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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
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Subject:	European Declaration on Cycling – Preparation of interinstitutional discussions

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission adopted the proposal for a European Declaration on Cycling ('the Declaration') on 4 October 2023. This Declaration responds to the calls from the European Parliament, in particular its resolution on developing an EU cycling strategy¹, and from a number of Member States². The Declaration is in line with the New EU Urban Mobility Framework³.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0058_EN.html

² European Cycling Declaration (<https://www.benelux.int/fr/publication/european-cycling-declaration/>) signed in June 2022 by AT, BE, DK, IE, LU and NL, and later also by HR, CY, EE, FR, GR, HU, LT, SK, SI and ES.

³ COM(2021) 811.

2. Discussions were initiated by the Spanish Presidency during the meeting of Land Transport Working Party of 6 November 2023. Following the working party meetings on 27 November 2023 and 9 January 2024, and written consultations that followed, an agreement on the Belgian Presidency compromise was reached at the working party level on 17 January 2024.

II. MAIN CHANGES

3. The changes in the document compared to the Commission's proposal are indicated as follows: additions are underlined, deletions are marked with ~~striketrough~~.
4. The language related to road safety in recital 8 and in point 19 of Chapter V was aligned with 2017 Valetta Declaration on Road Safety.
5. More prominence was accorded to subsidiarity principle in recital 14.
6. The language regarding financial instruments (point 10 of Chapter II and point 17 of Chapter IV) was shortened and made less prescriptive to adapt it to the spirit of the political declaration.
7. A notion of ‘safe speeds in mixed traffic’ was added in point 13 of Chapter III.
8. Taking into account the reservations from a number of delegations regarding the deployment of charging points (point 16 of Chapter III), the point was deleted.
9. Throughout the text, several minor additions and changes were made to improve the readability of the text and increase Member States’ ownership of the Declaration.

III. NEXT STEPS

10. The Declaration is to be signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission as a joint declaration. In light of the modifications proposed by the Member States, it is necessary to engage in the inter-institutional discussions with the Parliament and the Commission in order to finalise the text.

11. The Presidency's intention is to sign the Declaration during the informal Transport Ministers meeting in April 2024. The final text will be submitted for a formal approval by the Council, via Coreper, ahead of its signature.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

12. In view of the above, the Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to:
- endorse the agreement on the draft Declaration reached at the working party level, as outlined in the Annex to this note;
 - authorize the Presidency to begin, on this basis, inter-institutional discussions with the Parliament and the Commission.
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European Declaration on Cycling

The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission solemnly proclaim the following joint Declaration on Cycling

Preamble

Whereas:

- (1) Transport is key for social inclusion and economic development, and for creating jobs and promoting access to other essential services, such as employment, education, health and care. However, it is still a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, air, noise and water pollution. Congestion remains a serious challenge to the efficiency of transport systems and also reduces the liveability of affected areas, at a considerable cost to society and the economy.
- (2) Sustainable forms of transport are essential for achieving the EU's climate, zero pollution and energy efficiency objectives. Among these, cycling is one of the most sustainable, healthy and efficient, with considerable potential to support the decarbonisation of urban transport and help achieve the EU-wide target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 and climate neutrality by 2050 in line with the European Climate Law¹. It will also help us advance towards the zero pollution ambition², with numerous co-benefits in other areas. ~~The importance of~~ Further developing cycling is ~~in particular key~~ important for European towns and cities as part of our climate objectives.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/956 ('European Climate Law').

² The 8th Environment Action Programme (Decision (EU) 2022/591) calls upon the Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities and stakeholders, as appropriate, to strengthen environmentally positive incentives and to phase out environmentally harmful subsidies, in particular fossil subsidies, at Union, national, regional and local level.

