

# Factsheet: Cycling

## Cycling for active travel

### Cycling is fast!

In most European countries, over 50% of car journeys are under 5 km. This is a distance that can be easily cycled in 20 minutes. Moreover, cycling is perfect for citizens who are in a rush: **considering peak hours, cycling and car speeds are nearly identical.** Cyclists also win time when parking their bike.

### Exercise while you commute: just try it!

Many people find it difficult to build in time for physical activity in their busy lives, with full time jobs, children, etc. By including cycling in your daily travel to work or school, you **save in transport time** by avoiding congestion and looking for parking, and you **exercise at the same time.**

Using an active mode of transport for commuting is correlated with a significantly **lower Body Mass Index** and body fat percentage than using passive modes like cars or motorbikes.

### More money to spend on the city life!

There are a lot of hidden costs related to driving a car: buying a car is expensive and parking it is especially costly in the city. Then you have to pay insurance, taxes, maintenance... and fuel!

Bicycles are not very expensive, even second hand ones ride along for years. **A bicycle is accessible for all and thus very democratic!**

### Less stress!

Cyclists are happier! Those who walk to work, are nearly as happy as cyclists, who are about three times happier than solo car-drivers. Not in the least because cyclists have some time for themselves while they ride or for informal conversations while cycling.

## What is at stake?

What exactly can one gain from being more active? For people who are largely sedentary, regular average physical activity gains them more than a year of healthy life years. Thirty minutes of exercise each day boosts your energy, improves your sleep and your mood, helps to keep your weight in control, and over time helps to prevent cardio-vascular diseases and some types of cancer.

Other significant mental health benefits of increased levels of regular physical activity like active transport include better stress management, resistance to burnout and depression.



Picture: Harry Schiffer (Eltis)

Health and a desire to increase activity levels can therefore be a significant factor in influencing people's choice to switch from car use. Health practitioners promoting physical activity can help promoting active travel in their recommendations to patients.

## What are the public health benefits of cycling?

Decreased use of motor vehicles and more cycling means:

- **Less air and noise pollution**, less congestion, less wear on roads, bridges & infrastructure. This translates to less maintenance and cost savings.
- Less space for car parking means **more new green spaces** that increase citizens well-being
- **Decreased social isolation** which is critical for our aging population: key benefactors of reduced congestion and lower traffic speeds are all groups who have lower reaction speed like seniors and elderly, children, persons with disabilities etc.
- **Decreases in numbers of sick leave** days from work, because cycling commuters are sick less often.
- An estimated the annual economic benefit of cycling in the EU-27 to be well above € 200 bn annually, or more than € 400 for every person that lives in the EU calculating all internal and external benefits of cycling together and adding the turnover of related industries (estimations by ECF). By far the biggest single chunk is on the health side: doubling the mode share of cycling would provide over €100 billion savings per year in reduced health costs in the EU.

### References and examples:

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<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults.aspx>

For further information please visit [www.switchtravel.eu](http://www.switchtravel.eu)



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## Start to cycle!

### Yes, you can!

Put normal but inspiring model cyclists in the spotlights in your media campaigns, when you talk to the press as coaches. They will show other citizens that it is easy and feasible. Make sure you take people everyone can identify with: young, old, man, woman, local, new arriving in the city or role models: teachers, lawyers, doctors...

Some examples of campaigns:

<http://www.copenhagencyclechic.com/>

(check if there is a Cycle Chic blog in your country)

<http://www.radlstar.de/die-gewinner/>

<http://velocitoyen.org/photographies>



Picture: ECF (Flickr)

### Install a Friday Bike Day! (cfr. Casual Friday)

People will not change their old habits overnight. You have to help them to change their behaviour slowly. Encourage them to start to cycle to work, school, hobby only one day a week, then gradually build up to more.