# Keeping Balance

## Maintaining the Strong Cycling Culture of Central and Eastern Europe

mobile 2020

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**Author:** Greg Spencer
**Design:** Tricia Barna
**Editor:** Nathan Johnson
**Proofreader:** Rachel Hideg
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## About

This publication reflects preliminary results of the European Commission–funded project Mobile 2020 (More biking in small and medium-sized towns of Central and Eastern Europe by 2020)

## Mobile 2020 Project Coordinator

Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) Germany

## Implementing Partners in Central and Eastern Europe

REC Bulgaria • REC Croatia • REC Czech Republic • REC Head Office (in Hungary) • BEF Estonia • BEF Latvia • Atgaja Community (in Lithuania) • REC Poland • REC Romania • REC Slovakia • REC Slovenia

## Expert Organisations

Institute for Social-Ecological Research (ISOE) (Germany) • Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH), Department of Transport, Planning and Logistics (Germany) • IBC International Bicycle Consultancy (Netherlands) • Municipality of Zwolle (Netherlands)



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***GOING BOHEMIAN***
*Mobile 2020 lent support to a Critical Mass ride in Liberec, Czech Republic.*
*Photo: Tomas Rehacek*

# Introduction

## Cycling cultures in Central and Eastern Europe

Cycling culture counts as one of the few jewels from Central and Eastern Europe's socialist past. During the years of market socialism, when few people owned cars and those who wanted one had to queue for years, sustainable mobility ruled the roads. In larger settlements, public transport was the popular choice, and Eastern Europe boasted systems of buses, trolleybuses, metros and trams that in many cases were superior to those in the West. In smaller towns and villages, people got around by foot and bike.

Active travel, including cycling, remains popular in much of this region. A 2013 Eurobarometer survey compared local travel habits of people throughout the EU. As Figure 1 shows, there are 17 EU countries where at least 10 percent of inhabitants ride a bike on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, Scandinavia and the Low Countries dominate. But most of the others, with the exception of Austria and Italy, are new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

You don't hear much about this. It's overshadowed by a big-city phenomenon of cycling fashion that has spread across Europe, the Americas and parts of Asia over the last decade. It's what Mikael Colville-Anderson, of the popular Copenhagen Cycle Chic blog, calls 'Cycling 2.0' — a revival of pedal-powered transport in the post-auto era. The archetype of this movement is the businessman in wool suit and tie, his ear pressed to a smartphone as he glides on a Boris bike past Tower Bridge. Or the fashionista in fur and knee-high boots, pedalling a Dutch-style city bike through the driven snow of Copenhagen. Or the Madison Avenue creative with goatee and messenger bag, racing a stripped-down fixie through Times Square.

Cycle chic has hit the countries of CEE as well, which is evident in the popular Critical Mass rides of Budapest and Prague and the automated bike-sharing systems cropping up in Ljubljana, Krakow, Warsaw and other large cities. But the recent upswing in big-city biking doesn't account for this region's high levels of cycling.

Based on available data, the latest cycling modal shares for several regional cities with more than half a million inhabitants are given below. Except where noted, data come from the website of the European Platform on Mobility Management (EPOMM):

- Bucharest: 1 percent
- Budapest: 1 percent
- Krakow: 1 percent
- Poznan: 2 percent
- Prague: 1 percent*
- Warsaw: 1 percent
- Wroclaw: 4 percent
- Zagreb: 2–3 percent**

* From Wikipedia: <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modal_share>

** From the EU-funded Presto cycling project website: <www.presto-cycling.eu>

If the big cities of CEE have such paltry cycling levels, smaller communities are clearly picking up the slack.

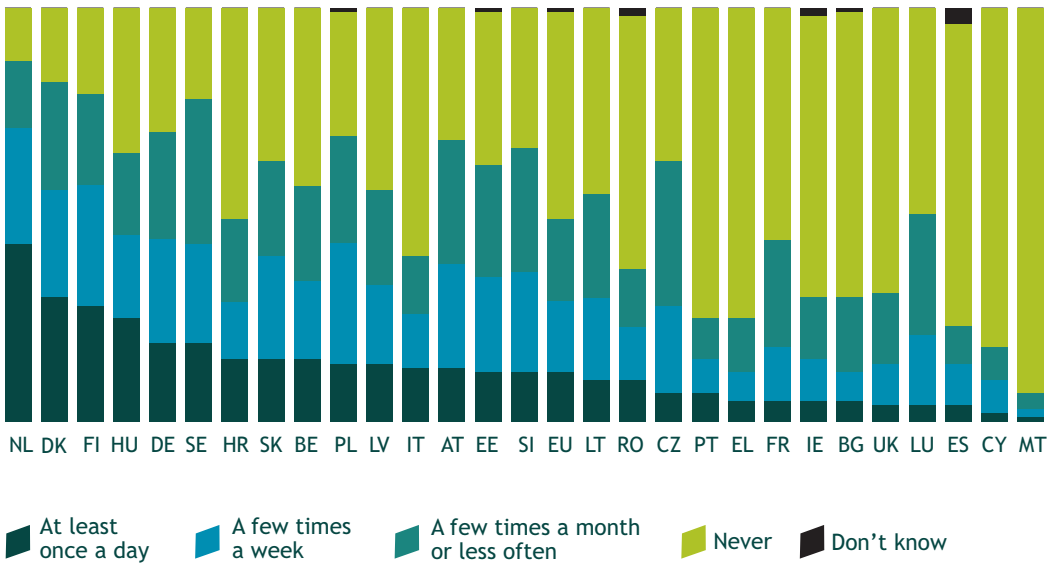
Hungary is illustrative. In Budapest, despite all the hoopla over Critical Mass (the spring 2013 event drew an estimated 100,000 participants, more than any other Critical Mass ride in the world) the cycling modal share is just 1 percent. Meanwhile, national data show that 25 percent of Hungarian adults ride a bicycle daily. A 2011 Eurobarometer survey found that 19.1 percent of Hungarians named the bicycle as their main mode of transport, putting them in second place in Europe behind the Dutch.

Apparently, it is Hungary's smaller towns and villages that account for the high national numbers, which is in accord with international patterns. As noted in the 2012 book *City Cycling*, edited by John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, smaller settlements are more conducive to everyday cycling for several reasons: their smaller scale means local trips are shorter; lower population densities mean lighter motor traffic on local streets; and relatively scarce public transport means the bicycle has fewer competitors. The book also speculates that the closer social connections in small towns help promote cycling.

So, is cycling on good footing in the CEE countryside? Relative to Western Europe, the answer is yes; but relative to this region's recent past, no. According to testimony of city participants in the Mobile 2020

Figure 1
**How often do you cycle?**

***Source:*** *Special Eurobarometer 406: Attitudes of Europeans towards Urban Mobility. European Commission, December 2013*



project, cycling levels were much higher 30 years ago than they are today. And the reason for this is the proliferation of cars.

Towns such as Gyor or Bekes in Hungary were both known as cycling havens during the socialist period. But several years of rising car use and inattention to cycling development mean that both cities had to start over to build up their currently impressive cycling levels.

Ljubljana, Slovenia, is perhaps unique in the region for its decades-old Danish-style cycling tracks. They were built in the late 1960s in consultation with Danish experts, and bikes commanded a strong modal share in the city until the change of systems. Over the next 15 years, cars quickly supplanted cycling culture. In the last decade the city has restarted work on cycling, including through such projects as CIVITAS ELAN and Mobile 2020. But it's a mark of what was lost that there are no longer any experts in Ljubljana — or anywhere else in Slovenia for that matter — who are qualified to design cycling infrastructure.

