

Plenary 2a: Strategies to Promote Cycling in a National Context

National Cycling Strategy in the Czech Republic

Plíšková, Radomíra (CZ)

*Czech Transport Research Centre (Centrum dopravního výzkumu, v.v.i. – CDV)
Krapkova 3, 77900 Olomouc, Czech Republic
pliskova@cdv.cz*

Introduction

After four years of demanding preparation works, the Czech Republic can affirm: “Through the final governmental resolution n. 678, issued on 7th July 2004, the Czech cycling development strategy was fully approved”. The strategy tackles the majority of issues presented at the Velo-City conferences, but actually, the crucial issue is not “what to implement”, but “what is the best way” in Czech conditions?

The role of the ministries within the National Cycling Strategy is to co-ordinate activities between all the levels, to create a systematic and financial background, to include development of cycling into the projects prepared for co-financing from the EU structural funds. To implement this task, the National Cycling Strategy defines a responsible co-ordinator for the planned measures and assigns a timetable for their implementation.

The National Cycling Strategy is progressively recommended to regional and local governments, to businesses and to NGOs to be included as a complementary part of their activities, programs and documents.

The National Cycling strategy is a live document, which realisation will be carefully followed and the document will be further supplemented and updated.

Key to the success - partnerships, high level of awareness and fund-raising

There have been elaborated many strategic documents, and it often occurs that they are not fully implemented or the actions prescribed by them are not always successful. Therefore our efforts are directed to create mechanisms which would help the National Cycling Strategy to avoid the same destiny. We deal principally with the five following specific focuses:

1. Partnership and human resources. The Czech Cycling Strategy has a big advantage, as during its preparation phase, many partnerships with various bodies have been established. The fact of existing partnerships is crucial for fulfillment of the strategic objectives.
2. Decentralisation. Thanks to good experiences with previous partners from cycling projects, the National Cycling Strategy can be decentralised. In this way, the partners from bigger cities and the regional governments naturally join the National Cycling Strategy actions. This fact shows that cooperation with public bodies will not be just formal, but very active.
3. Raising public awareness. Our first point of interest is the work with massmedia. They are usually interested in events, important social-economic trends, concrete facts, attractive and instructive examples and interesting stories. These facts make a basis of the mass-media communication strategy and the way how the public is addressed through them. To support this communication, there is established an information portal: www.cyklostrategie.cz



4. Cross-cutting and complexity. The National Cycling Strategy is not restricted only within borders of the field of transport, but it is linked also with environmental, health and tourism issues, and in a broader context with sustainable development as well. The cross-cutting and complex visions are missing in today's society, so if we apply the wider view of cycling, it opens a possibility to involve more partners and interested bodies from more fields.
5. Financial resources. The implementation of the National Cycling Strategy in long-term will be financially demanding. It is impossible to determine just one resource for its financing therefore to create a wide range of possibilities, the „cooperative financing“ - a condition for EU co-financing - is important. So far, the objective is to cumulate and associate the financial means progressively for implementation of projects and to effectuate actively fundraising. The regular basis for co-financing of cycling projects are subsidies from the national transport infrastructure budget for construction of cycle paths.

The main document of the National Cycling Strategy is accessible on internet -www.cyklostrategie.cz (incl. an English version)

The website brings the full information on the strategic objectives, priorities and implemented measures. The National Cycling Strategy has the following main priorities:

- (1) Development of cycling as a means of transport equal to others;
- (2) Development of cycling to strengthen tourism;
- (3) Development of cycling to help protecting the environment and strengthen health;
- (4) Coordination of activities with other bodies and fields.

PRIORITY 1 – Developing Cycling as an Equal Means of Transport and an integral Part of the Transport System

Cycling transport is an essential part of the transport system. The Goal is to continue creating a dense network of safe cycle routes and accompanying cycling infrastructure in urban and rural areas of the Czech Republic.



