting sustainable water management;
 - (vi) promoting the transition to a circular economy;
 - (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution;
- 🚲 a more connected Europe with strategic transport and digital communication networks (PO 3), which includes:
 - (i) enhancing digital connectivity;
 - (ii) developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal TEN-T;
 - (iii) developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TENT and cross-border mobility;
 - (iv) promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility;
- 🚲 a more social Europe, which will support quality jobs, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to health care (PO 4), which includes:
 - (i) enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure;
 - (ii) improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure;
 - (iii) increasing the socioeconomic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;
 - (iv) ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care;
- 🚲 and a Europe closer to citizens, which will support locally driven development strategies and sustainable urban development across the European Union (PO 5), which includes:

- (i) fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas;
- (ii) fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development.

According to the Regulation, Member States shall allocate between 35% and 85% (depending on the level of gross national income) of their total ERDF resources under priorities other than for technical assistance to PO 1 and PO 2, and at least between 30% to 60% to PO 1. Thus, it is clear that including the planned investment under one of these priorities creates better opportunity of obtaining necessary funding.

While the European Commission proposed to include investments in promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility under the PO 3, the European Parliament and European Council have both put forward an amendment according to which this sub-objective should be moved up to PO 2. This could result in considerably more investments in this area. In the coming weeks we should find out whether the amendment was adopted.

It is also worth mentioning that the Annex I to the ERDF regulation includes dedicated cycling infrastructure supported as one of the output indicators and the number of annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure as the results indicator for the ERDF.¹⁸

6.2. Overview of programming documents

Of all the programming documents, the Partnership Agreement is the most important one. Partnership Agreements (PAs) are negotiated and signed between the European Commission and EU Member States. These are strategic plans outlining each country's goals and investment priorities and setting out the use of funding under the five European Structural and Investment Funds.

Based on Partnership Agreements agreed and signed between the European Commission and each Member State, ministries or regions work on operational programmes. These are detailed plans in which the decision-makers set out how money from the European funds will be spent during the programming period. They can be drawn up for a specific region or a country-wide thematic goal (e.g. Environment). For the European Territorial Cooperation goal, cross-border or interregional operational programmes are drawn up. In other words, operational programmes break down the overarching strategic objectives agreed in the Partnership Agreement into investment priorities, specific objectives and further into concrete actions. The equivalent of operational programmes for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development are rural development programmes.

The graphic on the next page illustrates this process for an example of the ERDF:

¹⁸ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (COM(2018) 372 final), Annex, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:8d2f7140-6375-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

The European Regional Development Fund Regulation

A legal act containing conditions and setting objectives of financial support for the development and structural adjustment of regional economies.



27 Partnership Agreements

The financial contracts of each Member State with the European Union.



200+ Operational Programmes / Rural Development Programmes

The translation of general objectives set down in the partnership agreement to specific thematic or regional policies. The decision on the number and type of programmes is made by each Member State itself.



Thousands of Calls for Projects

Calls for contractors for the implementation of the objectives of operational or rural development programmes.

EUROPEAN FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR CYCLING IN THE 2014-2020 FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

In the graphic on the next page you can see how many EU funds approximately were available for cycling in each Member State in the 2014 – 2020 EU budget edition, according to ECF analysis of more than 200 operational programmes ECF analysis also shows that explicit references to cycling objectives in programming documents are the best guarantee of securing necessary resources for cycling-related investments.

Country	Estimated amount of funding available (€ million) based on:			Total
	Explicit references	Implicit references	Indirect references	
Austria	0.0	2.6	0.0	2.6
Belgium	11.4	0.0	0.0	11.4
Bulgaria	40.0	85.7	4.6	130.3
Croatia	0.0	30.0	0.0	30.0
Cyprus	0.0	7.0	0.0	7.0
Czech Republic	20.0	0.0	5.0	25.0
Denmark	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estonia	20.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Finland	0.0	6.0	0.0	6.0
France	196.8	25.2	22.3	244.4
Germany	123.4	6.2	1.8	131.4
Greece	5.5	18.7	7.0	31.2
Hungary	106.7	15.0	30.0	151.7
Ireland	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
Italy	44.5	12.0	31.5	88.0
Latvia	0.0	15.0	0.0	15.0
Lithuania	0.0	10.0	2.0	12.0
Luxembourg	2.5	0.0	0.0	2.5
Malta	0.0	3.2	0.0	3.2
Poland	403.7	0.0	0.0	403.7
Portugal	6.0	9.5	0.0	15.5
Romania	25.0	0.0	46.0	71.0
Slovakia	28.7	0.0	0.0	28.7
Slovenia	20.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Spain	135.5	96.2	15.7	247.4
Sweden	8.0	0.2	0.0	8.2
The Netherlands	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
United Kingdom	16.7	5.3	1.9	23.8
Summary	1,324.8	408.1	308.3	2,041.2

Table 3: Estimated amount of funds allocated to cycling in operational programmes¹⁹

References to cycling in the programming documents

Explicit references – “Cycling, bicycle, cycling infrastructure, cycling industry” are listed among the eligible actions. In the best cases, the operational programmes even include a dedicated cycling fund and/or the estimated outputs include cycling.

Example: “Implement projects concerning the construction of linear infrastructure of cycling transport”

¹⁹ *Cycling for Growth Using European Funds*, ECF, December 2014, p. 12, available at: https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/150626-Cycling-for-Growth-Using-European-Funds-for-Cycling_low-res.pdf.

Implicit references – Cycling-related measures are eligible under different headings, such as “sustainable transport / mobility, green infrastructure, green vehicles, soft mobility, urban transport, sustainable (transport) modes, multimodality, sustainable tourism”.

Examples: “Clean urban transport infrastructure and promotion”

Indirect reference – Covers situations where broader themes are mentioned, such as “land transportation, roads, tourism, SME development, training and campaign, vehicle industry”.

Example: “Investments for the accessibility to the local cultural heritage, which contributes to the valorisation of the local cultural heritage, to the promotion of the rural tourism”.

6.3. Investment needs

Besides the process from the EU regulation via a partnership agreement and operational programmes down to specific calls, it is also important to develop concrete projects that can be submitted in response to relevant calls of managing authorities.

For that you need to understand your investment needs. What is your ambition for cycle use and what does it take to increase it accordingly over a given period of time? What infrastructure do you have in place and where are the missing links and gaps in your network? And who will pay for it? Analysing your investment needs is crucial to align ambitions for increasing cycle use with resources needed and should be the starting point for developing individual projects.

In its final National Energy and Climate Plan, Austria set the target of increasing the mode share of cycling in the modal split from 7% to 15%. To that end, public authorities would need to invest 2.2 billion EUR in cycling from 2021–2030, primarily in infrastructure, with 20% of the investments to be financed by the national government and the remaining 80% by regional and local authorities. EU investments could contribute accordingly.

6.4. Programming documents and national cycling strategies

An increasing number of European countries have put in place and implemented national strategies on cycling. Most of these national strategies and/or action plans set clear activities and precise goals for the development of cycling at the national level.

In the first place, national cycling strategies allow national governments to set a clear framework for the development of cycling in their countries. This way, they can send the signal to regional and local authorities that cycling matters and that it should be taken into account in public policies. The framework set by national cycling strategies ideally refers to the coordination of cycling policies (vertically and horizontally between government authorities), the exchange of good practice, the capacity building for local and regional authorities, the co-funding for investments in cycling infrastructure and the funding of pilot projects, research and awareness-raising campaigns.