It would be good to avoid this loss of expertise elsewhere. In many small towns in CEE, cycling seems part of a bygone era. Pensioners coast down the street on bikes with springy leather seats and rod-activated brakes. They park at the local tavern in an old-school wheel-bender rack made of rusty rebar. Never mind retro chic, this is the real McCoy — Cycling 1.0 in the new millennium. It has its charms, but can't last forever.

The latest Eurobarometer survey of travel habits notes a difference between Hungary and countries like Denmark and the Netherlands. Although all three stand in the top tier of European cycling countries, the Dutch and Danes do so in the context of abundant, attractive alternatives. The survey notes that although Hungarians have the lowest car ownership rate in Europe, young Hungarians aspire to own cars much more than their northern counterparts.

***THE WAY AHEAD***
*Identifying strategies for the future at the Mobile 2020 seminar in Kuldiga, Latvia.*
*Photo: Liga Karkle*

## Mobile 2020's challenge

Mobile 2020 was a project to boost cycling modal share in small and medium-sized communities (up to 350,000 inhabitants) in Central and Eastern Europe. It was funded by the STEER Programme, the transport branch of the EU's Intelligent Energy Europe Programme.

The project sought to improve conditions for cycling by supporting the work of community stakeholders through state-of-the-art knowledge and professional networks. Good-practice examples and guidelines existed already. Mobile 2020 collated some of the best guidance material available in Europe, including from specialist organisations in Germany and the Netherlands and EU cycling projects such as Presto. This material was condensed and collated into a cycling handbook, and was then translated into the languages of Mobile 2020's 11 target countries and adjusted to national circumstances.

The handbook was meant to guide municipal planners and decision makers to make the right investments, improve their planning procedures and trigger a change in people's mobility behaviour at local level. The handbook was used as an instructional guide in a capacity-development programme involving trainings and study visits. The sessions took place in four frontrunner cities in the Netherlands,

***WHERE THE ACTION IS***
***Cyclists take to the streets en masse during a demonstration in Sopot, Poland.***
*Photo: Flickr.com/Creative Commons*

Scandinavia and northern Italy. This set-up allowed for in-city tours and expert presentations on the different ways that theory meets practice.

The project applied a multiplier approach: in the first stage, it built the capacities of 11 partner organisations; in the second, these organisations passed on their newly gained knowledge to cities in the 11 target countries.

The purpose of establishing national working groups — the networking element of the project — was to foster a long-term development of cycling through information exchange at a high level. The project aimed to establish these groups in every country with the hope that they would continue to function in perpetuity, thus ensuring continued progress towards achieving the long-term EU 2020 goals.

## Target region

Although the beneficiary countries share certain political and economic pasts, their cycling cultures and geographies vary considerably, and each one required a different approach.

The Baltic countries of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania all have relatively high levels of everyday cycling (10 to 14 percent of adults ride daily, according to the 2013 Eurobarometer survey). No doubt the region's flat terrain and smaller city sizes are contributing factors. Cycling communities were already formed in these countries, and their networking activities went smoothly and were conducted on a more informal basis than elsewhere. In Latvia, the national networking was deemed a success even though it didn't involve officials from government ministries. Members were confident they could engage their government on an as-needed basis — perhaps because Latvia's is a closer-knit society.

Poland and Romania are at the opposite end of the spectrum: large, heterogeneous countries where cycling levels and cycling activities differ from region to region. In Romania, the project partner held four seminars in different parts of the country, and experienced very different rates of participation in each one; and with the given resources it was impossible to reach more than a small fraction of communities in any region. In Poland, cycling culture is generally better developed than in Romania, but the geographic challenges are greater; not being entrenched in any of the far-flung regional cycling networks, the project partner there had difficulty building bridges with any of Poland's established voivodeship cycling groups.

Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia can be considered another group: all mid-sized countries with relatively high levels of cycling. Hungary is a leader in regional cycling, and the Czech Republic is less so. Both countries have strong, well-established national NGOs that were eager to cooperate with Mobile 2020 and helped the project to achieve very high penetration rates among the target cities in their respective countries. Slovakia has high cycling levels but is perhaps a step behind its Visegrad neighbours in terms of activist networking. However, a government-led initiative to promote cycling at national level gave the project a platform to achieve excellent levels of urban outreach by the end of the project.

Finally, there are the Balkan countries of Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia. Bulgaria, due at least partly to its mountainous terrain, has cycling levels among the lowest in Europe. The cycling that does exist is mainly of a touristic variety, and although Mobile 2020 was expressly about everyday utility cycling, it was impossible not to promote the project without linking it to the existing touristic culture. This was also true in Croatia and Slovenia: cities that were interested in the project were often touristic cities with touristic motives. But as noted by Mobile 2020's Slovenian partner, the small communities engaged with the project did not have budgets or capacity to promote utility and recreational cycling separately. The partner established cooperation with cycling NGOs, cities and tourist agencies in ways that satisfied everyone's goals.


***SOMETHING IN COMMON***
***The Bulgarian city of Burgas has introduced a bike-sharing system.***
*Photo: Mihaela Dineva*

# Objectives and targets

## Project achievements

This section describes how well the project followed through on its planned activities. It offers explanations for the relative successes and difficulties from one country to the next in carrying out the same tasks. The discussion is organised by activity and gives highlights rather than an exhaustive history. Achievements are listed point by point in Table 1 (page 16).

### National working groups

All participating countries embraced the national working group activity. On average, national implementers held between three and four working group meetings over the course of the project, with an average attendance of more than 17 people per event. As envisioned, participation was an effective mix of municipalities, NGOs and government ministries. On aggregate, the biggest category of participants was city staff (23 percent) followed by cycling activists (19 percent), other NGOs (15 percent), city decision makers (10 percent) and ministries (9 percent) (see Figure 2).

In general, stakeholders understood the added value of a national-level coordinating body in the promotion of local utility cycling. Topics taken up by national working groups included:

- the creation or updating of national cycling development strategies;
- the reform of road rules to give greater priority and safety to cyclists;
- codes or guidance documents on bicycling infrastructure design; and
- the establishment of platforms for information exchange between cities and ministries, especially regarding funding for local infrastructure.

As anticipated, the idea of a national working group on cycling was new to some countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Latvia and Estonia) but well known in others (e.g. Hungary). Productive experiences were reported in both cases, but there were two universal keys to success:

1. good support from ministries and long-term government plans for cycling development; and/or
2. agreement on goals and a work plan among working-group members.

Hungary was one of the biggest success stories. Countrywide networking was long established, with

two strong NGOs working at national level; some long-running government support programmes for cycling (e.g. a national bike-to-work campaign, now sponsored by the National Development Ministry); and a record of success among municipalities in securing support for cycling from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

In Hungary, the Mobile 2020 implementer got involved in the existing network and found ways to support its activities. It did this by hosting working group meetings and other events and helping to mobilise additional stakeholders into national-level lobbying. With Mobile 2020 support, these activities culminated in December 2013 with 21 cities signing on to the National Cycling Concept 2014–2020, a coordinated effort by municipalities to maximise cycling-support subsidies in Hungary from the EU Horizon 2020 funding programme.

Mobile 2020's Hungarian multipliers took part in or hosted five formal national working group meetings and 10 smaller, informal meetings.

Another big success was Slovakia. Here, there was little history of national-level cycling promotion, but as luck would have it, a government initiative on the topic was launched just in time for Mobile 2020.

