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Vice-President Kallas

European Commission

Rue de la Loi 200

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Brussels, 19 March 2010

“Rate-based” targets to halve the risk of pedestrian and cyclist KSI by 2020

Dear Vice-President Kallas,

The European Cyclists' Federation signed the ETSC-initiated joint letter last month, calling for challenging road fatality and casualty reduction targets in the forthcoming Road Safety Action Programme, as we believe such targets can be a strong motivator for action to reduce the toll of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on Europe's roads.

Encouraging a shift from individual motorised travel to walking and cycling could be expected to reduce overall road casualties and fatalities, since pedestrians and cyclists have a very low involvement rate in injuring other road users. Moreover such a shift would have wider health, environmental, congestion-reduction and other benefits to society.

Ironically however, the pressure to reduce road KSI numbers can sometimes be seen by individual national or local governments as a reason for being reluctant to encourage walking and cycling. The common perception is that this is likely to result in increased pedestrian and cyclist casualties and fatalities, contrary to their targets, even though road safety overall might improve, and there is also likely to be a reduction in the risk faced by individual pedestrians and cyclists. There is however good evidence that such fears are misplaced, for instance:

National examples

- In the Netherlands between 1980 and 2005, there was a 45% increase in cycling, and a 58% reduction in cyclist fatalities¹
- In Germany between 1975 and 1998, the proportion of trips made by cycle rose from 8 to 12%, while cyclist fatalities fell by 66%²
- Western Australia increased cycle use by 82% in 7 years during the 1980s, while reducing hospital admissions by 5%³
- In the Netherlands between the period 1985-87 and the period 2001-03, person kilometres travelled on foot increased by 24% while pedestrian fatalities per kilometre walked decreased by 58%⁴

¹ Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat. *Cycling in the Netherlands* 2009, p14 (www.fietsberaad.nl/library/repository/bestanden/CyclingintheNetherlands2009.pdf)

² Pucher J and Dijkstra L. *Making walking and cycling safer: lessons from Europe*. In *Transportation Quarterly* vol. 54 no. 3, pp25-50, 2000 (http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/MakingWalkingAndCyclingSafer_TQ2000.pdf).

³ Source: Robinson D. *Safety in numbers in Australia: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling*. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* vol.16, pp47-51 (www.cycle-helmets.com/hpja_2005_1_robinson.pdf).

⁴ SafetyNet (2009) *Pedestrians & Cyclists*, p.11 & 13 (http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/specialist/knowledge/pdf/pedestrians.pdf)

City examples

- In London, cycle use on the city's main roads increased by 107% between 2000 and 2008, while cyclist KSIs fell by 21% over roughly the same period⁵
- In Copenhagen between 1995 and 2006, cycling increased by 44% and the proportion of people cycling to work increased from 31% to 36%; meanwhile cyclist KSIs fell by 60%⁶

These are very good examples of the “safety in numbers” effect, where walking and cycling get safer the more pedestrians and cyclists there are. The general principle of the “safety in numbers” relationship has also been documented in a number of studies.⁷ This has also been recognised in a recent paper on Pedestrians and Cyclists forming part of the specialist knowledge base of the European Road Safety Observatory.⁸

“Safety in numbers” does not necessarily mean that increases in walking and cycling will always be accompanied by absolute reductions in pedestrian and cyclist casualty and fatality numbers. However, it should not be seen as a failure if sharp increases in walking and cycling are accompanied by slight increases in pedestrian and cyclist casualties and fatalities when measured in absolute numbers, as this still means that walking and cycling are getting safer for the individual pedestrian or cyclist. It is therefore essential to measure pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and injuries in terms of KSI rates per kilometre (or per trip, or per hour) walked or cycled.

The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), together with the Federation of European Pedestrian Associations (FEPA), believe it is vital that the Road Safety Action Programme acknowledges this points, to ensure that simple casualty and fatality reduction targets do not deter national and local authorities from pursuing the aim of more (as well as safer) walking and cycling: the “safety in numbers” evidence shows that they can and should go hand in hand.

As the advantages of more walking and cycling for public health and environment (reduced mortality and healthy lifestyles through regular exercise; less pollution⁹) outweigh their disadvantages (the risk of death or injury), we ask the European Commission to think beyond purely “road safety” issues and to apply a cross-sectoral approach.

With this in mind, we strongly urge that, in addition to overall road safety targets, the RSAP should also set “rate-based” targets for pedestrian and cyclist safety. We note that the UK Government is already proposing to adopt targets to halve the rate of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, over the 10-year period of its forthcoming Road Safety Strategy¹⁰, and we urge the Commission to adopt similar targets in the RSAP.

⁵ Transport for London. *Mayor challenges London to get cycling*. TfL press release 28th May 2009 (www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/media/newscentre/archive/11900.aspx).

⁶ City of Copenhagen Traffic Department. *Copenhagen, city of cyclists: bicycle account 2006*. Copenhagen 2007 (www.vejpark2.kk.dk/publikationer/pdf/464_Cykelregnskab_UK.%202006.pdf).

⁷ For example: Jacobsen P. *Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling*. Injury Prevention vol. 9 pp 205-209, 2003 (<http://ip.bmjournals.com/cgi/reprint/9/3/205>); Vandenbulcke G et al. 'Mapping bicycle use and the risk of accidents for commuters who cycle to work in Belgium' *Transport Policy* 16. 2009. pp 77-87; Elvik R. 'The non-linearity of risk and the promotion of environmentally sustainable transport' *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 41. 2009. pp 849-855; CTC. *Safety in Numbers*. Guildford, UK, 2009 (www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0905_SIN_full_rpt.pdf).

⁸ SafetyNet (2009) *Pedestrians & Cyclists*, pt. 4.1.1 (http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/specialist/knowledge/pdf/pedestrians.pdf)

⁹ Sælensminde, K., 2004. Cost-benefit analyses of walking or cycling track networks taking into account insecurity, health effects and external costs of motorized traffic. Transportation Research Part A 38, 593–606.

¹⁰ DfT 2009 *A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World*: para 37 (<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/roadsafetyconsultation/roadsafetyconsultation.pdf>).

The ECF has elsewhere submitted its position on the measures required to achieve such targets.¹¹ These focus on better facilities for walking and cycling; tackling speed; urban design oriented to people rather than cars; demand management measures to restrict use of motorised vehicles; education and training; improved vehicle design and stricter enforcement of traffic laws. We also urge you to revive the proposal to conduct a study on safe walking and cycling, as envisaged in the Urban Mobility Action Plan Impact Assessment.¹²

We thank you very much for considering these important points.

Yours sincerely,

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Secretary General
European Cyclists' Federation asbl

Mr Tom Dhollander
President
Federation of European Pedestrian Associations asbl



Cc: Ms Veronica Manfredi, Member of Cabinet, Siim Kallas, Commissioner for Transport
Ms Isabelle Kardacz, European Commission, DG MOVE
Ms Maria-Cristina Marolda, European Commission, DG MOVE
Ms Carla Hess, European Commission, DG MOVE
Mr Gilles Bergot, European Commission, DG MOVE
Ms Magda Kopczynska, European Commission, DG MOVE
Mr Enrico Grillo-Pasquarelli, European Commission, DG MOVE
Mr Matthias Ruete, European Commission, DG MOVE

¹¹ Road Safety Action Programme: ECF position paper, November 2009 (http://www.ecf.com/3743_1).

¹² SEC(2009) 1211 final (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2009:1211:FIN:EN:PDF>).