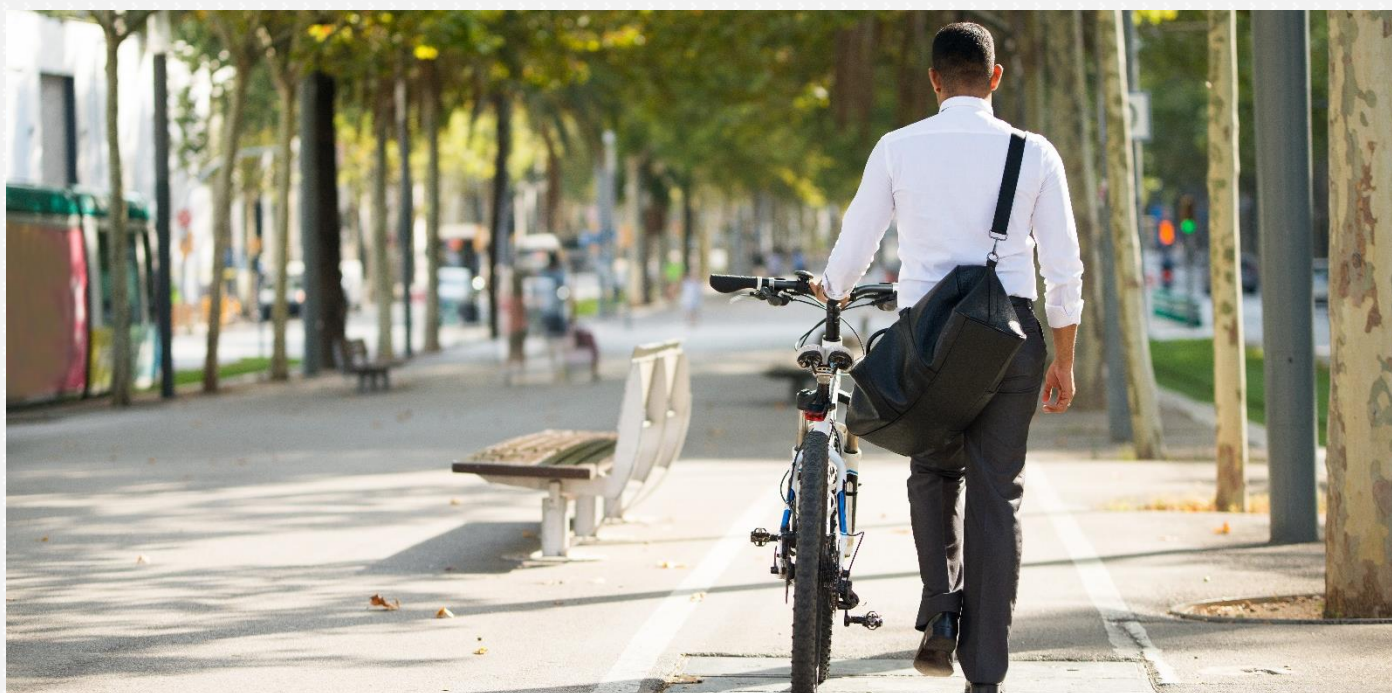
In addition to a general framework for the development of cycling, national cycling strategies enable the adoption of new legislative and fiscal frameworks at the national level. Particularly relevant areas are the highway code, taxation rates and fiscal incentives for commuting by bicycle. Finally, national cycling strategies are also a means to boost dynamics at the national level and in various cycling-related areas such as cycling tourism, intermodality, education or physical activity. Setting clear objectives,

in particular in terms of modal share, allows national authorities to mobilise the different stakeholders involved in the promotion of cycling.

Our analysis shows that having a good national or regional cycling strategy and relying on it in the process of creating programming documents is one of the factors that increase the effectiveness of states in applying for EU funds for bicycle investments. First, cycling strategies often include specific investment needs and projects which can easily be transferred to the programming documents. Second, they show European officials that planned investments are not isolated ad-hoc ideas but part of a larger strategy whose stages and final benefits are clear for the national decision-makers. Third, they guarantee that the implemented projects will make a real contribution to the long-term goals of countries and regions.

For all these reasons we always recommend for national authorities to develop their cycling strategies and use them in drafting their partnership agreements and operational programmes. The same can be said of other strategic documents like sustainable mobility plans, integrated territorial investments plans etc.

The Spanish region Andalusia, one of the main beneficiaries of EU funds for the development of bicycle infrastructure (estimated EUR 31 478 725.00), supported its application for ERDF resources for cycling investment, by mentioning in its operational programme that “these actions are framed in the Andalusian Bicycle Plan 2014-2020, the EuroVelo Network and in the corresponding Sustainable Mobility plans approved for the metropolitan area, and envisage autonomous, metropolitan and urban bike lane networks. Likewise, these actions are part of the 2020 Andalusia Energy Strategy.”²⁰



²⁰ Programa Operativo de Andalucía 2014-2020, p. 207, available at: <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/economiaconocimientoempresasyuniversidad/fondoseuropeosenandalucia/storage/operativos/documentos/6fcf10ef58a387851029f7cfd026f567.pdf>.

7. Good Practices and Great Inspirations

A. CYCLING INVESTMENTS

The best way to see how European funds can be used to make great cycling investments is to look at some good practice examples. Thousands of inspiring cycling projects have been implemented across Europe thanks to the support of the ERDF. The following section provides a detailed description of three such projects and a brief description of some other investments. Our examples come from different European countries, have different scale and require different amounts of funds. However, all of them contributed to the achievement of economic and climate goals of their regions.

ECF SUGGESTION

If you would like to share with us the example of successful cycling project from your region and wish to promote it across Europe – do not hesitate to contact us! We are happy to distribute the knowledge on good practice investments.

7.1. Urban Transport: Valencia Cycling Infrastructure (Spain)

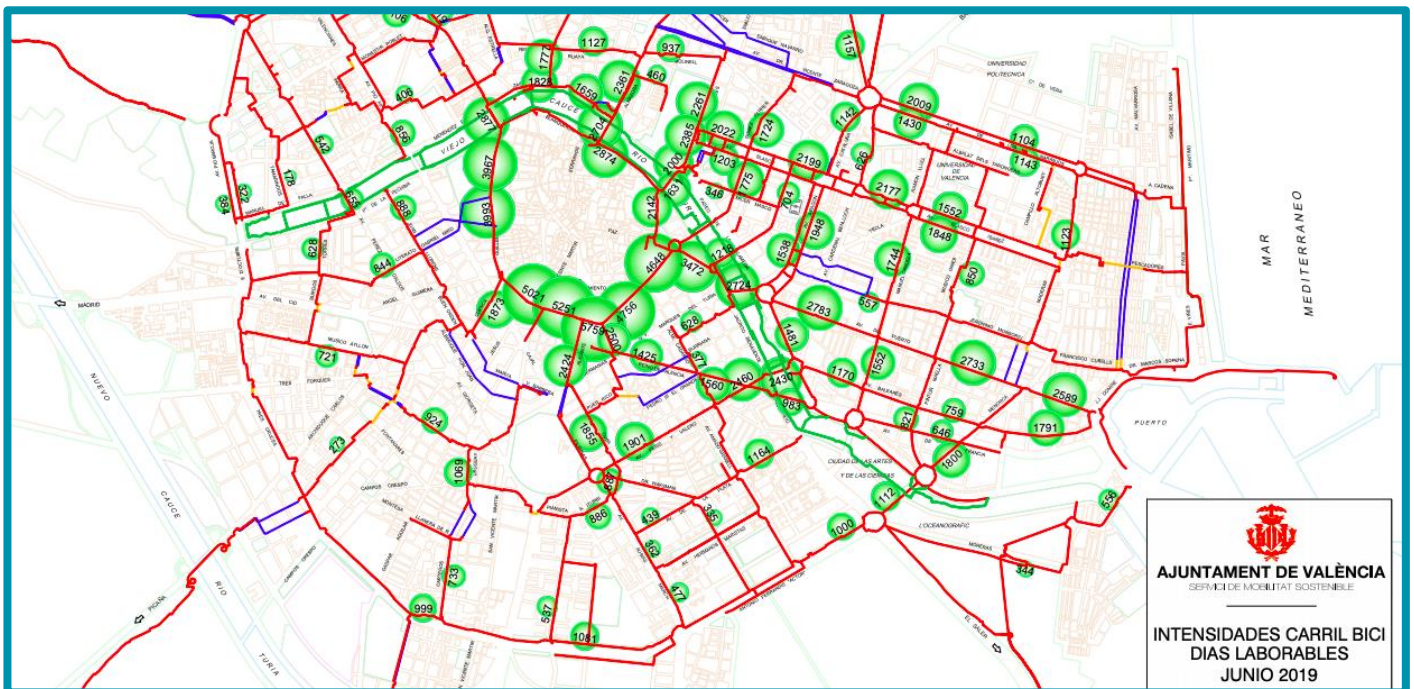
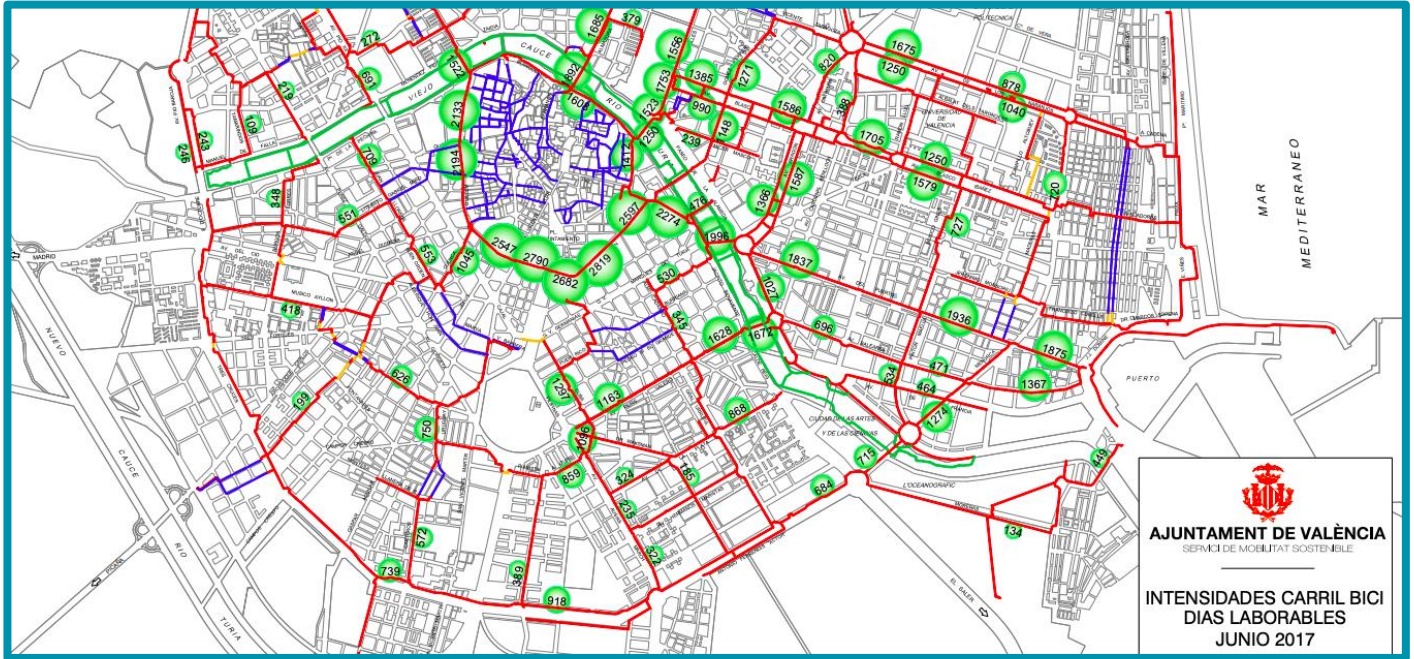
The experience of many Mediterranean cities shows that the provision of cycling infrastructure into the city centre is a great solution to many problems plaguing European metropolises, in particular traffic congestion. The construction of a dense network of various paths throughout the urban fabric in Valencia has led to an increase in the volume of daily cyclists and a substantial decrease in motorized traffic.

