

19 May 2023

To: Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 20
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Dear President von der Leyen,

More cycling is essential to achieving the European Green Deal, and now is an especially opportune time to promote this in Europe.

Dozens of EU countries are implementing national cycling strategies. Numerous municipalities across Europe are building cycling infrastructure and getting their citizens to cycle. Europeans cycle billions of kilometres each year for daily life, sport and leisure. The Commission will propose an EU Cycling Declaration, as announced by Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans in March. A growing coalition of 15 EU countries, led by Belgium, have signed a 'European Bicycle Declaration' calling for cycling to be recognised as a full mode of transport. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in February for the development of an EU cycling strategy. These last two initiatives have formally requested that 2024 be designated as the European Year of Cycling.

Europe has fully awakened to the benefits cycling can create for people, communities and our climate. **For this reason, we, the undersigned coalition of organisations that are part of the European Cyclists' Federation, urge you to heed the call of EU member states and the European Parliament and to designate 2024 as the European Year of Cycling.**

After all, the bicycle was born in Europe. German baron and inventor Karl von Drais created in 1817 a two-wheeled machine called a "velocipede," which was soon improved upon by French inventors who developed prototypes with pedals attached to the front wheel. The invention of the penny-farthing with an oversized front wheel in the 1870s made the bicycle mainstream. That paved the way for Englishman John Kemp Starley to perfect the "safety bicycle" design, the template for the modern bicycle that we all know. Cycling is an integral part of European history and culture – and one of Europe's most successful common projects.

Today, the bicycle touches virtually everyone's life. It is a childhood rite of passage. A tool of independence for growing adolescents. A means of functional mobility and health for adults of all ages. Cycling is a proven antidote to the pandemic of physical inactivity. It cleans our air. When people cycle more than they drive, it becomes one of the quickest ways to lower CO₂ emissions. It is our way to fight the climate crisis.

Talk to anyone in the world about cycling, and often they will think of a European city or country. Utrecht and Amsterdam are the global gold standard for cycling infrastructure. The Finnish city of Oulu shows that political leadership and municipal effort combined can get citizens to cycle in sub-zero temperatures. Paris is radically remaking itself into cycling city. German cities are providing more space to people on bikes, with Leipzig having hosted the most recent Velo-city conference.

Madam President, a 2024 European Year of Cycling would be just the spark Europe needs to excite millions more Europeans to take up the bicycle. Forming partnerships with cycling industry, sport, employers, civil society, communities and municipal authorities, a European Year of Cycling would be filled with numerous events and actions, all under the banner of our collective membership to the European Union.

We are ready to support your leadership in making a 2024 European Year of Cycling the most successful European year on record.

Signed,

1. Radlobby Österreich, Austria
2. Flemish Cycling Embassy, Belgium
3. Les Cyclistes Quotidiens asbl (GRACQ), Belgium
4. Sindikat Biciklista, Croatia
5. Foreningen Frie Fugle, Denmark
6. Cyklistforbundet, Denmark
7. Eesti Linnaratturite Liit MTU, Estonia
8. Pyoralitto, Finland
9. Fédération Française des Usagers de la Bicyclette (FUB), France
10. L'Heureux Cyclage, France
11. Human Powered Vehicles (HPV) Deutschland e.V., Germany
12. Cities for Cycling, Greece
13. Hellenic Urban Cycling Federation, Greece
14. Magyar Kerekparosklub, Hungary
15. Icelandic Cyclists' Federation, Iceland
16. Cyclist.ie - The Irish Cycling Advocacy Network, Ireland
17. FIAB – Federazione Italiana Ambiente e Bicicletta, Italy
18. Latvijas Riteņbraucēju apvienība, Latvia
19. ProVelo.lu asbl, Luxembourg
20. Rota Malta, Malta
21. Biciklo.me, Montenegro
22. Syklistenes Landsforening (Norwegian Cyclists Association), Norway
23. Dutch Cycling Embassy, Netherlands
24. Fietsersbond, Netherlands
25. Polish Association of Cycling Instructors, Poland
26. MUBi: Associação pela Mobilidade Urbana em Bicicleta, Portugal
27. Portuguese Federation of Bicycle Tourism and Bicycle Users (FPCUB), Portugal
28. Cyklokoalícia, Slovakia
29. Slovenský Cykloklub, Slovakia
30. A Contramano - Asamblea Ciclista de Sevilla, Spain
31. ConBici: Coordinador en Defensa de la Bici, Spain
32. Cykelfrämjandet, Sweden
33. Pro Velo Schweiz, Switzerland

