

Brussels, 6th May 2020

Dear President von der Leyen,
Executive Vice-President Timmermans,
Commissioner Vălean,
Cc: EU Parliament Chair of Transport and Tourism Committee and Chair of
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee

Investing in cycling to fast track the EU green recovery and EU Green Deal

We recognise that the current COVID-19 virus pandemic has caused unprecedented health and economic impacts on the EU. We strongly support the actions developed by EU institutions, governments, local authorities, the health sector, citizens and businesses to manage the crisis period.

The signatories of this letter represent over 130 million citizens who cycle regularly, generate external benefits of €150 billion per year in the EU and provide over 650,000 EU jobs. The EU is the world's most important cycling market with the biggest penetration of technologies such as e-bikes, bike sharing and cargo delivery bikes. E-bikes and cycling are already moving the EU towards sustainable urban mobility and our climate goals, they are proven technologies that are supported by citizens and governments at all levels in the EU.

The EU Green Deal calls for industrial leadership. The EU Industrial Strategy needs "European Champion" companies and Smart Value Chains that can be world leaders in their field. EU cycling companies are these global leaders, together with the suppliers of equipment, accessories and services that support these markets. They are operating in an industrial eco-system that is attracting global investment in new factories while stimulating innovative and fast-growing SMEs. Hubs of new development are growing rapidly in countries like Portugal, Belgium, Bulgaria and Romania and Italy.

With this background we offer our contribution to a green EU Recovery Plan that will have rapid impact on employment recovery, act against a second wave of the disease and add value to the actions of Member States. This will be highly effective because it also moves towards objectives such as the EU Green Deal, it is an investment not a bail-out.

COVID recovery plan requirements:

A plan that supports economic stimulus, without creating risk of further pandemic waves.

During a return to normal economic activity reduced public transport capacity and public anxiety cannot increase private car use in already congested cities, or lockdown will be replaced by gridlock. Member states, cities and regions have said they need cycling to take a significant capacity of journeys immediately or there will be a big restraint on recovery.

Frontrunner cities have shown the way by creating special cycling networks that relieve pressure on urban mobility. But users need bikes that enable the same travel distances as public transport and deliveries. This means e-bikes, shared bikes and delivery e-bikes.

Cycle tourism and leisure supported over 400,000 jobs in the EU before the pandemic. These are important jobs in the rural economy because cyclists avoid congested hot spots and travel to lower intensity destinations that will be vital for restarting the post COVID economy. Access from cities to open space are part of the vital networks to be created.

A plan that stimulates green job creation, reemployment and the restart of capital investments.

Cycling networks create local jobs, stimulating purchasing at local small and medium sized businesses in all sectors and locations. Cycling businesses cover a complete spectrum from local bike sharing, cycling delivery services, cycle retail, leisure and tourism to our leading global champions.

There are significant major investment projects in the cycling sector which have attracted global investors to build new factories in Europe, many of which can see a rapid restart to activity when given a strong market signal from the EU.

Strategic investments that support the EU Green Deal and a green COVID-recovery.

As well as the urban mobility capacity that is needed to support all employment growth in the first stage of COVID-19 recovery there is a much bigger range of strategic benefits for the EU in this plan.

Investment in a cycling recovery plan provides an immediate return on investment for the EU Green Deal. Each extra cyclist delivers reductions in CO2 emissions, air pollution, noise and congestion, especially in cities where 70% of EU citizens live. There are consequential benefits in improved public health and road safety, while improved environmental conditions stimulate local economies.

Each Euro spent on a bicycle creates more green employment than the same Euro spent on cars and similarly each Euro spent on cycling infrastructure creates more jobs than similar expenditure on road highways so these investments are exceptional value for money.

A plan that supports EU values of fairness, access for all and the principles of the single market.

E-bikes are an EU success story. But the benefits are unevenly distributed, with the advanced markets purchasing 100 times more bikes per capita than the least developed countries. There are price, availability and service barriers in many countries that prevent a full market access being established. This can be changed by the right level of investment to reach a tipping point or critical mass in the low uptake countries.

Previous recessions have seen “bail-outs” that have prevented reform of sustainable mobility and undermined multi-modal transport solutions. This has to change. Under fair single market rules we challenge any exclusive scrappage scheme for automotive industries unless funding is balanced with similar schemes for bicycles as proposed here.

Specific recommendations:

At the Cycling Industries Europe Annual Summit 2020 we set out our plan for COVID-19 recovery based on three main proposals which will meet all of the criteria set out above.

1. A centralised EU E-bike Access Fund.

This fund will make the benefits of e-bikes available in all countries in the EU and stimulate European jobs in European Champion companies of all sizes including bike sharing and bikes for commercial services.

A fund of €5.4 billion has been calculated to be the amount needed to take the e-bike market through “tipping point” in a further 22 countries, by implementing either purchase premiums or bike sharing, rental and leasing schemes.

2. A comprehensive network of so called “COVID lanes” or similar infrastructure which will immediately facilitate cycling access in cities and stimulate green and sustainable mobility.

An EU wide target for the amount of road network converted to additional cycling capacity is proposed, benchmarked on the proposals from Ile de France and City of Paris. The target is 95,000 kilometres which is available for both increased commuting and business deliveries.

Funding of EU recovery funds and subsequently EU Green Deal funds to a value of €2 billion should be made available to cities for the initial cost of creating the lanes and then making them permanent.

3. Leveraging the EU’s financial support for the goals of the European Cycling Strategy.

The proposal for an EU Cycling Strategy was presented to the EU Commission in 2017, following recommendations from the EU Parliament and the EU Member States.

This remains the document of record for what could and should be implemented in EU Policy to deliver a comprehensive increase in cycling across the EU by 2030, a major contribution to the EU’s climate and environmental goals.

In particular it calls for an expenditure of €6billion per EU budget period to be spent on cycling through central and structural funds. In the budget ending 2020 the expenditure is expected to be just €2billion, therefore there is a need to accelerate the allocation and take up of funds for cycling at all levels of the EU to get to at least €6billion in the forthcoming budget round.

More details on each proposal can be given in terms of delivery and calculation as required.

We trust you to make strategic investments that will deliver outstanding impacts for the EU both at this challenging time and going forward. We look forward to working with you to achieve these results by delivering these dedicated cycling investments.

Yours sincerely,

The organisations listed below:

