



PRESS

European Economic and Social Committee

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Europe must do much more to boost cycling in cities, says European Economic and Social Committee

On Friday 15 May 2009, the concluding plenary of the international conference on cycling policy "Velo-City 2009" took place in the European Parliament. At this session, the EESC signed the "Charter of Brussels", a commitment to a European pro-cycling policy. Among other things, the charter calls for a policy target of at least 15% share of cycling in journeys made in Europe by 2020. EESC Secretary General Martin Westlake launched the first "European Cycling Lexicon", containing key terms of cycling infrastructure and different types of cycles for different mobility needs in all 23 official EU languages.

"Cycling is the fastest, healthiest, cheapest and greenest means of transport for medium distances in cities and must be supported by adequate measures at EU level" **Janos Tóth**, President of the EESC's Section for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, stressed today during the "wrap-up" session at the Parliament. Important demands of the EESC are that every train in Europe should be obliged to make space available for transporting different types of cycles, and that those who receive EU funding should present sustainable transport plans as a precondition for receiving the funding. Cycling policy should also be integrated into European policies in the fields of the environment, the economy, health, training and education. In line with these demands, **Janos Tóth** signed the "Charter of Brussels", calling for a post of a European Cycling Officer to be established in the European Commission and, if at all possible, for the creation of a 'Cycling' parliamentary intergroup in the European Parliament.

"Intergroup" is Eurospeak. Consider "cross-party group on cycling".

The EESC's Secretary General, **Martin Westlake**, officially launched the first European Cycling Lexicon; an illustrated passport-sized booklet containing key terms relating to cycling infrastructure in all 23 official EU languages. "The very positive reactions to this lexicon that we have received so far show us that this booklet can help citizens and policy makers to overcome language barriers in cycling matters and raise awareness about good cycling policies," **Martin Westlake** said. In several cases indeed the EESC translators had to *create* the terms for cycling infrastructure that so far exists only in some member states. "Words change thoughts and thoughts change reality," he concluded.

Derek Osborn, Vice-President of the EESC's Sustainable Development Observatory and Chair of today's Velo-City session on *Climate change and taxation policies* emphasised the crucial role of fiscal measures: "Getting the prices right is probably as important as getting the right infrastructure. The EESC demands steadily increasing taxes on oil to decrease Europe's oil consumption, especially in transport. This will be beneficial for air quality, energy security and the global climate alike and help us move towards a more sustainable transport culture, in which cycling will certainly feature prominently" **Derek Osborn** said.



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