It is complex to establish a direct cause-effect relationship. However, the growth and excellent take-up of the Valencian cycle lanes coincides with a continued decrease in the volume of cars circulating through the city centre.

The debate on the usefulness of cycling paths in city centres is now taking place in many European metropolises. The example of Valencia seems to give a decisive answer: If cycling paths are built, people use them.²¹

²¹ Mohorte, Valencia ha logrado multiplicar su número de ciclistas. ¿Su receta? Simple: poner carriles bici, “Magnet”, November 15th 2018, available at: <https://magnet.xataka.com/en-diez-minutos/valencia-ha-logrado-multiplicar-su-numero-ciclistas-su-receta-simple-poner-carriles-bici>

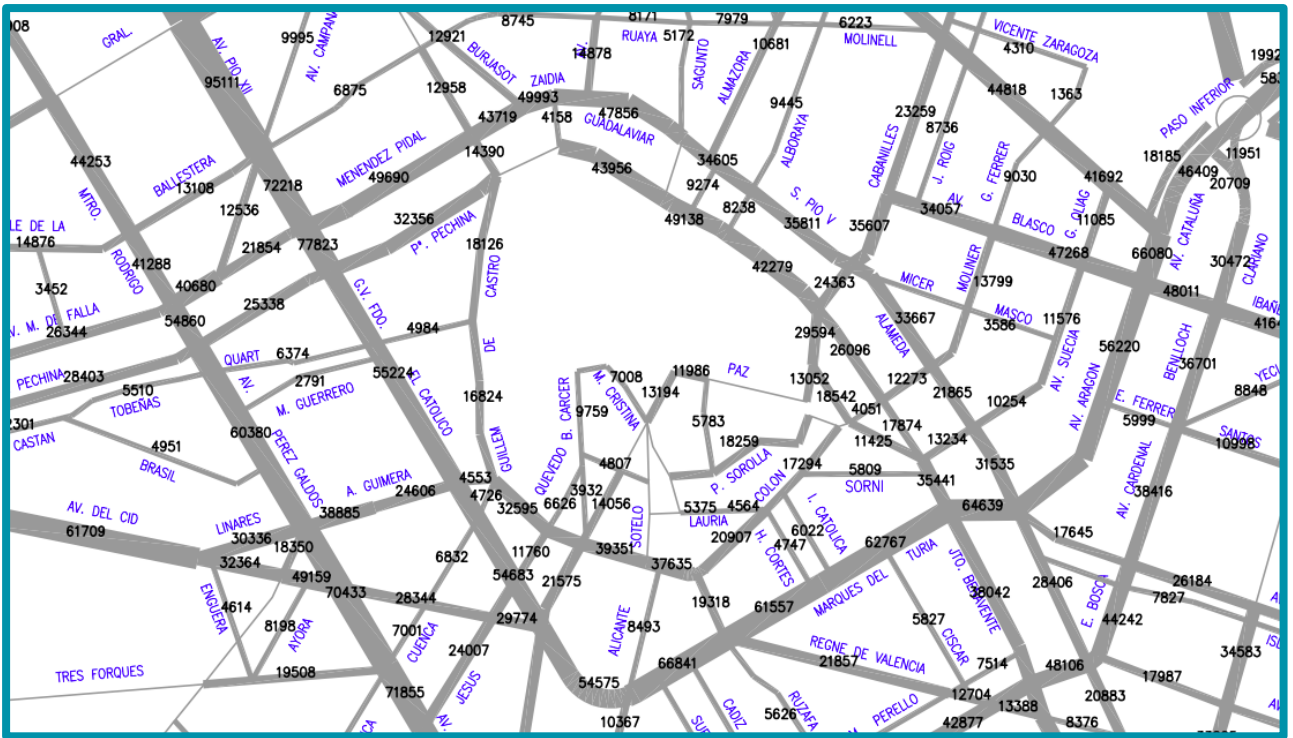
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?



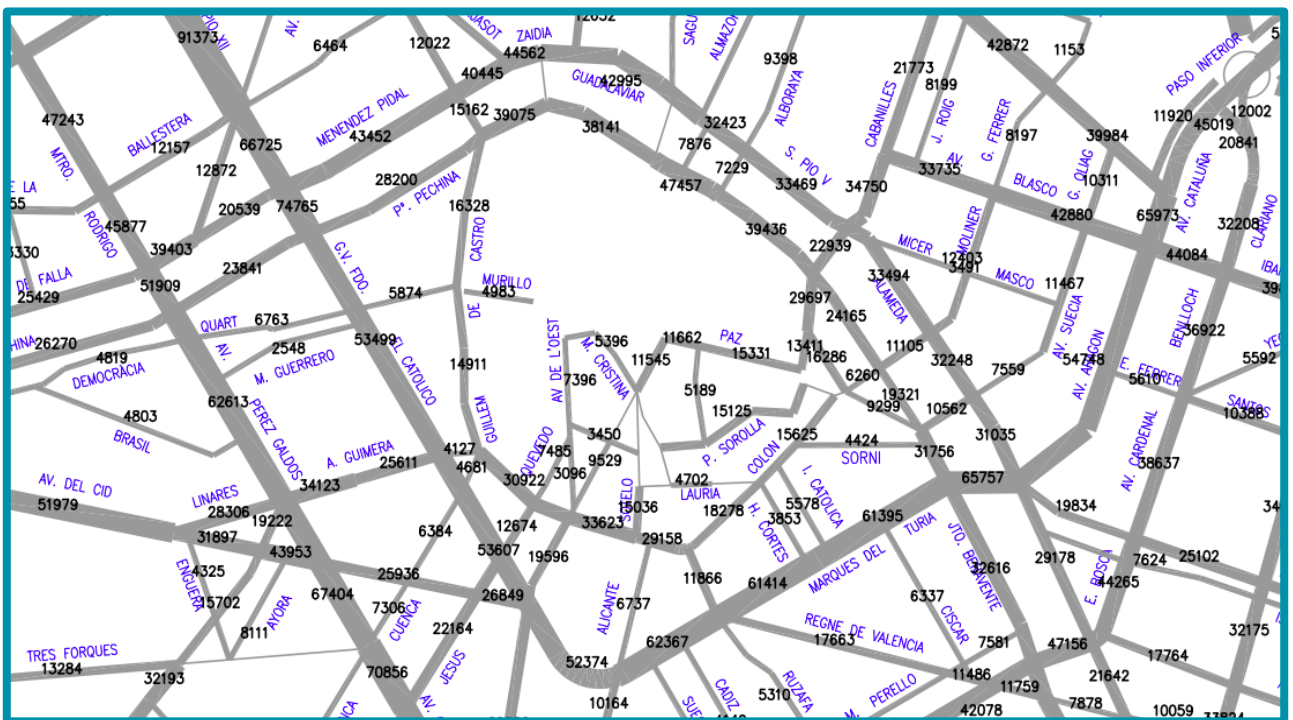
In just two years after the EU funds were used to build bicycle infrastructure in the centre of Valencia, the number of cyclists has doubled (picture above). At the same time, the analysis of car traffic shows that the number of motor vehicles on the roads has decreased by more or less the same value as the number of cyclists has increased (see next page).²²