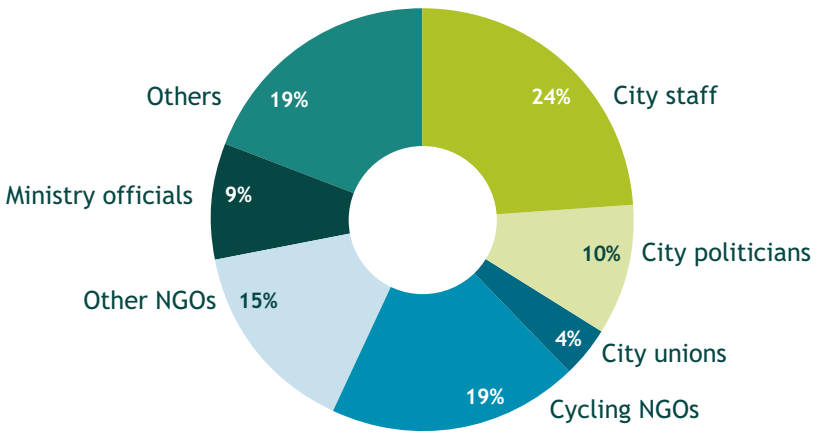
Slovakia's Transport Ministry appointed a national cycling coordinator and invited Slovakia's regional governments to each appoint counterparts. The plan was to convene this group on a regular basis to exchange information about cycling needs at local level and available resources at the national level. With its knowledge of best international practice in national networking, Mobile 2020 was poised to advise on the formation of this group. A key contribution was the mobilised involvement of cycling NGOs, thus ensuring grassroots input.

In Latvia, the national networking exercise was deemed a success despite the lack of government participation. City representatives and NGOs exchanged experiences and discussed needs for national legislation reform. The fact that the country had an existing national cycling strategy, and that the government was working on an update, was another impetus. They met four times and agreed to engage the government on an as-needed basis.

The biggest challenges were where government support was unpredictable. In Croatia, the national working group got off to a good start, with participation by government ministries along with several cities and NGOs. The group agreed on a working agenda: making bike-friendly improvements to the

Figure 2
**Who attended the national working groups?**

*Source: Mobile 2020 event tracker*



traffic code, getting cyclist training into the national curriculum, and ensuring cyclist participation in an important working group of the Ministry of Transport.

The group spent considerable time giving input for a draft national transport strategy, but when they learned that this draft was never submitted for high-level consideration, members were discouraged and could not agree on topics for further work.

The Slovenian group also got stuck amidst political turmoil at national level. The group's main focus had been to draft a national cycling strategy and to codify a set of infrastructure design guidelines. In total, 15 formal and informal working group meetings were held during the course of the project. But due to the economic crisis at the end of 2013, hope of putting cycling on the national political agenda was lost and the working group decided to suspend its work.

## Handbook

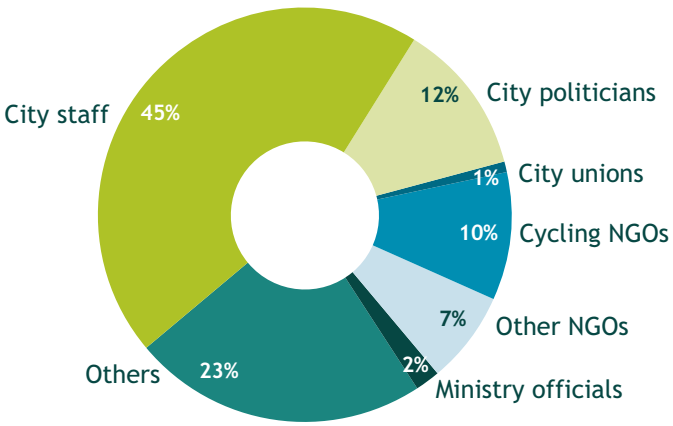
The project handbook, an expert's guide for municipal transport officials, will be one of the project's most valuable legacies. The guide covers the four project sub-themes of urban cycling development: infrastructure design; integrated transport planning; communications and behavioural change; and cycling services. The English-language master edition was translated into all project country languages and adapted with local practical examples for each country. Several project partners noted it was the first professional guide of its kind in their national languages; it's likely this was the case in every country. In Bulgaria, it was added to the curriculum of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia.

Work on the guide was concluded by end-2013 in most countries. A typical print run of 50 to 200 books was circulated at seminars to project participants. City representatives who did not attend seminars were able to obtain a PDF version, which partners sent out by email or made available for download from the project website — or, in some cases, from a municipal or other institutional website. Partners circulated download URLs on social media and other forums relevant to cities and cycling.

One challenge of the project was that the original description of work called for an English-language master edition of between 50 and 100 pages. In the end, the book ballooned to 218 pages, which meant much more work than anticipated for translation and adaptation at country level. Country implementers noted as well that it was difficult identify-

Figure 3
**Who attended the national seminars?**

*Source:*
*Mobile 2020 event tracker*



ing professional translators who had the knowledge and vocabulary needed for the material. Many relied quite heavily on transport or cycling experts who were up to the technical language but less efficient in translation work.

## Training the trainers

To prepare country implementers for their work in building capacities for local cycling development, trainers needed training. For this exercise, each country partner appointed two multipliers to attend a seminar programme on cycling development based on a curriculum assembled from existing texts and research. It covered the four above-mentioned project themes and was carried out in four week-long sessions in four cities: Odense, Denmark; Vasteras, Sweden; Zwolle, the Netherlands; and Bolzano, Italy. These communities were selected for their status as frontrunners in terms of cycling development, and also because they were small or medium sized — like the target project cities.

Each session concentrated on one of the project themes and was enriched with practical examples related through bicycle tours and visits with local practitioners. During each session, participants had opportunities to present and discuss examples and experiences from their own cities in CEE.

The programme was seen as effective, with 90 percent of participants indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the sessions' comprehensibility. Impressions from training presenters revealed greater enthusiasm for concrete subjects such as infrastructure and services, less interest in more abstract and theoretical topics like strategic planning, and especially less interest in the theoretical background on communication measures. (Similar affinities were expressed by city participants in the in-country seminars, more of which below.)

The ultimate result was quite good. At the conclusion of the final training session in Bolzano, 78 percent of multipliers indicated very good or good satisfaction with their readiness to pass on their newly gained knowledge to city beneficiaries.

The only significant criticism was that some of the practical examples in the training sites were too advanced for implementation in CEE. This was true especially of Zwolle and Odense, both of which boast infrastructure and cycling cultures that appear several generations ahead of the leading cycling cities in CEE.

Figure 4
**How many cities were reached through the national seminars?**

*Source:*
*Mobile 2020 event tracker*

## In-country seminars

The national seminars were Mobile 2020's centrepiece. That's when the expertise and knowledge built up during the project's initial phase were finally imparted to cities. According to the project methodology, a curriculum was developed based largely on northern European expertise, and then translated and adapted in each of Mobile 2020's project countries. Meanwhile, national multipliers underwent four weeks of teachers' training on all four pillars of the project curriculum in four different model cycling cities in northern Europe. The national seminars in the project countries were a culmination of all this preparation.

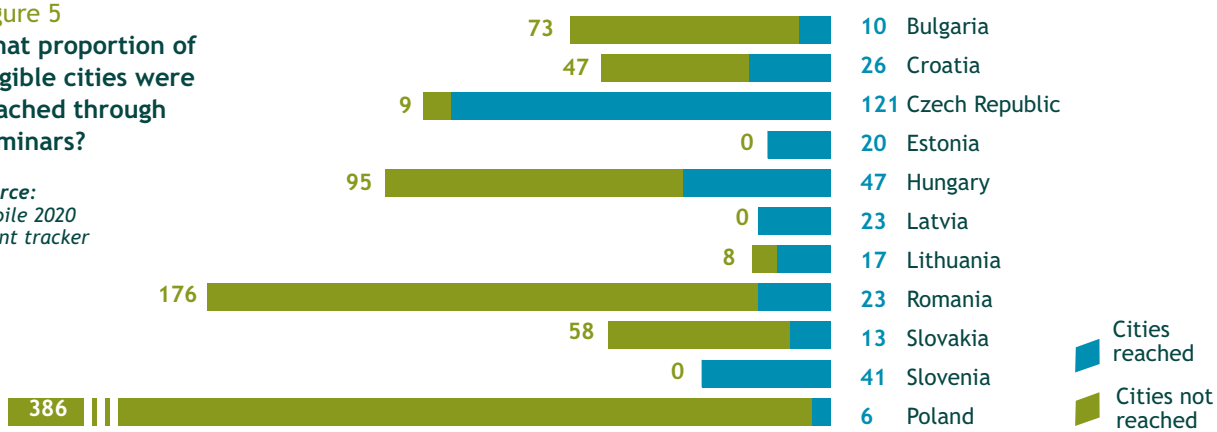
The seminar series were planned to run for a total of eight days in each country, with two days of instruction on each curriculum pillar. This did not happen in practice. Implementers from larger countries expressed from the beginning that they would have to take a regional approach, holding trainings in four or more locations around the country and giving a comprehensive gloss of all topics at each one. In the end, the same regional approach proved best in some of the smaller countries as well, because very few participants were willing to travel more than an hour or two to attend trainings.

Though organisation was flexible, all countries spent considerable time and resources maximising the seminars' reach. As of March 2014, a total of 50 seminars had been reported in 11 countries, each with an average of 28 participants. The biggest category of participants was city staff (45 percent) (see Figure 3). A further 12 percent were city politicians and 1 percent came from associations of cities, thus over 58 percent represented cities in some way. The next biggest categories were cycling NGOs (10 percent), and non-cycling NGOs (7 percent), while 23 percent belonged to other categories.

The project target was to reach 350 cities through the national seminars. By March 2014, with some countries still planning their final seminars, partners had reached 359 cities. The Czech partner came out on top with 133 cities taking part in one or more of eight events (see Figure 4). This success can partly be explained by the Czech partner's fruitful cooperation with the Central MeetBike project. The two cycling projects worked jointly on their capacity-building tasks and put together an attractive programme of trainings. Had they worked separately, the content would have been diluted and cities would have been forced to pick and choose from an unwieldy events schedule.

Figure 5
**What proportion of eligible cities were reached through seminars?**

*Source: Mobile 2020 event tracker*



Hungary and Slovenia also reached high numbers of cities — 47 and 41 respectively. This was thanks to both countries' high interest in utility cycling, and also to the project partners' large contact bases of urban mobility experts and early networking efforts.

The seminar task wasn't without its challenges. In Hungary, for instance, the original plan was to hold all the seminars at the Hungarian partner's convention hall near Budapest. However, the first seminar drew almost no participants from outside the greater Budapest area (with the exception of a city planner from Subotica, a predominantly ethnic Hungarian town in northern Serbia). This led to a change of plans to hold several regional seminars in the western, eastern and southern parts of the country.

In Romania, project partners took a regional approach from the start, with seminars held in each of four quadrants of the country. However, because of the differing levels of interest in the topic, attendance ranged widely from 25 down to six.

Meanwhile, in Poland, the project implementer was frustrated by an inability to find partners in the NGO sector. There are a few very strong national and regional cycling NGOs in Poland, and their support was seen as crucial. Unfortunately, they perceived Mobile 2020 as competition and declined initial invitations for joint work. The partner broke the ice eventually, but Poland's first seminar was not held until March 2014.

Figure 5 (page 13) shows the penetration of the seminar activities — that is, how many cities took part out of the total number of small and medium-sized cities in each country. For three of the smallest countries — Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia — the graph indicates 100 percent coverage. In fact, due to the small number of cities within the target population range, these country partners opened up participation to cities outside the targeted population range. As a result, the numbers of participating cities in these countries exceeded the total number of target-sized communities. The Czech Republic's numbers approached the 100 percent threshold as well, not only because activities were opened to smaller cities, but also because of Mobile 2020's very fruitful cooperation with Central MeetBike.

## Pro-cycling municipality contest

The pro-cycling municipality contest was a more vexing challenge because, in addition to the logistical tasks of setting up an awards scheme, it also required the participation of municipalities, which always have full dockets. Even so, by late March 2014, contest entries had been received from 111 municipalities across the project — more than double the target.

However, just two countries, Hungary and Slovenia, had concluded the contest and given out prizes by that stage. In both cases the awards ceremonies garnered strong participation and enthusiastic feedback. In Slovenia, although such a contest had never been held, there was a history of rivalry between cycling activist communities from different cities, and this translated into an enthusiastic competition. The contest was promoted over the web pages and social media networks of cycling NGOs, as well as a national association of cities and a government transport agency. Six cities submitted multi-page applications, which were vetted by an impartial jury. The winners were presented at Mobile 2020's biggest public conference, the international conference in Ljubljana, before a crowd of 80 guests from across Europe. Combining the awards with the conference added prestige to the event, including coverage by TV and other national press.

In the case of Hungary, the national government has supported a Bike-Friendly Communities and Employers contest for several years. Mobile 2020 supported the event three years in a row, from 2011 to 2013, with prizes and promotions. During the final year, the Regional Environmental Center's head office, the project partner in Hungary, took part in the awards jury and hosted the event at the organisation's premises. Twenty-three municipalities took part (and 38 companies), and the awards drew about 100 guests, including several journalists.

## Public activities

Although Mobile 2020 primarily targeted an expert group of beneficiaries, with municipalities at the fore, it included a handful of activities to engage the wider public. These included a video competition and a cycling tour. Budgets for these activities were small, making it a challenge to engage large numbers of people. The biggest successes were achieved when events were piggybacked onto others in cooperation with other groups or projects.

### Video contest

The video awards event was a relatively new idea, inspired by the popularity of YouTube and the proliferation of phone cameras and editing software that have made DIY video so accessible. It was believed that a token advertising budget and some bicycles as prizes would suffice to induce participation; in general, however, country implementers found that these incentives alone were not enough to drum up interest.

As agreed at a partners' meeting, country partners promoted their contests through the project country web pages and through logical multipliers — namely cycling and sustainable transport NGOs and coordinators of other projects concerning utility cycling. Some also posted notices in universities and at film-making schools. Response, however, was usually tepid: in a few countries (e.g. Slovenia, Lithuania and Poland), submission deadlines were extended into spring 2014 in the hope of getting more entries.

Competitions were concluded in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia and Croatia, but they mustered no more than four submissions each. As of March 2014, the two biggest success stories came from Estonia and Hungary. In both cases, cooperation with other networks made the difference.

In Estonia, country implementers engaged with the organisers of a long-running amateur film festival, as well as NGOs behind the Tallinn Bike Week. With in-kind help from a professional film maker and graphic artist, they bolstered promotions with a stylish online video announcement and a slick contest poster. An awards ceremony was scheduled in a popular cinema in

***ONE SIZE FITS ALL***
***Participants in Romania's cycling tour wore extra layers.***
*Photo: REC Romania*

Table 1 **Achievement of original objectives**

| OBJECTIVE | INDICATORS | RESULTS |
|---|---|---|
| Improving stakeholder communication and networks in cycling planning | • 11 working groups successfully set up or topic integrated into the agenda of existing networks or organisations. Networking is regarded as successful if cycling becomes a topic on a regular basis (at least one annual meeting). | • Cycling networks were established, or existing networks were engaged in the Mobile 2020 agenda, in all 11 countries. |
| | • 50 to 60 participants visit the international conference in Ljubljana; at least 80% of all participants evaluate the event as good or very good. | • The Ljubljana conference drew 119 participants and was rated as very good or good in all evaluations. |
| Capacity development and knowledge transfer | • Four trainings of trainers for 20 to 25 multipliers. | • This was achieved. Most countries had two representatives at all four trainings. Romania and Slovakia, due to staff changes, sent only one representative each to some events. |
| | • All multipliers gain capacity and feel confident about their tasks in the national training phase of the project. | • According to participant evaluations of the multiplier trainings, 78% were satisfied or very satisfied that they were prepared to deliver in-country seminars. |
| Enabling municipal planners and decision makers in the target countries | • Representatives from 350 cities participate in national seminars. | • As of March 2014, representatives of 359 cities were reported to have attended national seminars. |
| | • At least 80% of all participants evaluate the seminar as good or very good. | • The participant evaluations of all seminars in all countries indicated good or very good overall satisfaction. |
| | • Representatives from 22 cities participate in the study visits. | • 22 city representatives were registered for the study tour programme in the Netherlands and Germany, scheduled in April 2014. |
| Spreading good practice and being a good example | • 35,000 to 40,000 visits to the project website during the project (real visits, not just search engine hits). | • Analytics data showed that from project website launch until March 2014, the site had 62,059 visitors. |
| | • 60 participants visit the international conference in Hungary; at least 80% of all participants evaluate the event as good or very good. | • The conference in Hungary was downsized by mutual agreement with EACI's project officer. This allowed more resources for the Ljubljana event (attendance exceeded target by 59). The Hungarian event, scheduled for April 29, 2014, was expected to draw 30 to 40 participants. |

Table 1 **Achievement of original objectives (continued)**

| OBJECTIVE | INDICATORS | RESULTS |
|---|---|---|
| Spreading good practice and being a good example (continued) | • 4,000 take part in cycling tours and similar events in project countries. | • As of March 2014, four country partners had held a bike tour, or supported an existing ride, with total participation of 2,880. Most of the partners had scheduled their tours for a warmer date in April 2014. |
| | • In total, 50 short films are submitted during the competition. | • As of March 2014, video contests had been concluded in six countries, with 110 films submitted. |
| | • In total, 50 municipalities contribute in the competition for municipalities. | • As of March 2014, contest entries from 111 municipalities had been received. |

conjunction with the closing party for Bike Week. This ensured a sizeable audience for the winning videos.

Despite it being a one-off event, Estonia's organisers built up high expectations and collected 17 entries. The best entries were screened before an audience of approximately 600, and six winners were recognised, with the top prize being a retro-style Finnish-built city bike.

In Hungary, meanwhile, the country implementer engaged the country's largest cycling NGO to tack a video contest onto the autumn Bike to Work campaign. This twice-annual event had been running several years and routinely drew up to 30,000 participants nationwide. Those who take part register and record their distances cycled online, and the contest website receives thousands of visits daily. Having the Mobile 2020 video contest on the Bringazz a Munkaba homepage guaranteed huge exposure; in the end, Hungary netted 80 contest entries, more than in any other country. The video awards were staged in conjunction with the Bike to Work campaign's usual closing party at a popular nightclub in downtown Budapest. Mobile 2020 co-hosted.

## Bicycle tour

In each country, a bicycle tour was to be organised with the aim of raising awareness of the project among the general public. No special budget was allotted, however partners had funding for t-shirts and other handouts. As of March 2014, just four partners had carried this off, with the others holding out for better weather in the project's final weeks in April. In terms of attendance, the Czech partner posted the best results. Rather than hold a one-off, stand-alone event, the Czechs supported an existing Critical Mass ride in Liberec by handing out Mobile 2020 t-shirts. Participation was estimated at 2,500 to 2,700. By contrast, the Hungarian partner organised the ride as a stand-alone Mobile 2020 event, but gave it added impact by starting at the offices of a local municipality. Participants presented city officials with the Hungarian edition of the Mobile 2020 handbook.


***GOING THE DISTANCE***
***Riders exchange some friendly banter during the Mobile 2020 bike tour in Kaunas, Lithuania.***
*Photo: Arunas Rutkauskas*

# An effective approach

## Relevance to the region and target groups

The Mobile 2020 curriculum was based largely on Western European research and know-how through such sources as EU-funded cycling projects (e.g. Presto); the CROW manual on cycling infrastructure design (Netherlands); and best practices and case studies from German cycling archives. To ensure the relevance of materials, the English-language master edition of the project handbook was adapted by project implementers in each partner country. This was typically done in consultation with cycling NGOs or specialist transport planners who knew the needs and characteristics of the country.

This approach was effective. Participant feedback at the national seminars was overwhelmingly positive in every country, with both materials and presentations marked as very satisfying or satisfying.

## Infrastructure

Central and Eastern Europe lags behind northern Europe in terms of infrastructure in general, and this is also true in the special case of local cycling networks. In general, specially designed and built cycling infrastructure is in shorter supply and of inferior quality to that of the model cycling cities where the project multipliers were trained. It's not just a financial issue: it's also due to a lack of tradition and lack of regional models.

This last point was noted at a Slovenian seminar on infrastructure. Although 43 people took part in the event, including 12 who identified themselves as "cycling and/or transport experts", participants were in general agreement that Slovenia had no professionals with specific expertise in cycling infrastructure design. This was a shame, especially in light of the fact that the capital, Ljubljana, during the socialist era, had perhaps the most advanced urban cycling network in the former Eastern Bloc. It was created based on Danish models and the city's transport staff gained world-class know-how in the process. Unfortunately, this work ceased after the economic and political changes, and Ljubljana has only recently picked it up again.

Although many cities that took part in Mobile 2020 have some separate cycling infrastructure, much of it is a low-cost solution of painted lanes on pedestrian pavements, which doesn't accord with accepted best practice.

Participating cities almost universally believed infrastructure was their biggest need, while at the same time expressing frustration that it was the least obtainable goal due to cost. Comments in this vein were made at Croatia's first three seminars: some participants said the country's national government needed to recognise and promote transport cycling, including through a funding programme for capital investments.

Slovenian participants made similar remarks about the need for government subsidies and other support. But they also found some constructive ways forward with a measure that didn't involve significant investment. In the town of Novo Mesto, cycling on the main street leading through town was going to be banned in the course of a roadway reconstruction. The road wasn't wide enough for a bike-only lane, but it could legally accommodate advisory bike lanes. Successful examples presented at a Mobile 2020 seminar persuaded the city to install such lanes and keep the road open to cyclists.

Many cities noted that design standards were very much needed for cycling infrastructure, and expressed the wish that they could be adopted and disseminated at national level. A good deal of discussion at Slovenia's seminars and national working group focused on codifying such design standards in a national cycling strategy. The initiative foundered amidst political reshuffling, but the project at least got the discussion started.

One criticism about the project's infrastructure element was that it was geared for larger cities. At an early stage partners agreed to define small and medium-sized cities as those with 30,000 to 350,000 inhabitants. Some partners, particularly those in the smallest countries, found that significant demand for the training came from villages and towns with smaller populations than 30,000. Such communities have neither the need nor the budget for sophisticated separated cycling infrastructure, as is common in the more urban project demonstration cities in Scandinavia, Germany and northern Europe.

What might have been needed was a training city in a very small town of a few thousand inhabitants.

## Integrated planning

Although infrastructure and investment topped the list of city concerns, feedback from virtually all countries recognised the value of planning. One takeaway was that attention to planning can help solve investment problems.

In Estonia, integrated planning was of special concern because the national government had recently made sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs) a prerequisite for EU urban transport subsidies. In the course of the project, the Estonian partner gave input on a guidance document compiled by the Ministry of Interior for cities applying for support from the ERDF. The partner's input focuses on guidance in implementing SUMPs and sustainable mobility projects.

Planning was a hot topic in Hungary, as well. Mobile 2020's partner there contributed to work on the above-mentioned National Cycling Concept 2014–2020, which compiled urban cycling development plans from scores of cities throughout the country. The idea is to underscore cycling as a priority in Hungary and to ensure that projects are planned and prepared to the demanding standards of EU funding programmes.

