Minutes from the EU Cycling Strategy workshop at the CIVITAS Forum 2016

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Context:

From 28-30 September, ECF joined the CIVITAS Forum in Gdynia, Poland. This annual conference brings together almost 500 cities, regions and other professionals working on sustainable transport in Europe.

ECF organized a workshop to collect contributions from the conference attendees on the idea of an EU Cycling Strategy. 30 participants from cities all over Europe gathered to give their views and inputs on the strategy.

"Every relevant infrastructure project should take cycling into consideration as much as possible"

The participants strongly agreed that "Every relevant infrastructure project should take cycling into consideration as much as possible", but they proposed some modifications. The expressions "relevant" and "as much as possible" open too wide possibilities for interpretation, instead of that they proposed to specify the statement to all "land based" infrastructure project (rail, road, buildings) should take cycling into consideration and provide motivating conditions to increase cycling.

"Minimum EU cycling infrastructure quality criteria should be established for relevant projects co-funded with EU money."

The participants agreed with the statement "Minimum EU cycling infrastructure quality criteria should be established for relevant projects co-funded with EU money.", but again proposed to remove the reference to relevant projects and specify the statement (see above). Participants also proposed to set different level of minimum criteria depending on the level of cycling traffic the infrastructure should handle (for example cyclist/day). The minimum criteria should not go into technical details (for example surface material) but define the quality from the users' perspective (width, level of motorized traffic,

smoothness of the surface). The EU should not develop a detailed technical standard but encourage Member States to develop one and a national standard should be obligatory for EU Funds. The different types of infrastructure (cycle lane, cycle path etc) should be defined at the EU level together with their signalization and legal consequences and then be advised to Member States. The criteria should be recommended for cycling infrastructure and applied obligatory for EU Funded infrastructure.

"EuroVelo, the long-distance cycle route network, should be included in the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T)."

The participants agreed with the statement and proposed to provide the same procedure to manage the EuroVelo network as the TEN-T network. They also proposed to apply strict and obligatory standards.

"At least 10% of the EU's transport funds should be invested in cycling. „

When discussing the idea of a dedicated EU budget for cycling, all participants agreed to this, even if there was no consensus about the exact percentage. One of the participants suggested to link the budget for cycling with the challenges / ambitions and investments needed to tackle these challenges / reach the ambitions of a city/region/country. If the set goals are reached, a fast track to more funding for cycling could be opened up. This would of course also imply a close monitoring of the impact of measures and the share of cycling.

Targets for budget spent on cycling should not only be set on EU level, but also on local, regional and national level. This should be combined with a quality check of cycling infrastructure that is invested in.

There is a need and at the same time huge potential for cycling projects. However, it is currently very difficult for the usually smaller size, cost-efficient cycling projects to be eligible in large funding schemes such as ELENA, H2020 or the Juncker Plan. Participants did make an important note to extend a dedicated cycling budget also on the national and local government level and especially to check quality of investments made.

"The EU should recommend the introduction of 30 km/h (20 mph) to be the default speed limit in urban areas in the EU."

The participants agreed with the statement that 30km/h (20 mph) should become the default speed limit in order to prevent collisions to happen in the first place as well as to lessen the impact of collisions that could not be avoided. However, it was argues that the definition of an 'urban area' was not precise enough. For highly-urbanised countries such as Belgium where more than 90 % of the country is defined as an 'urban area', it was felt that such a recommendation was not realistic. Therefore it was suggested to introduce a European classification of urban areas (e.g. residential areas, schools, hospitals, etc.) to take these concerns into account.

"All new motorised four-wheelers, buses and heavy goods vehicles should be equipped with Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) systems."

All participants agreed that equipping new motorized four-wheelers with ISA would be a useful tool in enforcing speed limits with almost immediate effect on the whole system. There was a lively discussion as to how strict such a system should be: while some participants thought that an over-ridable system would be already very useful in helping drivers to stick to speed limits and also politically more realistic to implement, other participants made the point that in countries with generally low compliance with highway code rules an over-ridable system would not be that effective.

