

Bigger than Denmark: Economic benefits of cycling in the EU-27



For immediate release

Brussels, 4 September 2013

German Chancellor Angela Merkel opened Europe's biggest bike trade fair Eurobike last Wednesday, signaling a huge step forward for the cycling advocacy movement. At the same time ECF released its analysis of the "Economic benefits of cycling in the EU-27" making it clear that such high level interest in cycling is set to continue. Senior politicians are beginning to realize that daily cycling not only changes the face of our cities for the better, it also makes much sense in economic terms.

Calculating all internal and external benefits of cycling together and adding the turnover of related industries, ECF estimates the number to be **well above € 200 bn annually**, or **more than € 400 for every person that lives in the EU**. By far the biggest single chunk is on the health side, with over € 110 bn annually. ECF calculated this figure by using the [Health Economic Assessment Tool \(HEAT\) for Cycling](#), developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Despite the excellent work done by the WHO, there is still a long way to go within the health sector in promoting active mobility. ECF therefore has the following 3 key messages to the political world in general and to the health sector in particular:

n Cycling policy needs continuous political leadership and coordination from the very top down. Cycling has links to many different policy departments[i]. This fragmentation needs to be overcome. ECF therefore encourages government at all levels[ii] to develop and implement **cross-departmental cycling action plans**.

n As the main socioeconomic benefit of cycling is on the health side, the ECF calls in particular upon the health sector to live up to its responsibility. Health departments should actively reach out to other departments for fully inclusive cycling policies. This also relates to the concept of 'health in all policies'. Health departments and health insurance programmes are also invited to financially **support cycling projects**, e.g. cycling infrastructure investments and promotion campaigns. Another tool is to offer regular active commuters health insurance discounts.

n The "polluter pays" principle is finding more and more political support. The European Commission stated in its White Paper on Transport (2011[iii]) the ambition to "Proceed to the full and mandatory internalization of external costs (including noise, local pollution and congestion)". ECF welcomes the progress being made here but thinks that the **external health benefits of cycling should be included in this policy framework**.

For reading ECF's political messages in further detail please here.

ECF detailed calculations on the numbers can be found here:

ECF would like to point out that these calculations can be replicated to a large extent at every local, regional and national level and we encourage cycling advocates to do so when speaking to their politicians. The WHO currently organizes a number of training [webinars](#) in English and German language on how to use the HEAT tool.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

The figures:

- Annual economic benefits in the EU-27[iv] are estimated at about € 205.2 – 217.3 bn (in 2010), based on internal and external benefits[v] of cycling as well as turnover in relevant industries;
- Cycling in the EU therefore has an annual economic benefit of about € 410 – 434 per capita;

- With about 80 %, the health benefits of cycling are by far the largest single category among the direct internal and external benefits: using WHO's [HEAT for cycling](#), ECF calculated € 114 – 121 bn at current levels of cycling. At this moment, HEAT only takes reduced mortality into account, and not reduced morbidity. The numbers presented here are therefore of a conservative nature;
- By comparison, investments in bicycle infrastructure and promotion are much lower: In the Netherlands, the leading European cycling country with a 27 % cycling mode share, about € 25 are invested annually per capita; in the UK, the figure estimated by ECF member CTC, the UK's national cycling charity, is as low as about £ 2 per capita (€ 2.35), while it is about 3 € Euro in Hungary; On European average, ECF estimates that € 5-6 per capita are invested annually in cycling infrastructure and promotion.

Type of benefit	In € for 2010 in EU-27
1 Health benefits: reduced mortality	€ 114 – 121 bn
2 Congestion-easing	€ 24.2 bn
3 Fuel savings at US\$ 100/ barrel	€ 2.7 – 5.8 bn
4 Reduced CO2 emission	€ 1.4 – 3.0 bn
5 Reduced air pollution	€ 0.9 bn
6 Reduced noise pollution	€ 0.3 bn
7 Tourism industry	€ 44 bn
8 Bicycle industry	€ 18 bn
Total	€ 205 – 217.3 bn

About the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF)

With over 70 members across nearly 40 countries, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) unites cyclist' associations from across the globe, giving them a voice on the international level. Our aim is to get more people cycling more often by influencing policy in favour of cycling. ECF's members are complemented by networks Scientists for Cycling, Cities for Cycling and the ECF Cycling Industry Club.

More at www.ecf.com

Images

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[i] Transport, environment and energy, public health, urban affairs/ city planning, education, tourism, finances, etc.

[ii] Local, regional, national, European.

[iii] European Commission, White Paper Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system, COM(2011) 144 final

[iv] Croatia who joined the EU as 28th member state on July 1, 2013 could not be included in this study.

[v] Direct internal and external benefits are estimated at € 143.2 – 155.3 bn (Health benefits of cycling; Congestion-easing due to cycle use; Fuel savings due to cycle use; Reduced CO₂ emissions due to cycle use; Reduced air pollution due to cycle use; Reduced noise pollution due to cycle use); industry turnover estimated at € 62 bn, thereof the tourism industry (€ 44 bn) and the bicycle industry (€ 18 bn).