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IT WAS SUNNY SIDE UP AT THE LEADERS' BREAKFAST

Talk about a power breakfast. The Cycling Industry Leaders' Breakfast on Thursday not only broke attendance records with a crowd of nearly 300, but brought many of the industry's bigwigs together with other advocates for getting more people on bikes.

The future looks bright, as soaring pedelec sales have led the European Cycling Federation to significantly boost its projections for future bicycle sales.

Adam Bodor, the ECF's advocacy and EuroVelo director, made a presentation on growing cycling as a mode of transportation. According to a recent survey, he said, 60 percent of Europeans would consider cycling as a means of transportation, equaling a potential market of 340 million people.

Because of strong e-bike sales, the ECF has already adjusted its 2030 projections for annual bike sales across the EU to 18.5 million units from 12 million.

He noted that proper infrastructure and financing for transportation is an important component of growth, along with legislation and tax structures that favor cycling.

Martin Gibbs, director of Sports Resolutions, moderated a panel discussion after Bodor's presentation with Tony Grimaldi, chairman of Cycling Industry Europe; Erhard Büchel, president of CONEBI; and Robbert de Kock of the World Federation of the Sporting Goods industry.

Grimaldi, whose day job is being CEO of Cycleurope, said unified lobbying efforts can have results, citing recent proposals to mandate that all e-bikes carry insurance, and that electric cars — but not e-bikes — get a break on VAT.

"Our lobbying has successfully mobilized a majority in the European Parliament against the insurance proposal, and we now hope to turn the VAT proposal around as well," he said.

Büchel said one problem hindering e-bike sales are disparate rules and regulations across EU member countries. Overly restrictive laws in many countries have prevented speed pedelecs in particular from living up to

their potential, he said.

Yet the market potential is attractive enough to draw the attention of such huge companies as General Motors, which has launched a new e-bike brand, Ariv; and the American motorcycle icon Harley-Davidson, which has launched a new electric motorcycle and recently announced it would branch out into e-bikes as well.

De Kock said the industry has a huge opportunity among people who are not very active in their daily lives.

"Getting the couch potatoes off their digital devices and into the bicycle saddle by promoting an active lifestyle may sound like a big challenge, but it comes with huge potential rewards," he said.

He also challenged companies to take more social and environmental responsibility for their supply chains.

Büchel praised Europe's small and medium enterprises as the backbone of a vibrant bicycle industry that supplies a far greater proportion of domestic bicycle demand compared to the North American market, which relies almost entirely on imports, mostly from China and other Asian manufacturers.

An impressive number of industry leaders joined the breakfast, including Ton Anbeek, CEO of the Accell Group; Bob Margevicius, executive vice president of Specialized; Giant Manufacturing chairwoman Bonnie Tu; and Claus Fleischer, CEO of Bosch eBike Systems.

As Eurobike head Stefan Reisinger said in his opening remarks, one important function of a large trade show is to bring people in an industry together. The Cycling Industry Leaders' Breakfast did just that — leading one participant to joke that Eurobike is going to have to provide a larger room for next year's event. ■ LVR



Leaders' Breakfast panelists were (from left) Tony Grimaldi, Erhard Büchel, Robbert de Kock, and Martin Gibbs.