

Mr Karmenu Vella  
Commissioner for Environment,  
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Environment DG  
B - 1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Brussels, January 26, 2018

Ref: Air Quality Ministerial Summit on 30 January; National investments in cycling

Dear Commissioner Vella,

We strongly share your concern about poor air quality and the risks it poses to the health of citizens across the EU. The undersigned cyclists' associations therefore welcome your letter addressed to Environment Ministers from 9 EU countries and your call to submit *new* measures in order to come into agreement with EU legislation on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (Directive 2008/50/EC).

As you are well aware, motorised transport is among the main culprits for poor air quality in urban centres. While the European Commission initiated the European Mobility Week as early as 2002, about half of all car trips continue to be under 5 km, and 2/3 under 10 km. These are distances that could be easily shifted to (e-)cycling if conditions were safe and attractive, with an immediate impact on air quality.

Although many national governments have started to support cycling over the past 10 - 15 years, now is the time to step up efforts! Despite impressive success stories in some individual cities, cycle use remains stagnant on a national level in most Member States and by extension in the EU.

We therefore urge you to call upon national governments to immediately implement the following measures:

- Set up a National Cycle Investment Fund. It shall be equipped with annual investments equal to at least 10 Euro per person and used to co-fund local and regional cycle projects, such as cycle highway projects and other measures;
- Introduce or extend a national support scheme for the purchase of conventional and electric bicycles (pedelecs/ L1e-A), the latter similar to schemes given to e-cars in a number of countries, and/or set up tax-free allowance schemes for cycle to work;
- Frame national support and coordination to cycling in a systematic manner, by developing and implementing a national cycling strategy

Investments in cycling will not just improve air quality and thus save thousands of lives, but will also generate enormous public health benefits through physical activity. A recent EU-wide study estimated that if 167 European cities upgraded their bicycle infrastructure network and achieved a cycling mode share of 24.7%, over 10,000 premature deaths could be avoided annually [1].



EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

The premature death of 400,000 citizens across the EU, caused by poor air quality, is unacceptable. Contrary to politically highly controversial solutions, such as driving bans for diesel cars or the retrofitting of diesel particulate filters, investments in cycling enjoy strong popular support, are easy to implement and hence would show almost immediate effect.

The EU Cycling Strategy that was developed in 2017 includes numerous recommended actions at national and European levels on how to support cycling [2]. Beyond the suggested action points in this letter, we invite you to take this publication as a source of inspiration in your discussion with Member States on how to improve ambient air quality.

Sincerely yours

Dr Bernhard Ensink  
ECF Secretary General

Adam Bodor  
ECF Advocacy Director

Burkhard Stork  
National Director  
German Cyclists' Association

Michal Hlatký  
Chairman  
Slovak Cyclists' Association

Daniel Mourek  
Board Member  
Czech Cyclists' Federation



Peter Medved  
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Giulietta Pagliaccio  
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Italian Cyclists' Association

Olivier Schneider  
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French Cyclists' Federation





EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

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Manuel Martin  
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Spanish Cyclists' Federation



GreenRevolution



Cc:

Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport  
Corina Cretu, European Commissioner for Regional Policy  
Richard Brabec, Minister for the Environment, Czechia  
Nicolas Hulot, Minister for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition, France  
Dr Barbara Hendricks, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany  
Sándor Fazekas, Rural Development Minister, Hungary  
Dr Gian Luca Galletti, Minister for the Environment, Italy  
Gratiela-Leocadia Gavrilescu, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Romania  
László Sólymos, Minister for the Environment, Slovak Republic  
Isabel García Tejerina, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, Spain

Notes:

Founded in 1983, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) is the umbrella federation of the national cyclists' associations in Europe. ECF has 82 members in 46 countries. ECF's aim is to ensure that bicycle use achieves its fullest potential so as to bring about sustainable mobility and public well-being.

[1] Mueller et.al, on behalf of the PASTA Consortium: *Health impact assessment of cycling network expansions in European cities*. Preventive Medicine, January 2018, doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.12.011

[2] ECF (ed.), *EU Cycling Strategy. Recommendations for Delivering Green Growth and an Effective Mobility in 2030*. June 2017.