

World Bicycle Day

In 2018, the United Nations declared 3 June World Bicycle Day. Cycling represents a growing share of mobility. It is a healthy, green and flexible means of transport that helps achieve savings and generate jobs. However, a lot remains to be done when it comes to safety and suitable cycling infrastructure across the EU. Although the regulatory framework on cycling is determined at Member State level, with concrete action shaped locally, the EU provides best practice advice and financial support for infrastructure development. For its part, the European Parliament has regularly highlighted the importance of cycling and supported it as a means of transport.

Cycling in the EU

Today, there are an [estimated](#) 1 billion bicycles in the world – about as many as passenger cars. Figures show that bicycles are becoming an ever more important mode of transportation. However, big differences exist between EU Member States. A 2020 [Eurobarometer survey](#) shows that, while the use of cars remains dominant, 8 % of EU citizens – mainly in big cities – use a privately owned bike or scooter as their main mode of daily transport, with an additional 1 % using shared bikes or scooters on a daily basis. Numbers are the highest in the Netherlands (41 %), followed by Sweden (21 %). Meanwhile, daily cycling [figures](#) remain low (1–5 % of journeys) in about a third of all EU countries.

Cycling has several environmental and health benefits. It is an affordable and flexible means of transport that [benefits](#) both society as a whole and its individual members in a number of ways. For example, according to the [European Cyclists' Federation](#) (ECF), cycling generates global benefits of €150 billion per year, of which €90 billion concern the environment, public health and mobility. As a regular physical activity, cycling reduces the risks of heart disease, stroke, certain cancers and diabetes. Cycling can also help lessen greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and noise. As a means of transport over short distances, it can help reduce traffic congestion, and thus also delays and lost working hours. Moreover, it can contribute to lowering the dependence on fossil fuels.

A more widespread take-up of cycling can also create new, often local [jobs](#) – in sectors such as bicycle manufacturing and retail trade, repairs, and infrastructure construction and maintenance, but also for instance in cycling tourism. Meanwhile, bicycle delivery and courier services have been booming since the start of the pandemic and the restrictions and public health measures put in place, which led to rapid development of e-commerce. [Cargo bikes](#) transporting goods or people are more and more part of our daily lives, as well.

However, the surge in cycling has come with its challenges. More needs to be done to ensure cyclists' [road safety](#) and avoid [accidents](#). Cyclists' share of total [road deaths](#) in the EU stands at 8 %, and has been slowly rising. Mobility planning needs to be coordinated, and financing for cycling infrastructure secured. Boosting cycling as an attractive means of transport requires sustained [investment](#) in networks of safe and comfortable cycle routes in urban, peri-urban and rural areas across the EU. All levels of government, from local to the EU, need to contribute to this goal.

EU action and funding

Cycling policies are the Member States' responsibility, with each EU country setting up its own regulatory framework. Practical measures (such as developing cycling networks or adapting the public transport network to facilitate combined trips) are taken primarily at local or regional levels, most often in cities.

EU-level intervention consists mainly of promoting cycling, providing financial support, and sharing best practice. The EU has recognised the importance of cycling and its integration in several areas of EU action, such as transport and tourism, energy and environment, regional and cohesion policy, and public health.

Multiple resources support implementation of cycling infrastructure and associated measures; they have been developed at national level or by other interested parties within the EU using EU co-funding. This is true, for instance, for [EuroVelo](#), a European network of currently 17 long-distance cycling routes criss-

crossing Europe, under full responsibility of the ECF. The network is in various stages of completion, and can be used by both cycling tourists and locals.

Two major EU [funding sources](#) can enhance cycling-related developments: the EU [structural and investment funds](#), part of the regular EU budget, and the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) (RRF), which aims to address the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Through the structural funds – particularly the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) and the [Cohesion Fund](#) – about €2 billion has been invested in cycling during the EU's 2014–2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF). The current EU budget –the 2021–2027 MFF – is based on [two principles](#): tackling the health and economic challenges caused by the pandemic, and bringing about sustainable transformation to meet the goals of the [European Green Deal](#). The 2021–2027 ERDF and the Cohesion Fund will also support future cycling investments: at least 30 % of the former and 37 % of the latter must be dedicated to climate objectives.

Meanwhile, about half of the [national recovery and resilience plans](#) (NRRPs) drawing on the RRF intend to update, upgrade or extend existing national green mobility plans. Quite a few have assigned specific funds to enhance cycling, either as a daily means of transport, or as a sustainable form of tourism, or both. From the NRRPs submitted so far, Belgium is the frontrunner as regards cycling infrastructure, with investment worth €411 million (or 6.9 % of the country's RRF funding) in 180 kilometres of new and 1 360 kilometres of upgraded cycling paths and secured bicycle parking, including at rail stations. Sizeable investments are also planned in Romania, Italy and France.

Furthermore, the EU supports platforms for the exchange of best practice, for instance the City Vitality Sustainability Initiative ([CIVITAS](#)), the European Platform on Mobility Management ([EPOMM](#)) and the Urban Mobility Observatory ([ELTIS](#)), which hosts cycling data.

Legislative work also focuses more and more on promoting cycling. To protect cyclists and other vulnerable road users more effectively, new features have been added to the EU rules on safety requirements for vehicles. For instance, the revised [General Safety Regulation](#), adopted in November 2019, envisages, as of 2022, to improve direct vision for trucks and buses, reducing 'blind spots', and install systems at the vehicle's front and side to detect and warn of vulnerable road users, especially when making turns. The [proposal](#) for a revised Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Regulation, published in December 2021 as part of the 'efficient and green mobility' package, can be considered a step forward for cycling in urban areas. It aims, among other things, to establish synergies with other policies, such as those to increase bicycle infrastructure, including the EuroVelo routes. The TEN-T proposal also highlights the importance of developing multimodal mobility and sustainable transport modes further. The [European urban mobility framework](#), as part of the same package, discusses multimodality and the use of active travel, encouraging cities to draft sustainable urban mobility action plans, as well as promoting bike transport.

European Parliament's role

Over the years, the European Parliament has repeatedly highlighted and supported cycling as a transport mode and cyclists' interests. For instance, it called on the European Commission to develop an [EU cycling strategy](#) to get more people to cycle more often. In a September 2015 [resolution](#) on the implementation of the 2011 Commission white paper on transport, Parliament stressed the importance of supporting regional programmes for establishing and expanding cycling networks in large European regions to raise citizens' awareness for environmental matters, give everyone the opportunity to cycle, and reduce air and noise pollution and congestion. The resolution also asked for better data on transport use behaviours, in particular as regards walking and cycling.

In its February 2019 [report](#) on the Commission proposal for a revision of the Motor Insurance Directive, the Parliament stressed that the directive should not cover electronic bicycles (such as segways and electric scooters), which – because of their smaller size – are less likely to cause significant damage to people and property. The [final directive](#), adopted on 9 November 2021, took Parliament's position on board.

In an October 2021 [resolution](#) on the 2021–2030 EU road safety policy framework, Parliament made recommendations to the Commission on how best to achieve its ambition of reducing road deaths to almost zero by 2050. The resolution also emphasised how important it is that the cycling and walking infrastructure the Member States deployed in response to the pandemic not only remains in place, but is expanded to further promote safe active travel.