- (3) Cycling comprises a broad and dynamic range of human-powered road vehicles, including bikes for various terrains, cargo bikes, bikes for transporting children, bikes for people with disabilities, trikes, recumbent bikes, velomobiles, tandems, e-bikes, ~~speed pedelees~~ and bike trailers. They cater for a wide range of transport and mobility needs and require appropriate infrastructure. Cycling is playing an increasingly important role in the urban transport of goods, in particular parcel deliveries and shopping, thanks to cargo bikes and alike. In order to reach the full potential of cycling, cycling policies should reflect this diversity.
- (4) In order to reach its full potential, cycling needs to be properly addressed in ~~urban~~ mobility policies at all levels of governance and funding, transport planning, awareness raising, allocation of space, safety regulations and adequate infrastructure, including a special focus on persons with disabilities or reduced mobility. For example, the EU concept for sustainable urban mobility planning³ puts active mobility, including cycling, at the centre. Measures to support cycling need to be reported under the decarbonisation pillar of the National Energy and Climate Plans and be properly considered in the plans of the Horizon Europe mission on 100 Climate- Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030.
- (5) Cycling improves social inclusiveness, contributing to people's physical and mental health and well-being. It is a moderate physical activity that reduces health risks and premature deaths linked with sedentary lifestyles. Bicycles with electric assistance (~~e-bikes, speed pedelees~~) are increasingly popular and allow people to cover longer distances, meet the mobility and transport needs of families, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and reach additional groups, such as older people and persons with disabilities or reduced mobility.
- (6) More and better safe cycling infrastructure across the EU is essential to attract more people to cycling, in and between urban and rural areas. Better cycling infrastructure will also benefit other means, such as micro-mobility solutions.

³ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/550 of 8 March 2023 on National Support Programmes for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning.

- (7) Relevant funding dedicated to cycling – at local, national and European levels – is needed to match the ambition to get more people cycling. An appropriate level of investment is a prerequisite for significantly improving cycling conditions and maintaining infrastructure.
- (8) ~~Safety is a prerequisite to encourage people to cycle, especially those groups that may still hesitate, including many women, children and older people.~~ In addition to safer infrastructure such as separated cycle paths and secure parking, road safety plans and strategies following a risk-based or an integrated approach (such as the ‘Safe System’ approach) ~~all elements of the Safe System approach need to be applied~~ should apply to both cycling and to motorised vehicles and drivers sharing the road with cyclists. This includes safe speeds, safe road use and safe vehicles, underpinned by the strong enforcement of road traffic rules. Developing standards for cycling lanes would increase design-embedded safety for new cycling infrastructure. Training and education, such as at schools, can help promote safe cycling.
- (9) The European cycling industry is a global innovator and leader as well as an important and growing sector of the economy. It currently represents over 1 000 SMEs⁴ and accounts for 1 million jobs, with potential for many more.
- (10) Cycling is also a key enabler of sustainable tourism and contributes to connectivity within and between rural and urban areas, especially in combination with trains, buses and other modes to create multimodal mobility services. It brings tangible benefits to the local economy, in particular to SMEs.
- (11) Cycling data is not collected consistently in the EU. This affects the optimal choice of transport investments and the evaluation of the effectiveness of measures already taken.

⁴ In particular cycling service and repair, retailers etc.

- (12) The principles included in this Declaration are expected to help deliver on the EU climate and environmental targets, including in particular the Zero Pollution Action Plan⁵ and the other objectives of the European Green Deal, the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy⁶, and the New EU Urban Mobility Framework⁷.
- (13) The European Parliament adopted a resolution on developing an EU cycling strategy in February 2023⁸. In 2022, six EU Member States prepared a European Cycling Declaration, which has so far been signed by the majority of Member States⁹.
- (14) ~~The~~This Declaration constitutes a political instrument of the Union intended for promotion and implementation of the principles included therein. in this Declaration is a political commitment of the Union. It does not contain any legally binding commitment. The Union is responsible for implementing this Declaration in cooperation with its Member States, in accordance with their respective competences and in full compliance with Union law. This Declaration does not affect the allocation of competences between the Union and its Member States.

⁵ Communication of the Commission Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil' ([COM\(2021\) 400 final](#)).

⁶ COM(2020) 789.

⁷ COM(2021) 811.

⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0058_EN.html

⁹ <https://www.benelux.int/fr/publication/european-cycling-declaration/>

Declaration on Cycling

We aim to unleash the full potential of cycling in the EU. This Declaration recognises cycling as one of the most sustainable, accessible and inclusive, low-cost and healthy forms of transport and recreation, and its key importance for European society and the economy. The Declaration should serve as a strategic compass for existing and future policies and initiatives related to cycling.

We therefore declare that:

Chapter I: Developing and strengthening cycling policies

The EU and its Member States, together with regional and local authorities, all have a key role to play in supporting the further uptake of cycling.

We commit to:

1. developing, adopting and strengthening cycling policies and strategies at all relevant levels of governance;
2. taking necessary measures to implement these cycling policies and strategies as swiftly as possible;
3. ~~taking prioritising~~ cycling measures into account in sustainable ~~urban~~ mobility planning in urban and rural areas, including the wider commuting area beyond municipal borders;
4. encouraging companies, organisations and institutions to promote cycling through mobility management schemes such as cycle to work incentives, the provision of company (e-)bikes, adequate cycle parking and facilities, and the use of bike-based delivery services;
5. promoting cycling as a healthy way of transport or recreation, through awareness raising, advocacy campaigns, capacity building and ~~the~~ trainings of ~~active mobility~~ professionals, including at ~~in~~ relevant international fora.

Everyone, including people with disabilities or those with reduced mobility and irrespective of age and gender should have access to mobility, and cycling can make a major contribution to enable this. Cycling should also be affordable irrespective of income level and promoted as beneficial to mental and physical health.

We commit to:

6. increasing the use of cycling to promote social inclusion by paying particular attention to the needs of women, children, older people and vulnerable and marginalised groups;
7. taking measures to enable better access to cycling for people with disabilities or those with reduced mobility;
8. taking measures to boost active mobility of older people and thereby contributing to active ageing;
9. providing targeted cycling training in particular for children and vulnerable and marginalised groups;
10. ~~taking note of the possibility for Member States to apply reduced VAT rates for the supply, rental and repair of bikes and e-bikes as introduced by Council Directive (EU) 2022/542¹⁰ in order considering measures~~ to increase affordability of cycling¹¹.

¹⁰ ~~Council Directive (EU) 2022/542 of 5 April 2022 amending Directives 2006/112/EC and (EU) 2020/285 as regards rates of value added tax, OJ L 107, 6.4.2022, pp. 1–12.~~

¹¹ For example, Council Directive (EU) 2022/542 (OJ L 107, 6.4.2022, pp. 1-12) foresees the possibility for Member States to apply reduced VAT rates for the supply, rental and repairing services of bikes, including e-bikes.

Improving the quality, quantity, continuity and attractiveness of cycling infrastructure is essential to promote greater cycling use.

We commit to:

11. significantly increasing safe and coherent cycling infrastructure across Europe;
12. developing and using EU guidance on standards for quality requirements regarding vulnerable road users, including cyclists, under Directive (EU) 2019/1936 on road infrastructure safety management¹²;
13. giving sufficient space to cyclists and other vulnerable road users to increase safety levels, in particular through the physical separation of cycle paths from motorised traffic ~~wherever feasible~~ where relevant, or by ensuring safe speeds in mixed traffic;
14. working towards creating a coherent cycling network in cities and improving connectivity between suburban and rural areas and city centres, including cycle highways;
15. ensuring the provision of safe and secure bike parking spaces in urban and rural areas, including at railway and bus stations and mobility hubs;
- ~~16. supporting the deployment of charging points for e-bikes in urban planning and in bike parking spaces inside and outside buildings.~~

¹² Directive (EU) 2019/1936 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 amending Directive 2008/96/EC on road infrastructure safety management, OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, pp. 1–16.

More investments are needed to unlock the potential for cycling.

We commit to:

17. providing technical support, funding and financing to help develop and implement cycling strategies and cycling-related investments, including through the relevant EU instruments and under the conditions set out therein; ~~this includes using the available EU instruments, in particular the Social Climate Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Technical Support Instrument¹³, and the Recovery and Resilience Facility to support cycling measures;~~
18. reflecting cycling in investments at all levels of governance¹⁴;

¹³ ~~Regulation (EU) 2021/240 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 February 2021 establishing a Technical Support Instrument~~ [EUR-Lex - 32021R0240 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ Incl. for National Energy and Climate Plans (introduced by Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the governance of the energy union and climate action)

Everyone should be able to cycle in a safe and secure manner.