Planning training was also appreciated in Lithuania, where two cities, Vilnius and Klaipeda, were creating or renewing cycling development strategies. Other Lithuanian city experts learned the value of specificity in planning after seeing some in-country examples of poorly prepared bike paths. In Romania, representatives from the city of Targu-Mures took part because they were in the process of developing a SUMP. In Latvia, several cities were at work revising or creating transport and/or spatial plans that would include sections on cycling.

## Communications

The third and fourth pillars of Mobile 2020 also received appreciative remarks in seminar evaluations, but these two were given less emphasis and were seen as less relevant in the project countries. This is

A paradox in the region is that cycling levels are higher than the European average, while cycling retains a stigma as a 'peasant' or 'proletarian' way to travel.

perhaps because they're not seen as core activities, particularly for very small municipalities.

In terms of communications, the methods and tools presented in the project handbook are universal and also relevant to CEE. Towns in virtually every project country promoted cycling in the course of European Mobility Week events, for instance, and bike to work events are held in many cities in the region (organised nationally in the case of Hungary).

Young people are seen as a particularly important target group. This is true at least in Croatia, where several participating towns are undertaking cycling education programmes and campaigns regarding safe cycling. In Zagreb, cycling NGOs and a motorists' organisation are focusing on campaigns and trainings aimed at reducing conflicts between car drivers and the city's growing number of utility cyclists.

The project's Slovenian partner also noted that safe-cycling campaigns for children were needed there, and appreciated Mobile 2020's focus on messages that emphasise cycling as a safe, healthy activity.

Although many of the arguments for cycling apply universally, the situation in CEE requires some bespoke tailoring. A paradox in the region is that cycling levels are higher than the European average, while cycling retains a stigma as a 'peasant' or 'proletarian' way to travel. The cycle chic image propounded in recent years from Copenhagen to Paris to London may not be especially relevant to small-town Hungary or Bulgaria, but some sort of aspirational marketing can't hurt. Project participants noted that the image of cycling needed a makeover in order to retain its strong modal share.

## Services

Probably least relevant for smaller towns in CEE was the material on cycling services. As mentioned, the needs in this region are more basic than in northern Europe. It's also true that most of the services presented in the master edition of the handbook are best suited to larger cities: cycling route-finder apps for smart phones, bike-and-ride parking, giant bike-parking facilities etc.

Even so, many of the larger cities in the project were interested in implementing such services as automated bike counters, bike-sharing schemes, internet-based journey planners and bike stations with storage, repair and other services. The handbook's material on such schemes was very relevant.

In Slovenia, a special seminar on services focused on the needs of touristic cyclists: accommodation booking services, travel information and the like. Though technically not a focus of Mobile 2020, touristic cycling is very popular in Slovenia, and the topic served as a good springboard for a session on ways that everyday cycling and recreational cycling could be promoted in tandem.

***PICTURE PERFECT***
***The winner of Estonia's video contest carried home a Finnish-made street bike.***
*Photo: Tonu Tunnel*

# Gauging success

## Project impacts

So how did the project measure up in terms of its impact on cities? This is no doubt the best gauge of success, but also the most elusive. As a capacity-building project, it will impact cycling modal shares only indirectly, as the planners and other seminar participants put their newly gained knowledge and contacts to work — carrying out campaigns, drafting strategies, building bike paths. And because of the lengthy timelines of municipal projects, most of these indirect impacts won't be felt until long after the project ends.

To get an indication of project impacts — both actual and foreseeable — city participants were sent questionnaires or were asked face to face about the issue. Not surprisingly, many said they couldn't ascribe any local cycling developments to Mobile 2020 only. Typically, they said the project had given them timely information on developments that were already under way when Mobile 2020 got started. In fact, this was often a motivation for city participants: they were working on cycling issues and saw Mobile 2020 as a platform for timely professional exchange and state-of-the-art guidance. So with regard to specific cycling projects, Mobile 2020 was usually seen as just one of several contributing initiatives.

City participants were asked to list the sorts of activities that Mobile 2020 contributed to, including:

- council decisions on strategies, plans or other documents related to cycling development;
- investments in infrastructure;
- the appointment of city cycling officers or staff with special tasks related to cycling;
- communications and promotions; and
- cycling services.

A total of 78 municipalities responded and each named several impacts. Some of the standout examples are given below (see Table 2), by country.

Impacts relevant to the specific targets laid out in Mobile 2020's description of work are described in Table 3.

Table 2 **Headline impacts and achievements**

| COUNTRY | IMPACT |
|---|---|
| Bulgaria | • City participants and the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Investment Projects agreed to work on bike-friendly legal reforms.<br>• The Bulgarian edition of the Mobile 2020 handbook was adopted into the curriculum of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia. |
| Croatia | • Before Mobile 2020, the city of Split had just one cycle path a few hundred metres in length. After hosting two seminars, Split was inspired to do preparatory work on two new paths and to consider further steps to promote cycling. |
| Czech Republic | • The Association of Bike-Friendly Cities was formed in July 2013, with the active participation of 33 cities.<br>• Pro-Cycling Municipality awards, an initiative of Mobile 2020, were adopted into the permanent annual programme of the Association of Bike-Friendly Cities.<br>• The Mobile 2020 handbook was hailed by city participants as the first book of its kind published in the Czech language. |
| Estonia | • The Mobile 2020 handbook was promoted by and posted on the websites of the municipality of Tartu and the Estonian Road Administration.<br>• In the course of Mobile 2020, the project's Estonian partner was invited to comment on two pieces of national legislation:<br>- the Traffic Act; and<br>- guidance for cities applying for ERDF support for developing SUMPs and sustainable mobility projects. |
| Hungary | • The handbook initiative became an opportunity to update and improve an existing but outdated Hungarian book. Project participants were very pleased with the result.<br>• Mobile 2020 contributed to the National Cycling Concept 2014–2020, a coordinated effort of municipalities to maximise Hungary's absorption of EU cycling subsidies; 22 cities had signed the document as of December 2013.<br>• Hungary's project partners supported the Bike-Friendly Communities and Workplaces Awards for three consecutive years, contributing as a member of the awards jury for the 2013 event. |
| Latvia | • 10 cities reported local impacts in terms of guidance for updated strategic documents, cycle network extensions and the holding of promotional events. |
| Lithuania | • The seminar on integrated planning proved very useful for the city of Vilnius, which was developing a cycling plan (adopted in October 2013) and the city of Klaipeda, which was revising an existing cycling document.<br>• The city of Kaunas completed new bike paths during the project and consulted with Mobile 2020's Lithuanian partner before finalising plans for parking infrastructure. |
| Poland | • Mobile 2020 material was deemed helpful for longer-term cycling planning for the city of Sopot and the greater Tri-City area. |
| Romania | • Through the national working group activities, Mobile 2020's Romanian partner introduced cycling-related text into the National Climate Change Strategy.<br>See: www.mmediu.ro/beta/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2012-10-05-Strategia_NR-SC.pdf<br>- Page 64, Section 5.6 Transport, paragraphs 2 and 4<br>- Page 69, Section 5.13 Education, paragraph 3 |

Table 2 **Headline impacts and achievements (continued)**

| COUNTRY | IMPACT |
|---|---|
| Slovakia | • A ministerial working group on cycling was formed. This consisted of a national cycling coordinator at the Ministry of Transport and Rural Development and eight regional-level cycling coordinators. Mobile 2020 contributed by mobilising cycling NGOs to get involved, and now the country's national working group consists of 15 members representing both the public and civil sectors.<br>• Work commenced, with project help, on a National Cycling Strategy, which is considered a big step forward for sustainable transport in Slovakia. |
| Slovenia | • The city of Gorje, in autumn 2012, declared a temporary ban on motorised traffic on a local road in order to ensure safe access for pupils at the local school by bike and foot.<br>• The city of Novo Mesto, in autumn 2013, reversed a decision to ban cycling in the course of the reconstruction of the town's main street. Instead, the city introduced an advisory cycle lane to ensure continued, safe bike access.<br>• The city council of Brezice, based on inspiration from Mobile 2020, voted in February 2014 to develop a cycling strategy, scheduled for adoption in early 2015.<br>• The city of Maribor developed the Cycling Action Plan Maribor 2014–2020 in cooperation with a city cycling NGO. This cooperation was inspired by the inclusive approach to integrated planning presented at Mobile 2020 seminars. |