Goal: 1.1. Creating the conditions for a further establishment of cycling infrastructure

A goal is to create optimal conditions for building a cycle network which will contribute to the overall traffic safety. To achieve wider possibilities in this field, an amendment of several regulations related to cycling transport (especially those on construction of cycle paths) is necessary.

Goal: 1.2. Increasing the safety of vulnerable road users

- Support the preparation of projects and realisation of the appropriate cycling infrastructure which will contribute to the protection of vulnerable road users
- Financial support from SFDI (State Transport Infrastructure Fund) for cycle paths
- Develop the BESIP program (Transport Safety Program) to increase the safety of cyclists



*Financial support from SFDI –
Tyniste nad Orlici*



Goal: 1.3. Incorporating cycling transport into the integrated transport system

The goal is to support the program helping to develop the inter-modality of cycling with the public transport, in the areas of daily travel to work or to school, and also as a part of leisure time and tourism.

Goal: 1.4. Strengthening research, training, education and awareness on cycling

- The goal is to incorporate research into the entire process, ensure the transfer of international knowledge, and put beneficial measures into practice. To inform continuously about the results of research and support educational and informational programs.

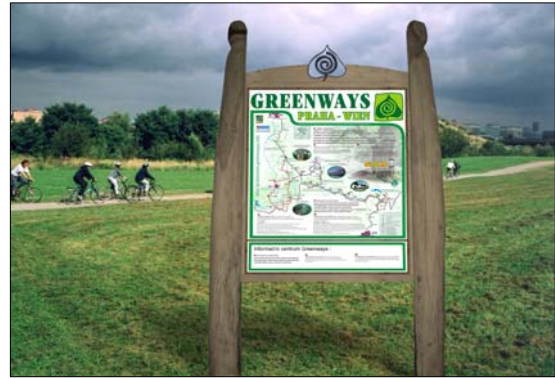
PRIORITY 2 – Develop Cycling for the Strengthening of Tourism

Cycling in the Czech Republic is appreciated nation-wide; it is an entertainment and a physically active way to spend leisure time. By providing a valuable product we can draw attention to the wide use of bicycles as a common and regular means of transport and as a means for keeping in touch with nature which cannot be achieved through travelling in a car or by public transport. Using the current popularity of cycling in the Czech Republic as well as in all over Europe, we can bring active tourism to some Czech areas which are not known yet.



Goal: 2. 1. Create the conditions for the support of cycle tourism

- Support the promotion, presentation and information techniques in the area of cycle tourism
- Support the program of Greenways
- Create the conditions for ensuring the good quality of projects and maintaining the cycle route signage. Issue the best technical conditions for the maintenance of the sign-posted cycle routes in the Czech Republic



Greenways Praha - Wien

Goal: 2. 2. Use of cycle tourism for the renewal of the countryside

- Support for the realisation of products and services (supply of cycle tourist packages).
- Support for the realisation of accompanying cycle infrastructure
- Support for publicity events and campaigns with the goal to renew the countryside area through cycling

Goal: 2. 3. Preparation for the use of EU financial resources in favour of cycling

- The goal is to acquire and collect the financial resources for the realisation of projects, gradually and actively use opportunities to acquire them from various funds: EU programs, as well as the state subsidies available through particular ministries, regional and municipal governments and the business sector.
- In this context, the municipalities and regions are called to use optimally the national funds, regional and municipal budgets for constructing the cycling infrastructure and join the efforts with partners. This brings a synergic effect and the partners express their common will for constructing cycle paths and demonstrate it in concrete activities.

PRIORITY 3 – Development of Cycling for the Strengthening of the Environment and Health

Strengthening the physical and mental health of citizens and finding a good relation to the nature and countryside, are additional goals for development of cycling transport. Cycling as a part of the healthy lifestyle and protection of the environment becomes a big priority within the strategic objectives.

