

Cycling innovations - Best Practice by EIT Climate-KIC

Utrecht cycling implementation programme

The cycling implementation programme is based on the Mobility Plan, and the bicycle vision for the region of Utrecht as well as the “Coalition Accord”. This latter is a politically approved document that sets out – among other things – the aims for cycling and the development of an action plan for cycling based on existing policy. The action plan covers the 12-year period from 2016-2028 and is broken down into three 4-year periods. The total budget for the implementation programme over 12 years is €90 million.

“One of the key success factors for the implementation programme is to have a good cooperation with a range of stakeholders”

The first Utrecht Cycling Implementation Programme provides an action plan for the period 2016-2020. There is a budget of €30 million available for the period 2016-2020. The plan aims to create and upgrade the coherent network for cycling through connecting provincial roads with municipal roads. Infrastructural improvements are financed 50 % by the Provincial government, and 50 % by the municipality in which the improvement is made. Examples of improvements include:

- Widening existing cycle paths
- Building tunnels at major junctions
- Optimising traffic light timings to improve flow of cyclists

The projects that get grants in the municipalities are decided based on a number of factors: they must be of regional character and used by many people; and they must lead to improving the network in terms of making it quicker, safer and more comfortable for the cyclist. The decisions on which projects to grant (and when) are taken in an ongoing discussion and collaboration together with the municipalities.

The implementation programme has been developed in close cooperation with a range of stakeholders. A core team of four people have worked on developing and project-managing the development and implementation of the programme – they are employees of the Province of Utrecht, working in the bicycle team. Two ideation and two co-creation sessions were organised in the development of the programme bringing together representatives from municipalities, bicycling and mobility organisations, sports organisations, environmental organisations, traffic safety organisations, etc. Input from these sessions helped to support the development of the programme. A consultancy company supported the development of the implementation programme, which took about 6 months to be written.



Context

The region has high ambitions relating to cycling including doubling the share of commuter cycling trips by 2030 compared to 2011 levels, and to have the bicycle as the dominant mode of transport for journeys up to 15km.

The Province only has jurisdiction over a small number of roads (350km, between main towns, but not highways), so cycling infrastructure seen on a regional level must be seen from the outset as a cooperation project, with the other asset managers (primarily municipalities).

On the national level, there has been increased support for cycling with the installation of a “cycling minister” to support a more coordinated cycling policy on the national level.

Driving forces

The main driving force for the implementation programme are the high cycling ambitions for the region. This needs to be backed up by funding and coherent action which is what the implementation programme aims to provide.



The cycling implementation program focuses on improving the accessibility of the region and make cycling safer, more comfortable and faster. The province wants to ensure that all major workplaces, sites for higher education and transport hubs are safely, smoothly and comfortably accessible by bicycle in 2028. In addition, the province has the ambition to increase the number of cyclists. The choice for a particular mode of transport depends on factors such as travel time, distance and attractiveness of the route and habit. The cycling policy has at its core to make cycling a “serious” mode of transport, equal in quality to other modes so travellers have more opportunities to choose a suitable way from A to B.

Barriers

There is a large need to show benefits of investments done in order to get more investments approved in the future. The current cost-benefit analysis models for cycling are not good enough and need to be improved.

Additionally, there is a lack of data on cyclists, which makes it difficult to follow-up the implementation plan and show what impact it is having.

Scaling potential

The way of thinking and implementing a cycling implementation plan on the regional level can be applied elsewhere. The details will differ compared to local characteristics, but the consideration of cycling on the regional level is possible and important.

An overview of the four pillars covered in the implementation programme is shown below:

Optimal and safe regional bicycle network	Strong transport chain
<i>Define main routes over larger distance. Define new investments. Mainly improvements since there are very few gaps in the network. Widening of cycling paths</i>	Links with trains and buses. Connection with walking (from station if cycle to station). Parking at transport hubs.
Smart cycling	Safe and healthy behavior
<i>Knowledge sharing, innovation Cooperative systems Transport model for cycling (flows on link, multi-modal, agent based) Bicycle data</i>	Mobility management campaigns

Success factors

One of the key success factors for the implementation programme is to have a good cooperation with a range of stakeholders. Working on the regional level means that particularly a cooperation with the municipalities within the region as well as the national level government which provides financing are important. An umbrella organisation called U10 which represents Utrecht with surrounding municipalities is one of the main cooperation bodies which the Province of Utrecht works with. Cooperation is done through regular meetings / cooperation and joint development of the plans for implementation.

Political backing is also crucial for the implementation programme. Having politically-approved and ambitious goals for cycling is a pre-requisite for the programme to be developed and implemented, and to get the right kind of financing needed for it to happen. Close connections between civil servants and politicians helps to build the political support, and when new cycling measures are implemented, it is important to show this to the politicians (get them to cut a ribbon!) so that they can see what changes are being made “on the ground”.

Electric bicycles have opened up the possibility of cycling for more groups on the regional level. and this is taken into consideration in the programme.

Find out more?

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