²² Data available at:

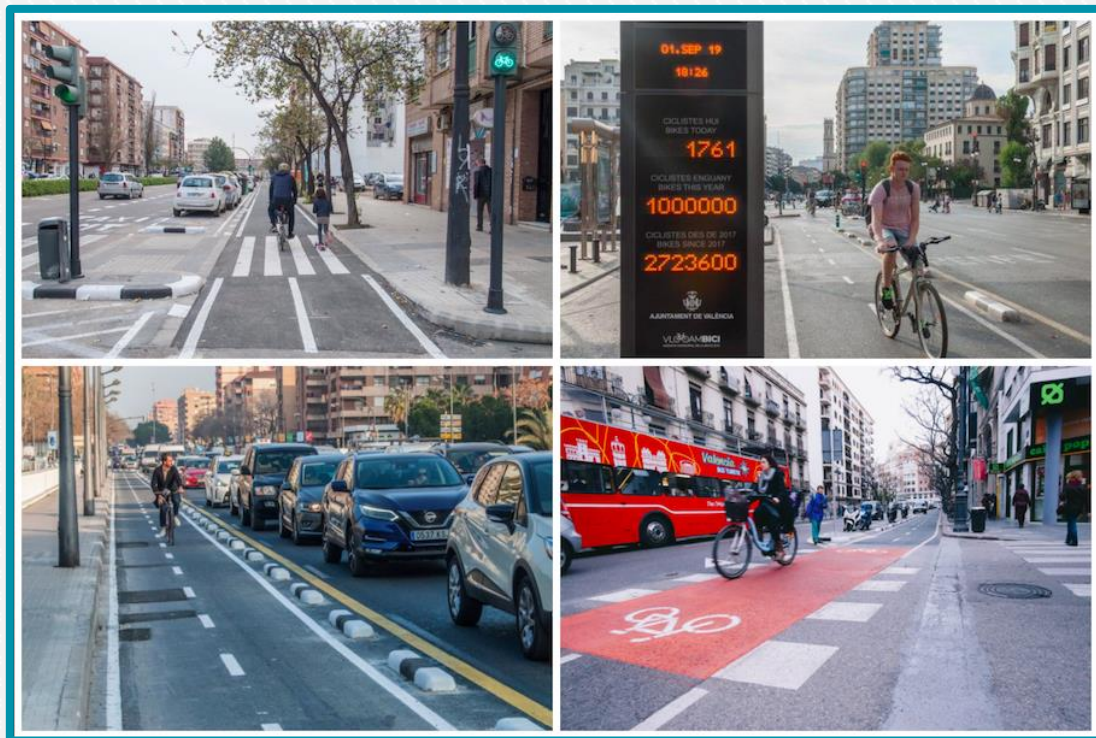
<http://www.valencia.es/ayuntamiento/trafico.nsf/fCategoriaVista?readForm&Vista=vCategoriaDescargas&Categoria=Sinca&titulo=Descargas&lang=1&nivel=7&expand=1&bdorigen=&idApoyn>



1 - June 2017



2 - June 2019



EU FUNDS IN PLAY

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES OF ERDF REGULATION

- 🚲 Favour the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors
- 🚲 Conserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ‘COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA’ 2014 – 2020, exemplary investments with amount of allocated funds

Construction of Constitución-Ronda Nord avenue bike path

ERDF	TOTAL
80,642 EUR	161,284 EUR

Construction of Avenida Maestro Rodrigo bike path

ERDF	TOTAL
143,136 EUR	286,273 EUR

Construction of Manuel Candela-Tomás de Montañana bike path

ERDF	TOTAL
221,264 EUR	442,529 EUR

Construction of Sancho Tello-Jerónimo Monsoriu bike path

ERDF	TOTAL
71,621 EUR	143,243 EUR

7.2. Provincial Network of Tourist Routes: Velo Małopolska (Poland)

Velo Małopolska is a network of high-quality cycle routes that stretch through the entire province to show tourists great natural and cultural heritage of the Małopolska region.

The Vistula River Cycle Route (which is 232 km long in the region) is the backbone of the network. The riverside cycle paths are increasingly popular among both road cyclists and less experienced travellers. The almost flat profile of the routes, the plethora of historical monuments close to the rivers and the experience of nature make riverside routes a perfect tourist product. The creators of Velo Vistula made sure that visitors can enjoy all of this travelling alongside the river.

Over 200 kilometres of mountain views are offered by another cycle route in the network, VeloDunajec. Built in accordance with the European standards, it has clear markings and numerous service points. It crosses the picturesque areas of the Dunajec valley, with views of several mountain ranges: the Tatras, Gorce Mountains, Beskids and Pieniny. The other routes in the network are, among others, VeloKrynica, VeloRaba, VeloNatura and VeloMetropolis, each of them exploring another part of region's rich heritage. The local government made sure that all the routes comply with EuroVelo standards, thanks to which VeloNatura is now the part of EuroVelo 11 East Europe Route and VeloMetropolis makes the section of EuroVelo4 Central Europe Route.

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Two things make VeloMałopolska a perfect example of large-scale bicycle investments. First, the scale of Małopolska in kilometers is 2–3 times longer than most other projects of this sort. According to local authorities, this centralized planning and spending on a large network has resulted in significant cost savings, as well as ensuring that the routes and signage are made to uniform standards.

Second, the Province wants to ensure that the bicycle infrastructure is integrated with the railway network, enabling tourists to move freely between sections of the route and to return conveniently to the starting point after the end of the trip. This feature makes VeloMałopolska a perfect example of multimodal planning.

Although the construction of the routes has not been completed yet, local authorities are already experiencing the benefits of the cycle network for their communities. Along the route, bicycle rentals and restaurants are being built, there is also a tourist offer profiled for cyclists, such as crossing or rafting the river with bicycles.



EU FUNDS IN PLAY

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES OF ERDF REGULATION

- 🚲 Favour the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME 'Małopolska' 2014–2020

Amount of Funds

The figures below show the amount of expenditure for September 2020. As the construction of the network is still ongoing, it is estimated that both the amount of funds obtained, and the funds spent will be finally approx. 70% higher than indicated below.

ERDF	TOTAL
19,289,000 EUR	29,164,456 EUR

7.3. Peri-Urban Cycle Connections: Fietssnelwegen (Belgium)

The potential of cycling transport is not limited to short sections. Cycle highways take cyclists quickly, safely and comfortably over longer distances to where they need to be. Flanders is developing 110 of these routes, together covering a network of 2,400 kilometres! Of the 110 routes, 61 are already in use.

A cycle highway is a mobility product that combines different types of infrastructure, such as cycle tracks or cycle streets, to provide a high-quality functional cycling connection. As the backbone of a cycle network, it connects cities and/or suburbs, residential areas and major (work) places.

