



Fédération française  
des Usagers de la Bicyclette



Association Française de développement  
des Véloroutes et Voies Vertes



Club des Villes  
et Territoires Cyclables



Fédération Française  
de Cyclotourisme



Fédération Nationale des Associations  
d'Usagers des Transports



Association des Départements  
et Régions Cyclables

## Helmets and fluo jackets must remain optional for cyclists

The Delegation for Traffic and Road Safety would consider making helmets and fluorescent jackets compulsory, beginning with cyclists under 16. This would mean that bikes were potentially dangerous. Cycling is in fact an excellent way to travel. It alleviates the traffic flows in towns, making downtown considerably safer and quieter. Cycling on a daily basis also helps reduce global warming. The French authorities should be taking more drastic measures concerning speed, alcohol and reckless driving if they hope to attain fewer than 3000 deaths on the roads, as announced by president Sarkozy.

### Such a measure would be irrational, ineffective, useless and counter-productive

**Irrational:** Recent annual figures from the ONISR indicate that cyclists suffer from fewer head injuries than pedestrians or motorists. (1)

**Ineffective:** In the few countries where wearing helmets is compulsory (Australia, New Zealand), there have not been fewer serious accidents or head injuries in relation to the number of cyclists. (2)

**Useless:** In Holland and Denmark, exemplary countries regarding safety for cyclists, wearing helmets is by no means compulsory; very few people wear them except when practicing sport. In Switzerland, Quebec and Great Britain, there have been fewer injuries even though cycling has become more and more popular (3). In France, the success of Velo'v and Vélib show similar results.

**Counter-productive:** If wearing helmets were to be made compulsory, the number of urban cyclists would rapidly drop (in Australia, the number fell by 30% and even 90% amongst pupils aged 10 to 16 and young girls). This would have a seriously negative impact on public health and on the environment (4). Moreover, if we allow people to consider cycling as dangerous as riding motorcycles, we may just be encouraging youngsters to quit using their bicycles for motorbikes or mopeds, as is already the trend, leading to far higher traffic fatalities. (5)

Town councils, firms and non-profit organisations are now doing their utmost to encourage cycling, extending State measures for sustainable development. Enforcing helmets and jackets would work against these measures. Having a real Street Code would be much more effective to improve safety on our roads and encourage people to use their bicycle on daily basis.

(1) The ratio of road fatalities from cycling: 3,5% death, 4,7% injuries and 4% journeys. Head injuries: cyclists 17%, drivers 24%, pedestrians 26%. Death of cyclists: 11% for the under 14's and 31% for the over 65's (data from ONISR and CERTU)

(2) No change in the ratio numbers of casualties cyclists/pedestrians, or head/other injured part although the number of cyclists wearing helmets has increased (Sources: Dr D.L.Robinson, University of South Wales; J.Merallo, Congrès international Velo-City 2007)

(3) In Paris, with the Vélib, between early 2007 and July 2008, the number of cyclists has increased by 70% and accidents only by 21%, which means lower risks

(4) Cycling for 30 mins a day at medium speed reduces by a factor 2 the risks of heart diseases, the first cause of death in France. 30% of cyclists who stop cycling would lead to 500M more in health expenses. (Source: Francis Papon, INRETS, Recherche Transports Sécurité, n°77, oct.-nov. 2002).

(5) Motorcycles represent 2% journeys, 33% injuries and 26% deaths (Source: ONISR, Bilan 2008).

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