

CYCLING FORWARD

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Recently launched by the European Commission at Urban Mobility Days, the **EU Cycling Declaration** signifies a higher-level commitment to boosting cycling in Europe.

But what does this Declaration truly entail for European cities and regions, and how will it impact the broader landscape of active mobility? POLIS dives in!

Officially launched by the European Commission at the beginning of October amidst the bustling atmosphere of Urban Mobility Days in Seville (Spain), the [EU Cycling Declaration](#) stands as a groundbreaking commitment poised to transform the landscape of cycling in Europe.

While it still needs to be signed by the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission, this Declaration already signifies a huge step forward in the right direction. With its main principles divided into eight chapters and 36 concrete commitments, it positions cycling as an indispensable element in the trajectory toward decarbonising European cities - a very much needed step forward.

Doing it right!

The EU Cycling Declaration conveys a definitive message, acknowledging cycling as a standalone mode of transportation that deserves its rightful place in the realm of mobility planning. Its fundamental principles address crucial aspects essential for the widespread adoption of cycling:

- Developing and strengthening cycling policies
- Encouraging inclusive, affordable, and healthy mobility
- Creating more and better cycling infrastructure
- Increasing investments and creating favourable conditions for cycling
- Supporting multimodality and cycling tourism



cities in motion

- Improving road safety and security
- Supporting quality green jobs and the development of a world-class European cycling industry
- Improving the collection of data on cycling

These principles and commitments go beyond boosting cycling infrastructure, mode share, or kilometres cycled; they are about doing it right. They aim to transform the way we view transportation, promoting equity, safety, comfort, sustainability, industry innovation, and professional and organisational capabilities.

Furthermore, the Declaration holds promise for more than just cycling. It opens doors to other needed improvements in various aspects of urban and active mobility, including walking, wheeling, intermodality, road safety, and quality of public spaces.

This collective vision urges us to fully embrace this multifaceted opportunity and commit ourselves to diligent efforts aimed at making active mobility a seamless, inclusive, and easily accessible choice for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities. In doing so, we are not merely advocating for a shift in transportation preferences but also catalysing a broader transformation in how people interact with their urban environments. It is an invitation to create cities where active mobility isn't just an option, but a convenient and celebrated mode of transportation, making sustainable and healthy living accessible to all.

The beginning of a long path

The journey has just begun, and there's a significant amount of work ahead for European institutions, national governments, and regional and local authorities to translate the principles outlined in the Declaration into tangible action. It's crucial to recognise that while documents like this one are important, they alone cannot bring about the desired changes.

To unlock the full potential of cycling for citizens, cities, and industries, it's imperative for governance at various levels to seize the opportunities presented by the Declaration. How? By properly structuring their actions, revising their budgets, and working in cooperation to promote the needed change that will support more sustainable and democratic transport modes!

The EU Cycling Declaration serves as a potent catalyst and tool for change. It can play a pivotal role in garnering political support for active transportation methods, regardless of the government level. Moreover, it acts as a mechanism to bolster climate-related initiatives by integrating transport into various policies and streamlining the planning and implementation processes for cities. This integration facilitates smoother access to European Instruments like the Social Climate Fund and the Cities Mission.

To effectively bring these aspirations to life, national governments must assume the role of facilitators for change within their regions and cities. How? By providing necessary funding, organisational frameworks, and resources; this includes prioritising cross-border cycling initiatives, addressing rural and isolated areas' needs, aligning budgets, and revising regulations. Encouraging collaboration and enhancing organisational structures among municipalities are crucial steps in realising the Declaration's objectives.

Final thoughts

POLIS joins the choir in praising the efforts of the EU Commission and actively shares its perceptions and recommendations to ensure that cities and regions can fully harness the growing momentum around cycling; this is a unique opportunity to foster consistent development of cycling across Europe by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among local and regional stakeholders.

Whether you are a frontrunner or a late bloomer, there's always room for progress.





Dive into the EU Cycling Declaration, craft your plans, and rethink affordability, accessibility, speed limits, and parking policies. Collaborate with local cycling startups, reimagine bike-sharing, and enhance street design and public spaces to make them more inviting and eco-friendly. Ensure that cycling and other active modes are accessible to all.