The priority is for each cyclist to travel quickly and safely to their final destination. Characteristics of a cycle highway include: a limited number of stops, cyclists with priority where possible, a wide and comfortable surface and linear design, among others. Especially in combination with the growing number of e-bikes, cycle highway innovation is an effective way get commuters out of their cars.

According to Tom Dehaene, deputy for mobility in Flemish Brabant, the popularity of cycling highways rose rapidly during the coronavirus pandemic. Although travel to and from work has been reduced, the number of cyclists has not decreased, as experts advised all those working from home to exercise regularly. “In recent weeks, we registered almost a doubling of the number of cyclists at some counting points. The typical morning and evening rush hours disappeared from the graph and a cycling peak appeared in the early afternoon” – added Mr Dehaene.²³ This example supports the thesis that cycling is among the truly effective tools in the fight against the pandemic.



²³ Corona zorgt voor verdubbeling fietsers op fietssnelwegen, Vlaams-Brabant PERS, May 18th, 2020, available at: <https://pers.vlaamsbrabant.be/corona-zorgt-voor-verdubbeling-fietsers-op-fietssnelwegen>.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

A study commissioned by the Flemish institute for technological research (VITO) shows a cost-benefit ratio of bicycle highways of at 1:2–14²⁴. The researchers looked at the construction cost, the number of users, the external costs related to air pollution and traffic accidents, the positive impact of physical activity on health (less risk of cancer, diabetes, depression and dementia) and the resulting reduction in health care costs, assuming a 20-year lifespan for every bicycle highway.



Their conclusion is unambiguous: bicycle highways pay for themselves twice over in savings on health care and economic costs: “Even in the least favourable scenario (where only 600 cyclists use the bicycle highway every day), the gains from saved health costs amount to double the construction costs. In a favourable scenario (where 4,400 cyclists daily use the bicycle highway) the profit is even ten to fourteen times the investment. Even if the model assumes that the cyclists were not motorists before (and so they do not cause less CO2 emissions or less traffic jams), the profit remains greater than the cost”.

EU FUNDS IN PLAY

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES OF ERDF REGULATION

- 🚲 Favour the transition to a low-carbon economy in all sectors

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ‘Vlaanderen’ 2014 - 2020

EXEMPLARY INVESTMENTS WITH AMOUNT OF ALLOCATED FUNDS:

At the moment 1406km of the planned 2400km or 58% of the cycling network are in place, partly thanks to investments from ERDF

F105: Bicycle bridge over Kempisch Kanaal, Herentals (3)

ERDF:	TOTAL:
EUR 632 000	EUR 3 091 211

F7: Bicycle bridge over Volhardingslaan N35, Deinze (1)

ERDF:	TOTAL:
EUR 774 400	EUR 1 936 000

F24: Bicycle tunnel Tiensesteenweg, Leuven (2)

ERDF:	TOTAL:
EUR 660 000	EUR 4 000 000

²⁴ Buekers J., Dons E., Elen B., Int Panis L., *Health impact model for modal shift from car use to cycling or walking in Flanders: Application to two bicycle highways*, Journal of Transport & Health 2(4):549-562. The summary of the research available at: https://www.sport.be/cycling/nl/nieuws/article.html?Article_ID=750409



Investments planned (1), in construction (2) and ready to welcome cyclists (3)

OTHER EXAMPLES

You can find more information about the above projects, as well as additional examples of cycling investments funded through ERDF, on our website: ecf.com/***

8. Good Practices and Great Inspirations

B. PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS

This part of our Guide will highlight examples of wording of pro-cycling provisions used by selected Member States in their past programming documents. For your convenience we divided the examples into two main categories: 1) partnership agreements and 2) operational or regional development programmes.

Consider this collection as an inspiration and do not hesitate to include even more extensive and ambitious pro-cycling objectives into your programming documents.

8.1. Programming documents and national cycling strategies

A. Diagnosis

Below we present some examples of diagnostic observations, a necessary part of a Partnership Agreement (PA), which justifies investments in active mobility. Remember that country-specific reports, which we have looked at in the section 5.1. of this Guide, are one of the best sources of information for writing the diagnosis part of partnership agreement.

🚲 What proportion of pollution in your country / region is caused by transport?

- “Urban transport is a major source of emission of pollutants in Poland”.²⁵
- “The largest sectoral contributors to GHG emission in 2011 in Croatia were energy industries and the transport sector, followed by agriculture”.²⁶
- “The main sector in which the Slovak Republic has so far failed to stabilize the growth of a substantial volume of greenhouse gas emissions is the road transport sector due to the expansion of individual car transport, outdated public transport and insufficient use of non-motorized transport, especially bicycle transport. Since 1990, the share of transport emissions in total emissions has increased by 11.5%.”²⁷

🚲 What proportion of energy does it consume?

- “The transport sector is the largest consumer with 39.8% of total final energy consumption, mainly based on petroleum products, which is a determining factor in the high national energy dependence”.²⁸ (Spain)

²⁵ Programming of the 2014–2020 financial perspective - Partnership Agreement, p. 28, available at:

https://www.pois.gov.pl/media/9498/Partnership_Agreement.pdf

²⁶ Partnership Agreement. Republic of Croatia, p. 16, available at:

https://razvoj.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/EU%20fondovi/HR_PA_FINAL_ADOPTED_30_10_2014.pdf

²⁷ Partnerská dohoda SR na roky 2014 – 2020, p. 48, available at: <https://www.ia.gov.sk/data/files/partnerska-dohoda.pdf>

²⁸ Acuerdo de Asociación de España 2014-2020, p. 101, available at: https://www.dgfc.sepg.hacienda.gob.es/sitios/dgfc/es-ES/ipr/fcp1420/p/pa/Documents/20190215_AA_Espa%C3%B1a_2014_2020_Vdef.pdf

- “The largest sectoral contributors to the final energy consumption are the general consumption sectors, mainly households and services including public sector infrastructure, with 43% share and transport (34%), while the industry sector amounts to 17%”.²⁹ (Croatia)

🚲 What other problems could be combated through promotion of cycling?

- “Individual traffic congestion on the streets results with reduction of the speed of trips”.³⁰
- “The number of daily commuters [in Zagreb] (estimated at 80,000 workers plus 20,000 others) puts significant pressure on the existing infrastructure and raises the need for further development of a complex and sustainable urban transport system”.³¹
- “Increasing costs of transport of goods and persons and progressive degradation of road infrastructure”.³²
- “Low quality of life in urban and other residential areas”.³³

🚲 What are the main problems with existing cycling infrastructure?

- “[There is] an incomplete network of cycle paths and cycle routes”.³⁴
- “The urban transport network [in Split] of connections between urban and suburban areas contains gaps, limiting both everyday use and tourism development”.³⁵
- “[There are] breaks in national cycle route and greenways scheme, including seven European routes, which creates a link between urban areas and the countryside. In addition to their use by nearby residents, these cycle paths are also used by tourists, who generate significant economic spinoffs for the territories crossed”.³⁶
- “The use of bicycles for normal transport functions is far from reaching its potential. The length of cycle paths in cities is insufficient, individual bicycle routes are often unconnected and with frequent interruptions”.³⁷

B. Priority Objectives

Below, you can find the exemplary pro-cycling provisions which the selected Member States put into their partnership agreements for the years 2014-2020. You can use similar wording in your own programming documents or adjust them to your own needs.

As you can see your priorities can be formulated fairly broadly in partnership agreements. However, the more varied pro-cycling objectives you include into the partnership agreement, the easier it will be for ministries/regions to project specific investments in their operational programmes, rural development programmes and calls for projects. Having experience from the past budget editions, we can see that states which introduced numerous separate references to various fields of cycling investments, e.g. tourism, transport, safety, intramodality and innovation, managed to get and spend the most funds for extensive infrastructural projects.

🚲 Investment Priority 1 – strengthening research, technological development, and innovation

Under the new ERDF regulation, the provisions presented below could be included under Policy Objective 1: a smarter Europe through innovation, digitisation, industrial change and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

²⁹ Partnership Agreement. Republic of Croatia, p. 16

³⁰ Programming of the 2014–2020 financial perspective - Partnership Agreement - Poland, p. 28

³¹ Partnership Agreement. Republic of Croatia, p. 56

³² Programming of the 2014–2020 financial perspective - Partnership Agreement - Poland, p. 28

³³ Ibid., p. 49

³⁴ Partnerská dohoda SR na roky 2014 – 2020, p. 27

³⁵ Partnership Agreement. Republic of Croatia, p. 57

³⁶ Accord de partenariat avec la France - 2014-20, p. 63, available at: [180620-ap_france_vf.pdf](#)

³⁷ Partnerská dohoda SR na roky 2014 – 2020, p. 27

- “Promoting a transport system model based on sustainable mobility; integrating transport systems and applying new less polluting solutions”.³⁸

🚲 Investment Priority 4 – supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors

Under the new ERDF regulation, the provisions presented below could be included under Policy Objective 2: a greener, low-carbon Europe, investing in energy transition, renewable energy, and the fight against climate change.

- “Creating plans of sustainable transport to schools and workplaces, transferring, when feasible, to bicycle transport and developing necessary infrastructures”.³⁹
- “Reducing emissions from transport, including the use of alternative fuels such as CNG and electricity, and the promotion of alternative types of transport including the pedestrian and cycling ones”.⁴⁰
- “Improving air quality, in particular through supporting low-emission transport and soft mobility (especially walking and cycling)”.⁴¹
- “Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in urban areas by implementing sustainable urban mobility plans (low-carbon strategies in the case of the small cities), promoting investment in non-motorized mobility in all cities of Romania (cycling and walking, discouraging personal car use)”.⁴²

🚲 Investment Priority 6 – preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Under the new ERDF regulation, the provisions presented below could be included under Policy Objective 2: a greener, low-carbon Europe, investing in energy transition, renewable energy and the fight against climate change

- “Developing sustainable and quality tourism”.⁴³
- “Using the potential of tourism and leisure in natural areas and developing ecotourism “. ⁴⁴
- “Presenting new tourist products, around specific themes (hiking tourism, rural tourism, particularly agritourism, industrial heritage tourism, urban tourism, memory tourism) and innovative tourism experiences”.⁴⁵
- “Informing the population about environmental issues and promoting environmental activity of the population to stimulate the public’s interest in the protection of the environment and nature. In order to stimulate interest in nature, it is important to ensure that visiting nature does as little damage as possible to nature itself. It is also important to install separate objects in state parks – educational trails for pedestrians and cyclists”.⁴⁶

🚲 Investment Priority 7 – promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks

Under the new ERDF regulation, the provisions presented below could be included under Policy Objective 3: a more connected Europe with strategic transport and digital communication networks (according to EC proposal) or under Policy Objective 2: a greener, low-carbon Europe, investing in energy transition, renewable energy and the fight against climate change (according to amendments submitted by the EP and Council).

- “Supporting the construction of cycle paths and additional infrastructure, stimulating the wider use of non-motorized transport in urban areas, supporting intermodality (interconnection of public transport, individual car transport and

³⁸ Acuerdo de Asociación de España 2014-2020, p. 75.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁰ Partnership Agreement for the Programming Period 2014–2020. Czech Republic, p. 95 & 98, available at: <https://www.dotaceeu.cz/getmedia/4589b39c-4215-4f0b-914d-b296678db1c8/Partnership-agreement-technical-revision-approved-by-the-EC-on-13-April-2016.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁴¹ Accord de partenariat avec la France - 2014-20, p. 55.

⁴² Partnership Agreement România, p. 179, available at: https://www.fonduri-ue.ro/files/documente-relevante/acord/Acord de Parteneriat 2014-2020_EN.pdf

⁴³ Acuerdo de Asociación de España 2014-2020, p. 134

⁴⁴ Accord de partenariat avec la France - 2014-20, p. 73

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23

⁴⁶ Lietuvos Respublikos. Partnerystės Sutartis, p. 90., available at: http://www.esparama.lt/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a7c44f87-a810-4175-8cdc-db95d668a1d0&groupId=19002

bicycle transport) and interchanges (parking lots, bicycle shelters), supporting the construction of traffic calming elements and zones, as well as the safe separation of motorized and non-motorized traffic”.⁴⁷

- “Prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle traffic (including through the construction of bike paths), facilitating multimodal travels (park&ride, bike&ride), including their location in reasonable places, restricting car traffic in city centres”.⁴⁸

🚲 Investment Priority 9 – promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

Under the new ERDF regulation, the provisions presented below could be included under Policy Objective 3: a more connected Europe with strategic transport and digital communication networks (according to EC proposal) or under Policy Objective 2: a greener, low-carbon Europe, investing in energy transition, renewable energy and the fight against climate change (according to amendments submitted by the EP and Council).

- “Developing cycle paths and cycle routes used for transport to work, school and services with the aim of supporting sustainable regional and local mobility”.⁴⁹
- “Improving transport accessibility and safety for aging society”.⁵⁰

8.2. Operational Programmes/ Rural Development Programmes

Remember:

- 🚲 You can include bold cycling plans into your operational programme even if the partnership agreement doesn’t put much (or any) direct emphasis on cycling. It is still good enough that the partnership agreement aims at combating such problems as: air pollution, congestion, ineffective transport infrastructure etc.
- 🚲 It is advisable to include into operational programmes both output indicators (such as km of built cycle infrastructure) and specific funds allocation for cycling. This will be a significant facilitation for designing the future calls for projects.

A. Cycling for transport

🚲 “Establishing, constructing and renewing bicycle routes providing transport to work and public services (e.g. routes leading to train stations and bus stops in municipalities and cities), including investments in additional cycling infrastructure, including rest areas, protected bicycle parking, charging stations for electric bicycles, etc.”

🚲 “Modernizing and constructing infrastructure for non-motorized transport:

- Bicycle paths - renewal and reconstruction of already existing bicycle paths, construction of new bicycle paths, cycle corridors on existing local roads and roads between settlements,
- Additional cycling infrastructure (protected cycle stands, charging stations for electric bicycles, bicycle rentals, sanitary facilities, etc.);
- Parking systems for bicycles,
- Traffic calming elements (pedestrian zones, shared space, exclusion of traffic from the streets except for public transport and cyclists, etc.);
- Increasing the safety of vulnerable road users, removing bottlenecks in pedestrian crossings, etc.”.

⁴⁷ Partnerská dohoda SR na roky 2014 – 2020, p. 27

⁴⁸ Programming of the 2014–2020 financial perspective - Partnership Agreement - Poland, p. 106

⁴⁹ Partnership Agreement for the Programming Period 2014–2020. Czech Republic, p. 56

⁵⁰ Programming of the 2014–2020 financial perspective - Partnership Agreement - Poland, p. 227

- 🚲 “Including support for improved conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers in all road reconstruction plans”.
- 🚲 “Promoting the perception of cyclists as daily commuters and not only sportsmen and tourists”.
- 🚲 “Promoting and increasing the attractiveness of cycling in public through web portals, mobile applications, etc.”.⁵¹
- 🚲 “Equipping state and municipal roads (including state and federal roads where the municipalities have the responsibility for maintenance) with cycle paths. The subject of funding is the expansion and new construction of standalone and roadside cycle paths, possibly as part of the state road construction program or the municipal cycle path plans. Funding is provided for construction costs for standalone and roadside cycle paths, including land acquisition, in accordance with the usual eligibility rules for funding and remedial/compensatory measures”.⁵²
- 🚲 “Expanding local public transport and non-motorized individual transport can be used, particularly in the area of individual transport, in order to reduce CO2 emissions from transport. At the same time, further expansion of the nationwide network of cycle paths is intended to increase the attractiveness of low-emission cycling and its share in the total traffic volume”.⁵³
- 🚲 “Supporting sustainable urban mobility interventions: increasing soft mobility - cycle and pedestrian paths. The scope of this Action Line - finalized and integrated, according to the procedures set out in the Partnership Agreement – concerns the construction and/or strengthening of systems to support soft, cycle or pedestrian mobility. In particular:
 - Increase of the existing cycle and pedestrian network, favouring its completion throughout the urban networks;
 - Increasing the safety of cycling traffic;
 - Integration with the collective mobility system and/or connection with highly frequented places;
 - Creation of rest areas and equipped parking areas dedicated to bicycles;
 - Implementation of liveability and urban quality interventions aimed at cycling and walking”.⁵⁴
- 🚲 “The strategic objectives are: the increase of the existing cycle network, its completion in the urban area, the interconnection of cycle routes and their networking ("network effect"), the safety, the connection with the collective mobility and in particular with the regional railway system, the interconnection with which it is recognized as capable of maximizing the capacity to produce positive effects in the action of reducing CO2”.⁵⁵
- 🚲 “The following types of intervention will be eligible for funding:
 - Creation / safety of cycle paths (own cycle paths, reserved lanes, cycle / pedestrian paths, Zone 30) with priority for those that interconnect the railway with the urban level attractions;
 - Installation of horizontal and vertical signage dedicated to cyclists and cycle paths;
 - Installation of bicycle parking spaces, which meet the requirements of the Plan, near the railway;
 - Construction / redevelopment of velo stations;
 - Automatic counters for cyclists on cycle paths and for use of controlled access parking lots
 - Creation of a single regional bike sharing system (with particular reference to Municipalities with railway stations);
 - Fare integration between public transport and bike sharing systems”.⁵⁶

B. Cycling for tourism

⁵¹ Integrovaný regionální operační program, p.46-50, available at:

tps://www.dotaceeu.cz/Dotace/media/SF/Microsites/IROP/Dokumenty/Programov%20dokument/9.%2011.%202017/PD-IROP-verze-1-1_08112017.pdf.