We commit to:

19. working towards delivering on the commitments set out in the Valletta Declaration¹⁵, namely a target of halving the number of serious injuries in the EU by 2030 from the 2020 baseline using the definition in the Valletta Declaration, and in the framework of an overall road safety strategy for this period (the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030¹⁶ and national road safety strategies and action plans); ~~making Vision Zero¹⁷ (no road deaths by 2050) a reality, including for vulnerable road users, while reaching an interim target of a 50% reduction in fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 in line with the Valletta Declaration¹⁸;~~
20. ~~enforcing~~promoting the enforcement of road safety rules and legislation to ensure the coexistence of different means of transport, with a focus on protecting cyclists and other vulnerable road users;
21. ensuring that the rules on the safety requirements applicable to e-bikes are substantial, and promote their deployment;
22. improving security at public bike parking spaces (including bike sharing and multimodal hubs), and increasing efforts to tackle the issue of bike theft;
23. strengthening cycle training – including teaching children and young people how to cycle – and awareness raising campaigns on road safety, in particular on the biggest risks to cyclists, and supporting the safe use of bikes and e-bikes, as well as addressing the awareness of the safety of vulnerable road users during driver training.

¹⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9994-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁶ [SWD\(2019\) 283 final](#)

¹⁷ https://road-safety.transport.ec.europa.eu/index_en

¹⁸ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9994-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

Greater uptake of cycling means more high-quality, local jobs and is beneficial to the EU economy and cycling industry, and also contributes to the objectives of the EU industrial strategy.

We commit to:

24. creating conditions to increase the European production of a broad range of bicycles (including e-bikes, ~~speed pedelecs~~, and bikes for people with disabilities) and their components, including access to materials, equipment and maintenance of a global level-playing field through existing EU trade defence instruments;
25. supporting the bicycle service sector, including social economy entities and the circular use of bicycles (reuse, repair and rental);
26. creating favourable conditions to stimulate high-quality jobs and cycling clusters, including in cycling tourism, in order to significantly increase the number of cycling-related quality jobs, support SMEs and boost relevant skills and vocational training;
27. making the sector more attractive and enabling important job-to-job transitions from other relevant industries;
28. recognising the European cycling industry as a partner in the mobility system in order to strengthen resilience, sustainability, circularity and digitalisation in the cycling sector;
29. supporting cycling service industries, such as bike sharing and cycle logistics, especially in cities, including by strengthening the integration of cycle logistics into the logistics system.

Chapter VII: Supporting multimodality and cycling tourism

Cycling should play a key role in improving multimodal connectivity and tourism, especially in combination with trains, buses and other modes, both in urban and rural areas.

We commit to:

30. promoting and implementing multimodal solutions in urban, suburban and rural areas, as well as for long-distance trips, by creating more synergies between cycling and other modes of transport, such as enabling the transport of more bicycles on buses and trains, and providing safer and secure parking areas for bikes at stations and mobility hubs;
31. supporting bike sharing schemes as a solution to first and last mile access to public transport services;
32. creating favourable conditions to support cycling as a sustainable means of recreation and tourism.

Chapter VIII: Improving the collection of data on cycling

Cycling data needs to be collected in the same way across the EU to ensure effective monitoring of progress on implementation of the principles and commitments included in this Declaration.

We commit to:

33. monitoring the implementation of our commitments;
34. enabling the continuous measurement of progress on the use of cycling in the EU by establishing an EU-wide baseline, including the length, network density, quality and accessibility of cycling infrastructure and services for several user types, the share of cycling in total transport and mobility activity, and the number of serious injuries and fatalities among cyclists;

35. developing harmonised indicators related to cycling for urban nodes of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T);
36. developing statistics on cycling and its infrastructure at local, national and EU levels, including cooperation between Member States and Eurostat to collect cycling data.
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