Goal: 3. 1. Regulation and support of cycling in the scope of landscape protected areas

- Produce a systematic guide for building cycle networks with the aim at increasing the ecological effect of renewing trails and paths along waterways in combination with the benefit on the water surge in the landscape
- Control the planning of cycle paths in areas under a specific protection

Goal: 3. 2. Development of cycling in the territory

- Use all the levels of municipal planning to create good conditions for development of cycling transport.
- Create a methodology focused on using abandoned rail tracks for establishment of cycle paths with respect to environmental requirements.



*Batova draha - abandoned rail tracks
suitable for establishment of cycle paths*

Goal: 3. 3. Environmental training, education, and promotion programs for the support of cycling and a healthy life style.

- Regarding the significant environmental and health impact of transport, especially in municipalities, it is necessary to develop a complex program of environmental education, raising awareness and training toward a further support of cycling and its desirable effects on public health, transport and the environment.
- To present the cycling issues, it is possible to use events focused on public-wide awareness, for ex. Safety Days, European Mobility Week, Health days, Earth days, children's events, tourism trade fairs, automobile shows, etc. As an example of the suitable event promoting the cycle transport among other sustainable transport issues, is the European Mobility Week realised yearly on the days of 16-22 September.

PRIORITY 4 – Coordination within the Ministries and other relevant Bodies

Goal: 4. 1. Providing and co-ordinating the research and development

- The goal is to incorporate research into the entire process, ensure the transfer of international knowledge, and put the relevant activities into practice. At the same time to inform about the research findings and support education and training programs.

Goal: 4. 2. Sustainable planning and coordination of monitoring

- The goal is to integrate the management of cycling transport into the land use planning and other conceptions of the state bodies, regional and local governments, associations of self-governments (micro-regions), tourism bodies, non-governmental non-profit organisations, the public and business spheres as well.
- Intensify co-operation with the relevant bodies during the realisation of all measures planned by the National Cycling Strategy.
- Involve the public into the realisation and updating of the National Cycling Strategy and related projects:

Goal: 4. 3. Providing and control of publicity

- The goal is through existing programs to continue developing the accompanying cycling infrastructure, to raise awareness of the business sector on the National Cycling Strategy - its opportunities and necessities. At the same time the goal is focused on improving the conditions for leisure-time sport activities of citizens. The goal brings the opportunity to co-operate in activities

under the National Health Program aiming at increase of bicycle use and supporting organisation of specialised international conferences.

Goal: 4. 4. Providing and co-ordinating educational and informational programs

- The goal is to spread the program “Safe ways to schools” in Czech schools, to add the issues of cycling into regular courses at the secondary schools. Another challenge under this goal is to provide a further support for regular check-ups of bicycle equipment (from the safety point-of-view) and for programs aiming at prevention of bicycle theft. Other suitable programs to be co-ordinated under the goal, are connected to support the project of “Safe Communities” which tackles also the issue of traffic safety of cyclists and pedestrians and to co-operate in the awareness-increasing programs of the National Network of Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic which develops also its cycling program for development of healthy attitudes in cities.



Goal: 4. 5. Updating of legislation and coordination of its application

- The goal is to amend the main regulations relevant for the cycling transport, especially those dealing with the support of cycle infrastructure and removing barriers to the joint co-operation with the other ministries.

Realisation of these measures is ensured primarily through the three ongoing projects:

- “CYCLE21: Analysis of the needs for building the cycling infrastructure in the Czech Republic”, which is realised as a part of the National Research Program 2004 - 2009 of the Czech Ministry of Transport.
- “Sustainable transport: a chance for the future (part Cycling)” supported by the Czech Ministry of Transport.
- „ALARM - Modern forms of traffic education for children and teenagers as a means of reducing the accident rate in the road traffic network”, which is realised by the CDV as a part of the National Research Program 2004 - 2009 of the Czech Ministry of Transport.

Final comment:

A Chinese adage says: „Tell me and I will forget; show me and I will remember; let me do it and I will understand.“ The quotation uncovers the secret of how to reach the objectives of the National Cycling Strategy. The priority for its realisation is not to fulfill each planned task mechanically, but to understand its context and benefits and adopting them.