⁵² Operationelles Programm EFRE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2014-2020, p. 100, available at: <https://www.europa-mv.de/serviceassistent/download?id=1619519>

⁵³ Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁴ Giunta Regionale Toscana. Programma Operativo Regionale FESR 2014-2020, p. 148, available at:

https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/23870501/3c%29+POR_FESR_Toscana_2014-20-Vers_7_clean.pdf/823996a7-5438-3024-753e-ff8c83611343?t=1600240423797

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 148

⁵⁶ Lombardia. Programma Operativo Regionale FESR 2014-2020, p. 142, available at:

https://www.fesr.regione.lombardia.it/wps/wcm/connect/d365e089-b96f-4681-8595-f88b2c16ca26/Sintesi_ENG_FESR.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-d365e089-b96f-4681-8595-f88b2c16ca26-mTfCB7a

- 🚲 “Constructing and reconstructing of educational trails, cycling trails, constructing additional infrastructure (rest areas, shelters, bicycle stands, etc.), constructing viewing towers, setting up cycling markings on existing cycling routes, etc.”⁵⁷
- 🚲 “Supporting economic development projects based on the enhancement of the natural resources of rural areas by extending both the tourist attraction of the region and the leisure offer for the rural population of Lorraine through the major cycle-road green routes.”⁵⁸
- 🚲 “Creating, extending, and renovating investments relating to rooms, common areas and ancillary equipment or services for bikes users (e.g.: bicycle storage and maintenance space, laundry area dedicated to routes tourists).”⁵⁹
- 🚲 “Establishing a “Cycling guesthouse” label:
 - Investing to meet the labelling criteria (e.g. secure boxes, washing stations, small repair workshop, etc.).”⁶⁰
- 🚲 “Creating the regional scheme for cycle routes and greenways, becoming an eco-responsible tourist destination, bringing overall consistency to the other actions supported by Europe to make tourism a lever for the economic development of Burgundy.”⁶¹
- 🚲 “Funding innovative investment projects (e.g. for new types of service offers for guests, new sales ideas, green tourism), tourist cycle paths as an integral part of the cycle path concept of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern or tourist infrastructures, which are the basic conditions for meeting the recognition criteria in health resorts and recreational areas.”⁶²
- 🚲 “Connecting natural heritage locations through the creation of itineraries or tourist routes (adapting trails and paths for pedestrian and / or bicycle use, etc.). Promoting clean and environmentally friendly means of transport and sustainable mobility in Protected Natural Areas.”⁶³

C. Possible Output Indicators for Cycling Objectives:

🚲 **The share of bicycle traffic in the total transport**

EXAMPLE – According to the Integrated Regional Operation Program of Czech Republic 2014–2020 the share of cyclists among commuters should increase from 7% to 10% in the period of the programme’s implementation.

🚲 **Length of new sections of cycle paths**

EXAMPLE – The Operational Programme Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2014–2020 set a target of 339 kilometres of cycle paths to be built in the region during the given period.

🚲 **Number of elements of additional cycle infrastructure created**

EXAMPLE – The Integrated Regional Operation Programme of Slovakia 2014–2020 set a target value of 71 elements of additional cycle infrastructure. This includes, for example, public bike repair stations.

🚲 **Number of parking spaces for bicycles**

EXAMPLE – The Integrated Regional Operation Programme of Czech Republic 2014–2020 set a target value of 5,600 new parking spaces for bikes.

🚲 **Number of cycling paths users in the region**

EXAMPLE – According to the Operational Programme Małopolskie Voivodeship 2014–2020 the number of cyclists on the cycle paths should increase from 144,000 to 423,396 in the period of the programme’s implementation.

🚲 **Decrease in number of cycling-related fatalities**

EXAMPLE – According to the Croatian Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014–2020 the number of fatalities among cyclists should decrease from 12/1.000.000 to 6/1.000.000 people in the given period of time.

⁵⁷ Integrovaný regionální operační program, p. 43

⁵⁸ France - Rural Development Programme (Regional) – Lorraine, p. 301, available at: <http://europe-en-lorraine.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/PDR-LOR-V7.1-approuv%C3%A9-02082017.pdf>

⁵⁹ France - Rural Development Programme (Regional) – Bourgogne, p. 315, available at: https://www.europe-bfc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Programme_2014FR06RDRP026_7_0_consolidated_with_2014FR06RDNF001_8_0_fr.pdf

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 335-336

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 335-336

⁶² Operationelles Programm EFRE Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2014-2020, p. 74

⁶³ Programa Operativo de Andalucía 2014-2020, p. 263

9. Call for Action

Cycling is one of the most effective solutions to some of the major economic and environmental problems of our times. Maximise your chances of securing EU funds for cycling related measures by following these suggestions:

If you are a citizen, an NGO or the representative of cycling industry:

- 🚲 Participate actively in public consultations about programming documents.
- 🚲 If no information about public consultation is available – contact the authorities responsible for the preparation of programming documents and ask how you can influence their content. To identify relevant authorities, you can research who prepared the partnership agreement and operational or regional development programmes for the previous financial period.
- 🚲 Associate with others who share your goals and values. In a group, your voice is heard better.
- 🚲 Find allies among diverse stakeholders. Show that the support for cycling is strong among all groups in society.
- 🚲 Spread the knowledge about health, environment and
- 🚲 Economic benefits of cycling among your family, friends and colleagues. Share this guide with anyone who may find it useful.

If you work for a national or regional authority:

- 🚲 Participate actively in the process of preparation of programming documents and inspire your colleagues with a vision of dynamic and sustainable development of your country or region.
- 🚲 Have the courage to come up with bold ideas that can make your country and region stand out on the map of Europe.
- 🚲 Learn from the experience of the countries that benefited the most from cycling-related investments. If you are looking for know-how do not hesitate to contact us. Our mission is to connect experts on cycling planning with ambitious decision-makers.
- 🚲 Consult with relevant stakeholders about your ideas and do not be afraid to reach for their knowledge. Look for cycling NGOs in your region for support and advice about planned investments.
- 🚲 Use the overview of the investment needs, if it is available at the national or regional level, to create projects that will fill the infrastructure gaps in the area.
- 🚲 Listen to the needs, hopes and concerns of inhabitants of your region. Ask them what would make their life in a given area better. Less traffic, less noise, less pollution – these are often repeated answers, especially among urban residents.

If you work on regional policy at the European level:

- 🚲 Encourage Member States to include sustainable transport objectives, including cycling, into their programming documents.
- 🚲 Show the EU's determination to achieve the Green Deal goals and turn Member States' attention to how investments in zero-emission mobility can contribute to achieving set targets.
- 🚲 Make Member States aware of the importance of implementing country-specific recommendations, also in the field of sustainable transport.
- 🚲 Show that the EC takes the obligations of nations set in their NECP seriously.
- 🚲 Share the knowledge about positive measures taken in countries which are most successful in meeting European climate goals.
- 🚲 Draw Member States' attention to the increase in investment in cycling infrastructure during the pandemic and the beneficial effects of this means of transport in reducing the spread of the virus.

Whatever your role in preparing programming documents for the next financial period is, we are ready to give you any support you need to secure as much funds for your cycling projects as possible.

We hope that this Guide will be a useful tool to achieve this aim. However, if you have any further questions or doubts – feel free to contact our experts.

Here is the ECF team member you can contact: [Fabian Küster](mailto:f.kuester@ecf.com), ECF Senior Policy Officer (f.kuester@ecf.com)



10. Annex: the detailed benefits of cycling investments for Europe

10.1. Economy

Manufactures:

- 🚲 Goldstein Research analyst forecast that the Europe bicycle industry is set to reach almost 20 billion by 2024⁶⁴ and is expected to grow with an annual rate of 5.5%
- 🚲 In comparison, the European car market is expected to grow by only 1.7% until 2024.