***THAT JUST MIGHT WORK*** *Participants talk strategy at a Mobile 2020 project seminar in Burgas, Bulgaria.*
*Photo: Mihaela Dineva*

Table 3 **Achievement of concrete targets in cities**

| TARGETS | RESULTS |
|---|---|
| • 11 cities have formally committed (e.g. by a council decision or local regulation) to develop and implement a short-term sustainable cycling programme or a strategy within one year of the end of the project. | • According to country partner reports, at least 16 participating cities could be expected to adopt work plans or strategies related to cycling within a year of the project's conclusion. Most of these were dedicated cycling documents, while others were general spatial or transport documents that included cycling elements. |
| • At least five towns in CEE start to implement concrete sustainable cycling measures already during the project's duration. | • At least 11 cities had begun the construction of new cycling infrastructure during the project's timeframe. This included various types of bikeways, bike racks and bike shelters, bike-and-ride stations and bike counters. |
| • At least 40 cities carry out various types of soft measures. | • The Pro-Cycling Municipality contest had drawn submissions from 111 municipalities as of March 2014. Project-wide participation will likely be in the hundreds. Besides this contest, project cities reported involvement in several other kinds of promotional measures: bike to work and school contests, bike to shop contests, branding strategies for city cycling programmes, European Mobility Week events, Critical Mass rides, primary school education programmes, safety campaigns and more. Mobile 2020 can't take credit for all these events, but it supported them through its networking and capacity-building efforts. |

**At least 16 participating cities are expected to adopt plans or strategies related to cycling within a year of the project's conclusion.**

***GOOD TO GO***
***Riders in Zwolle, the Netherlands, prepare to hit the road at one of the project's four multiplier trainings.***
*Photo: Tomas Rehacek*

***TYKES ON BIKES***
*Promoting cycling to children is the key to ensuring a sustainable cycling culture.*
*Photo: iStock*

# Clearing the air

## Estimated project impact on $CO_2$ emissions

This chapter summarises the separately published document *Decreasing $CO_2$ by Increasing Bicycle Use*, which discusses the potential of Mobile 2020's capacity development achievements to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Among other targets, the project aimed to encourage citizens to do more of their local travel by bicycle and thereby reduce GHG emissions into the atmosphere. The modal shift from private car to bicycle is a desired result of the project. Cycling, because it is nearly $CO_2$ free, plays an important role in achieving the GHG reduction targets set by the European Commission. We have learned from a thoroughgoing review that:

- There is no unified scheme for evaluating the emissions reductions of cycling measures and projects. There are only qualitative descriptions of desired effects.
- The most common indicator of such effects is change in modal split or increase in cycle trips.
- The best way to explore the effects of a single measure is to carry out before and after surveys of affected residents. This gives a picture of the effects of new mobility routines.

To close this research gap we developed an easy-to-use toolkit (carbon calculator) that helps one to visualise and estimate $CO_2$ reduction potential by increasing bicycle use. Different carbon calculators available on the internet allow you to estimate individual $CO_2$ emissions reductions in various sectors such as fuel, energy, air travel, food, waste and agriculture. But carbon calculators cannot estimate the reduction or modal shift potential of cycling measures. The tool created within Mobile 2020 is based on facts and figures collected through German nationwide surveys on transport (MiD 2010; SrV 2013; MOP 2010) and can easily be used with a spreadsheet application, such as Microsoft Excel.

The tool is designed for stakeholders such as national multipliers, urban and transport planners in municipal administrations, local decision makers, energy agencies, ministries, interest groups and NGOs. Due to its minimal data requirements (i.e. total number of inhabitants and current local modal split for all transport modes), user friendliness, cost-effectiveness and capability to generate instant

Table 4 **Modal split values from participating cities**

| CITY | COUNTRY | POPULATION | CAR (%) | BIKE (%) | PT (%) | WALK (%) | YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tartu | Estonia | 103,000 | 28 | 5 | 27 | 40 | 2009 |
| Klaipeda | Lithuania | 183,400 | 32 | 1 | 63 | 4 | 2007 |
| Szeged | Hungary | 169,000 | 22 | 9 | 47 | 22 | 2009 |
| Gyor | Hungary | 130,478 | 41 | 7 | 26 | 26 | 2001 |
| Koper | Slovenia | 24,600 | 51 | 6 | 34 | 9 | 2008 |
| Ljubljana | Slovenia | 265,900 | 58 | 10 | 13 | 19 | 2003 |
| Maribor | Slovenia | 110,670 | 71 | 5 | 13 | 11 | 2002 |

***Source**: www.epomm.eu/tems/index.phtml*

Table 5 **$CO_2$ savings through 2020 (tonnes $CO_2$eq/7 years)**

| | SCENARIO 1 | SCENARIO 2 | SCENARIO 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Expected increase in cycle trips | 1% | 5% | 10% |
| Expected increase in cycle trip length | 20% | 25% | 30% |
| Tartu, Estonia | 84,601 | 96,596 | 112,438 |
| Klaipeda, Lithuania | 1335,545 | 352,807 | 375,822 |
| Szeged, Hungary | 236,183 | 252,258 | 273,301 |
| Gyor, Hungary | 105,567 | 123,095 | 146,140 |
| Koper, Slovenia | 25,436 | 28,756 | 33,130 |
| Ljubljana, Slovenia | 123,307 | 165,520 | 220,662 |
| Maribor, Slovenia | 48,321 | 65,497 | 88,182 |

***Source**: Author's compilation*

results, the tool can be used to:

1) estimate $CO_2$ reduction potential based on the targeted modal shift;
2) enable calculated results to inform discussions;
3) define objectives and GHG reduction targets in strategic documents (e.g. sustainable mobility plans or SUMPs); and
4) display data requirements for monitoring and evaluating measures.

# If all Europeans cycled as much as the Danish, the EU could achieve up to 26 percent of its carbon reduction target in the transport sector for 2050.

*Decreasing $CO_2$ by Increasing Bicycle Use* contains detailed background information and a description of the tool's features and generated outputs.

The overall reduction in carbon emissions achieved by shifting trips from passenger cars to bicycles contributes to $CO_2$ savings and helps move the EU towards its GHG reduction targets. With this study we developed an easy-to-use spreadsheet tool. All users need to do is enter some basic data and modal shift targets, and the tool produces the $CO_2$ reduction potential. Cycling's potential contribution towards $CO_2$ savings should be taken seriously. If levels of cycling in the EU27 were equivalent to those found, for instance, in Denmark, bicycle use would help to achieve 12 to 26 percent of the 2050 target reduction set for the transport sector, depending on which transport mode the bicycle replaces (ECF 2011).

## $CO_2$ savings through 2020

The Mobile 2020 objective is to mobilise at least 350 cities of 30,000 to 350,000 citizens to increase their share of bicycle use. During the project, 359 cities participated in national capacity-building seminars. Using the EPOMM Modal Split Tool we derived modal split values for those cities presented in Table 4. Calculations were based on the following assumptions:

- Average trips per day: 3.0 (based on MiD 2010)
- Average trip length: 9.11 km
- Average consumption of car fleet: 8 l/100 km (2,475 g $CO_2$eq/l combusted fuel, resulting from 1/3 diesel engines [2,640 g $CO_2$eq/l] and 2/3 Otto engines [2,392 g $CO_2$eq/l])
- Average $CO_2$ emissions per person/km conducted by public transport: 75 g/km
- Scenario 1 — 1 percent increase in cycling trips, 20 percent increase in trip length
- Scenario 2 — 5 percent increase in cycling trips, 25 percent increase in trip length
- Scenario 3 — 10 percent increase in cycling trips, 30 percent increase in trip length

Using these input data, the tool generated the $CO_2$ savings through 2020 shown in Table 5.