Participants still felt that one of the traditional approaches in managing speed - through infrastructure adaptation to steer behavior ("self-explaining roads") - should still be applied in the long-term in order to prevent frustration at the drivers' side. But there was agreement that ISA can produce quicker results at lower costs.

As to the political acceptance of ISA, there was agreement that with autonomous cars likely to enter the market within a couple of years the issue would need to be addressed – and solved – anyway. However, with ISA technology ready to go, time should not be wasted until autonomous cars will be also self-driving in the urban realm where most cycle trips take place.

"Cycling should be properly integrated in the multi-modal transport system, such as Mobility-As-A-Service schemes, in particular in regards to journey-planning, ticketing, parking etc. „

Participants agree with this statement and see a lot of benefits, especially for European citizens, of a better integrated system. They would welcome recommendations for EU standards on data and connectivity. However, it is also acknowledged in the group that this is not an easy task as existing smart solutions are difficult to combine and standardization is a challenge. Leadership of the EU certainly has an added value to overcome the barriers many local and national governments face.

"E-mobility policies at all governmental levels should always take e-cycling into full account. „

All participants agreed about the need to introduce e-bicycles in all e-mobility policies at all governmental levels. Many cities are including e-bikes in their fleets and in their promotion of cycling towards citizens. These efforts could be multiplied by a EU Cycling Strategy.
One of the city representatives pointed out that "e-cars are not the right solution for cities anyway, as they will not solve the problem of congestion and lack of space". The EU can also help in creating better regulation (concerning road laws for e-bicycles).

"EU green public procurement rules should provide to check if (e-) bikes can be bought instead of passenger cars and (e-) cargo bikes instead of LCVs. „

All participants esteem it is necessary to check if the take up of e-(cargo)-bicycles and shared mobility can be stimulated through adapted and ambitious green public procurement rules, in order to reach the EU goals to lower CO2 emissions and to harmonize rules in EU Member States. Participants said the wording of the statement might need some adaptation: (e-cargo-) bikes can be preferred when they fit the need and purpose of the public procurement. The

EU should provide Member States with fact based evidence to build the case for (e-cargo-)bikes and shared mobility.

"The EU should urge Member States to create a fiscal level-playing field for cycling with other modes of transport for commuting purposes. „

According to some participants, recommendations could be made in the EU semester procedure, as there are already numerous examples of good practices in Europe to divert from private motorized fiscal incentives. Participants also think recommendations are necessary in order to achieve the EU goal of internalizing external costs of transport.
Civil society organisations can then bring these recommendations to the attention of local and national governments. Networking and information at conferences also help to spread the information and recommendations.

"The EU Regulation on Passenger Rights on Trains should be revised to require rail operators to provide bicycle carriage on all services. „

This statement was overall considered as very important and had general support of participants, especially new vehicles should be obliged to have bicycle storage spaces. Old vehicles should be retrofitted and EU should provide subsidies to the operators for implementation. The EU should however take into consideration the different capacity of long distance trains and commuting trains.
As for a possible extension of the proposal to bus and ferry, there was less consensus.

"Eurostat should develop a common data collection methodology and harmonized definitions for national data on bicycle use. „

Although many participants agreed this is a very important topic, there was no consensus on how best to proceed. The EU should help Member States and EU cities work towards comparable cycling data, show how the data can be used and possibly integrate a harmonized methodology in existing tools (eg. SUMPs). Open data standards at EU level were also recommended by participants.

Participants also looked in detail at which cycling data should be measured: At city level, there were suggestions to measure: traffic time, bottlenecks, preferred routes and develop open city maps. At national level we should measure: modal split, state of network.

"The EU should play a more active role on gathering expertise on cycling, spreading best practice and building capacity of public bodies, both in the EU and beyond."

The participants fully agreed but they stressed it is not "instead" but "besides" the legislative hard law and guidelines.

Proposed new topics:

- an EU wide bicycle registration system (or other initiative) to prevent bike theft
- investments in local cycling actors