Tourism:

- 🚲 There is an estimated number of 2.3 billion cycle tourism trips per year in the EU, which stand for a total economic value of 44 bn EUR.
- 🚲 Cycle tourism is linked to ca. 525 000 jobs in the EU.
- 🚲 In France, cycle tourists spend almost 20% more than the average for all tourists.

Logistics:

- 🚲 Cargo bikes have the potential to replace the following share of motorised trips in urban areas:
 - + 23-25 % of the commercial deliveries in cities
 - + 50 % of the commercial service and maintenance trips
 - + 77% of private logistics trips (shopping, leisure, child transport)

Commerce:

- 🚲 Clients coming by bike spend more than those coming by car, be it during a certain time period or related to the parking space that has to be provided for them.
- 🚲 Cyclists do their shopping locally and are more loyal customers.
- 🚲 If a street is transformed in a way that gives more space to cyclists and pedestrians and less to cars, the absence of clients that came by car before is more than compensated for by the clients that come by foot or by bike afterward. In London, retail vacancy was 17% lower and retail rental values 7.5% higher after active mobility improvements in shopping streets and town centres.

Construction and Maintenance of Road Infrastructure:

⁶⁴ European Bicycle Market: Size, Trends, Share, Growth Drivers, Restraints, SWOT Analysis, Demand, Trade Data & Regional Outlook With COVID-19 Impact | Forecast Period 2017-2030, Goldstein Market Intelligence, ed. 2020, available at: <https://www.goldsteinresearch.com/report/europe-bicycle-industry-analysis>.

- 🚲 The annual costs for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure for motorised transport that are saved through cycling amount to 2.9 bn EUR per year in the EU.
- 🚲 One mile of a high-quality protected bike-lane is estimated to cost 0.21 million EUR, whereas an urban freeway costs 50 million USD per mile, or 240 times as much.

Congestion:

- 🚲 The value of congestion easing through cycling for the EU can be estimated at 6.8 bn EUR per year.
- 🚲 The total costs of congestion for the EU economy have been estimated at over 240 bn EUR per year or almost 2% of EU GDP.
- 🚲 A number of local studies from Europe and the US also show the benefits of cycling for reducing congestion:
 - Cycling improvements lead to 45% less car traffic and faster public transport (Copenhagen, Denmark).
 - Cycle highways reduce time spent in congestion by 3.8 million hours (The Netherlands). + Cycle highway network reduces the need for 50,000 car journeys daily (Ruhr area, Germany).
 - Bike share programme eases congestion during city works (Bordeaux, France).
 - Bike share programme reduces congestion by 4% (Washington DC, USA).

Connectivity and Multimodality:

- 🚲 Cycling helps to create sustainable mobility chains.
 - Dutch research shows that 44% of train commuters in the Netherlands use the bike to reach the train station from their home. People combining bike and train also use their car less.

Resilience:

- 🚲 Cycling, including cyclelogistics, makes cultures more resilient by providing transport options also in cases of emergency like pandemics, natural catastrophes or terrorist attacks.

10.2. Technology

Electromobility:

- 🚲 In 2017, more than 10% of the bikes sold in Europe were electric, compared to only 1.5% of cars.
- 🚲 Since 2006, sales of electric bikes have multiplied by 20, with an average annual growth rate of almost 30%.
- 🚲 When France introduced a national purchase incentive scheme for electric bicycles in 2017, 61% of beneficiaries stated in a survey that they used electric bicycles to replace car journeys.

Bike-sharing:

- 🚲 Bike-sharing makes work commutes and in-work trips more efficient and increases connectivity in a city by providing easy and fast first-mile/last-mile access, enhancing productivity in the urban economy.
- 🚲 For the Dublin bike-sharing system, every 1 euro invested created 12.3 euros of time benefits, wider economic benefits and health benefits. The value of the time savings alone is in a range of 6 – 10.4 million euros.

10.3. Environment and Resources

Air Pollution:

- 🚲 Value of reduced air pollution through cycling: 435 million euros
- 🚲 Air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe, causing around 400 000 premature deaths per year.

CO2 Emission:

- 🚲 Cycling saves emissions equaling more than 16 million tons of CO2 equivalents per year in the EU.
- 🚲 Value of the savings: 600 to 5.630 million euros, depending on the Social Cost of Carbon

Noise Pollution:

- 🚲 The current value of reduced noise pollution through cycling is 300 million euros.
- 🚲 Noise pollution from road traffic is the cause of around 8 900 premature deaths and almost 800 000 additional cases of hypertension per year in Europe.

Water and Soil Pollution, Space Saving:

- 🚲 Cycling infrastructure needs less space than infrastructure for cars. If less infrastructure is needed, this means less sealed soils, less soil pollution and less water pollution.
- 🚲 Establishing cycling instead of car infrastructure means also more land available for lucrative investments in the most attractive regions

Fuel Saving:

- 🚲 The current levels of cycling in the EU correspond to fuel savings of more than 3 billion litres per year, which corresponds to the fuel consumption for road transport of a country like Ireland.
- 🚲 The value of these fuel savings is almost 4 billion euros.

Waste Production:

- 🚲 The average weight of a car in the EU in 2017 was almost 1400 kg, a bike rarely weighs more than 20 kg, or 1.5% of the weight of a car. This means that much less resources are needed for its construction.
- 🚲 Some of the resources are the same, but used in much less quantities (e.g. steel, aluminium, different polymers), others, like platinum or palladium for catalytic converters which cause significant emissions and environmental damage during their extraction, are not used at all for the manufacturing of bicycles.

10.4. Health

- 🚲 Cycling prevents 18,110 premature deaths per year in the EU-28. This corresponds to an economic value of EUR 52 bn per year. Cycling also contributes to healthier lives by helping to prevent a large number of severe and chronic diseases, for example: cardio-vascular diseases; diabetes (type 2); breast cancer; colon cancer; osteoporosis.

Mental Health:

- 🚲 Engaging in moderate physical activity like cycling reduces the risk for Alzheimer's disease by 29% and for cognitive decline by about 26%.
- 🚲 Physical activity is also linked to 17% lower odds for developing depression in a large metaanalysis of relevant studies

Children Development:

- 🚲 4 hours after arriving in the classroom, concentration levels of children who are cycling or walking to school are 8% higher than for those who are getting a lift by car.

Absenteeism:

- 🚲 Employees that cycle to work regularly have on average 1.3 days less sickness absence per year.
- 🚲 This means a gain of almost 5 bn EUR per year for employers around the EU.
- 🚲 This amount roughly corresponds to the direct and indirect cost of sickness absence to the Austrian economy.

10.5. Social Benefits and Life Satisfaction

Quality of Time:

- 🚲 Studies from London, Montreal, the US and Colombia show that cyclist commuters are the most or among the most satisfied with their trips to work.

Public Space:

- 🚲 The bicycle is very space-efficient: During 1 hour, 7 times more bikes than cars can cross a 3.5m-wide space in an urban environment.
- 🚲 The place that is needed for a single car-parking spot can fit up to 15 bicycles.

Equality:

- 🚲 The yearly costs for owning and using a bike only amount to around 5% or 10% (for electric bicycles) to the costs for owning and using a car. By providing a cheap transport option, cycling can help to make jobs and participation in social life better accessible to disadvantaged population groups.
- 🚲 In the United States, the lowest-income households — Americans making less than \$20,000 per year — are twice as likely as the rest of the population to rely on bikes for basic transportation needs like getting to work.

Gender Equality:

- 🚲 Research shows that women tend to benefit more from higher cycling levels. For example, since they are still taking care of most of childrens' and older adults' mobility in families, they gain more free time if the children and elderly can undertake journeys by bike independently and do not need a lift by car.

Social Connectivity:

- 🚲 Cycling is a social activity. By bringing people together and connecting neighbourhoods, it provides the potential for improved social interactions and more exchange between them. It can connect people from different backgrounds and social classes, thus improving the cohesion of society.

Accessibility:

- 🚲 Cycling increases accessibility, not only to employment, but also to places of social and cultural exchange.
- 🚲 During the last years, cycling classes for refugees have been a success story in a number of EU countries, including Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, or Finland. Often managed by ECF member organisations, these initiatives give refugees, and in particular women, the possibility to participate more actively in society by giving them easy access to relevant facilities.

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