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***HAPPY TRAILS***
***A cycle tour in Szentendre, Hungary, followed a section of the Eurovelo 6 tourist route.***
*Photo: Csaba Mezei*

# The road ahead

## Lessons learned

The project reached its main targets, including the establishment of national working groups in every country and the engagement of at least 359 communities in the capacity-building seminars. The target groups indicated high satisfaction with the main activities, and the impact evaluations show that the project inspired, or contributed in part to, several local transport measures that should improve conditions for cycling — and, we hope, increased levels of everyday cycling.

Although this is true for the project as a whole, successes weren't uniform across all countries. Networking tasks were more challenging in larger countries than in small ones, and the level of penetration (cities reached versus the total number of small and medium-sized cities) differed from country to country. A couple of activities that seemed simple on paper — the video contest, for example — proved quite challenging in their implementation. Below is a set of conclusions based on impressions taken throughout the project's implementation.

### Local language and local know-how are invaluable

The project coordinator recognised the need for a local-language approach, and experience showed that the use of local cycling professionals was a big help as well. Many of the country partners called on the services of local cycling experts to serve as co-multipliers. These people not only helped to adapt the project materials to local needs, they helped partners tap into existing professional networks that were useful in the national working group exercise and other activities.

### Cooperation is necessary

With few exceptions, the project partner organisations that took on the role of multipliers were not specialists in urban utility cycling. They joined the consortium on the basis of their working relationships with local authorities and NGOs and their credentials in environmental project management. When they began work on Mobile 2020, a common challenge was to gain access to their respective national cycling networks. An obvious way to do this

was to partner with organisations already involved in these networks. This was certainly true in Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic, where several organisations and initiatives on cycling were already afoot. In the Czech Republic, the country's most prominent cycling NGO was running another EU cycling project, Central MeetBike, and there simply wasn't room on municipal calendars to take part in a separate project on the same subject. Fortunately, a collegial approach prevailed: the two projects joined forces, giving both of them a higher profile and a wider field of participants for their respective trainings.

Cooperation also helped at the activity level. The video contest, for example, was difficult for almost all countries, with disappointing participation and repeated delays in submission deadlines. It's difficult to drum up interest in a contest that has no history or prestige. Where it did succeed, the contest was wrapped up as a new element in an existing event. This ensured good visibility in contest promotion and a big, appreciative audience for winners. Cooperation was also a factor of success in the Pro-Cycling Municipality contest.

## Large countries may need a different approach

Project implementers from larger countries could only cover a small fraction of the total number of small and medium-sized cities in their countries. Country partners all had similar budgets for implementation and all were charged with reaching about 30 cities, regardless of country size. This resulted in good geographic coverage in small countries such as the Baltic states and Slovenia, but rather skimpy coverage for the largest countries. This could be an argument for making budget resources proportionate to country size.

## Short, convenient events are more attractive

It wasn't a big issue in the Baltic countries or in Slovenia, but distances presented a challenge in larger countries. Participants did not want to travel far, and very few were willing to stay overnight for multi-day seminars. This required a rethink of the original design, which was to organise two-day seminars with a homework assignment given on day one and evaluated on day two. The experience with the first seminars in Hungary showed that the vast majority of participants travelled no further than 50 km, despite nationwide advertising. Subsequent seminars were carried out as a nationwide roadshow and this strategy resulted in the participation of cities throughout the country. According to participant feedback, time was the real issue for participants, not travel expense.

**This region will eventually need to take a more modern approach to promoting bicycling, but it needs to start simply.**

# Conclusion

## Huge strides forward

Mobile 2020 has reached more than 350 smaller communities with promotional activities that will help ensure a future for utility cycling. It did this by marshalling expertise and best practices from Europe's leading cycling cities in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany. These are countries that had their reckoning with car-centrism decades ago and figured out ways to bring back cycling in a context of abundant travel choices.

Central and Eastern Europe can obviously learn a lot from its northern neighbours — but not everything. Typical Dutch or Danish communities, with long-established networks of separated cycling tracks, are several decades ahead of their Romanian or Slovakian counterparts. The state of the art there includes many examples that simply aren't relevant to CEE: cycle superhighways, multi-deck parking facilities and fourth-generation bike-sharing systems. This region will eventually need to take a more modern approach to promoting bicycling, but it needs to start simply.

Luckily, CEE already has such examples. Several cities in the region have made huge strides in recent years in building cycling cultures, and they've done so from the ground up. What's more, they've surmounted obstacles common to all cities in the region: a relatively new and rising trend of motorisation, a nouveau riche culture that views the car as a status symbol, and the lingering stigma of cycling as an outmoded and proletarian form of transport.

Good regional examples include Budapest, which has increased its cycling levels dramatically on the back of the largest Critical Mass ride in the world; or Ljubljana, a city that's given its traditional cycling culture a new lease on life with progressive transport policies and the region's biggest automated bike-sharing system. Then there's Koprivnica in Croatia and Skhodra in Albania, two smaller communities that have become leading lights in the Balkans for the promotion of active transport.

The response to Mobile 2020 proved a demand for cycling know-how and inspiration. It needs a follow-up to spread the knowledge further, including in large countries where Mobile 2020 only scratched the surface. The European Commission could follow Mobile 2020's work with a capacity-building initiative based on expertise and successful practices within the region. This would serve several needs:

## An initiative that recognised frontrunners on a regional level could inculcate a feeling of pride and ownership of this region's burgeoning cycling movement.

- **Locally relevant guidance.** Experts with experience in the region would be able to explain how cycling systems have been built from scratch against obstacles familiar to their peers: tight municipal budgets, negative stereotypes of cycling, trendiness of cars etc.
- **Establishment of regional cycling champions.** In a Europe-wide context, leading cycling cities in CEE are overshadowed. An initiative that recognised frontrunners on a regional level could inculcate a feeling of pride and ownership of this region's burgeoning cycling movement.
- **Attention to very small communities.** Mobile 2020 showed that scores of very small cities are interested in reinvesting in local cycling. They would benefit by networking and knowledge sharing with colleagues from cities of a similar size.
- **Networking potential.** One legacy of the initiative would be a lasting regional network of transport practitioners working on a common topic in close proximity to one another.

In the wake of Mobile 2020, such an initiative could take a number of shapes, such as:

- a follow-up project that builds on the expertise and experience of Mobile 2020 partners and the national working groups that were established in 11 countries;
- a regional cycling academy, or cycling embassy, modelled on examples in the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands: this would be a centre of excellence with a repository of guidance materials and research, a menu of capacity-building programmes, a contact database of cycling experts, and a network of frontrunner cities offering study tours and more; or
- support for post-graduate courses on cycling development at faculties of transport and urban planning: courses that build cycling acumen among students of transport and urban planning will help ensure the professional background for cities to integrate cycling into their transport schemes.

As recent travel habit statistics show, the CEE region as a whole has impressive levels of cycling, and smaller communities are at the heart of these findings. Despite this healthy culture of active transport, consumer culture poses a threat that must be countered. The Mobile 2020 project introduced a modern approach to cycling development that will support pedal-powered transport in more than 350 communities. This will help to make citizens' lives safer and healthier, and the global climate more resilient to change.

***REELS AND WHEELS***
***Participants enjoy themselves during the video contest in Tallinn, Estonia.***
*Photo: Tonu Tunnel*

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