In the face of challenges, the EU Cycling Declaration illuminates a path of immense opportunity and momentum. As we embark on this transformative journey, let our focus be unwavering — on commitment, innovation funding, policy alignment, and empowering local authorities. Together, let's pedal towards a future where active mobility is accessible to all.

Launched by the European Commission at the beginning of October during Urban Mobility Days in Seville, the [EU Cycling Declaration](#) is a document representing a higher-level commitment to the uptake of cycling in Europe.

With its key principles divided into eight chapters and 36 commitments, the EU Cycling Declaration still needs to be

signed by the three institutions: the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. Nevertheless, it already represents an important milestone for cycling as a key element in the future of decarbonising European cities. POLIS [joins the choir in praising](#) the efforts of the EU Commission and [actively shares](#) its perceptions and recommendations so that cities and regions can benefit from the cycling momentum.

The EU Cycling Declaration sends a clear message in recognising cycling as a transport mode in its own right and that it should be considered as such in mobility planning. Its key principles touch on relevant aspects for the uptake of cycling:

- Developing and strengthening cycling policies;
- Encouraging inclusive, affordable and healthy mobility;
- Creating more and better cycling infrastructure;
- Increasing investments and creating favourable conditions for cycling;
- Improving road safety and security;
- Supporting quality green jobs and the

development of a world-class European cycling industry;

- Supporting multimodality and cycling tourism;
- Improving the collection of data on cycling.

These principles and commitments are not just about increasing cycling in terms of infrastructure, mode share or km cycled. They are about doing it in the right way, shifting how transport modes are perceived, increasing equity, safety, comfort, sustainability, industry innovation, and professional and organisational capacity. Moreover, the Declaration could bring an opportunity not only for cycling but also for walking, wheeling, intermodality, road safety and quality of the public space. We should build on this opportunity and make active mobility an easy choice for everyone.

What is next?

The work is just beginning, and European Institutions, national governments, and regional and local authorities still have much to do so that the principles presented in the Declaration can be materialised. For citizens, cities and industry to harness the potential of cycling, we cannot assume that documents will act alone, however important they may be.

The different levels of governance need to take the chance of the Declaration to structure their actions, revise their budgets and work in cooperation to promote the needed change that will support more sustainable and democratic transport modes, such as cycling, walking, and wheeling.

As a structured document with high ambitions for cycling in Europe, recognised at a European level, the EU Cycling Declaration can act as a powerful lever and tool. It can support creating political commitment to active modes, no matter at which government level. It can also be a lever to support climate actions, linking transport to different measures and policies, making it more efficient for cities to plan and implement them, making the path to European Instruments such as the Social

Climate Fund and the Cities Mission smoother.

National governments need to be enablers of change in their regions and cities, giving them the money, structure and instruments required. Looking into cross-border and interregional cycling, rural areas, and isolated communities. Matching national budgets with regional and local funding. Revising regulations, standards and specifications for road design and safety, bicycles and frameworks. Linking municipalities that lack resources to work together, providing support to improve organisational structures.

POLIS see that as an opportunity to uniformly promote the development of cycling in different European regions as we foster more collaboration and knowledge sharing between local and regional players. This can also be a lever for cities and regions that are not typically recognised for their cycling culture, bringing political weight and force to local plans and aspirations.

If you are a frontrunner or a late bloomer, there is always room to improve. Take a look at the EU Cycling Declaration and put your plans together. Rethink affordability and accessibility, reconsider speed limits and on-street parking, engage with local cycling start-ups and enterprises and reassess bike sharing and mobility hubs. Delve into street design and public space use, can it be more people-friendly, greener, and welcoming? Are cycling and other active modes reaching everyone they can reach?

There is much to be done, there are still challenges to overcome. But there is also opportunity and momentum that the EU Cycling Declaration creates. Let's continue to build upon this. Let's see this as a first step in a moment of change. Let's see the commitment, the reflection on R&I funding, the links with other policies and multi-level cooperation and the strengthening of local authorities' capacity. POLIS will continue to follow this up close, with recommendations and advocating for safer, affordable and comfortable active modes for all.

