



Flanders
State of the Art

Cycling, of course!



PHOTO: FILIP ERKENS

**Vlaamse
Regering**

A progressive cycling ambition for Flanders

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
1. WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?	6
2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO AIM FOR?	10
3. WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND POINTS OF ATTENTION?	18
4. HOW DO WE PLAN TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES?	22
5. GOVERNANCE & MONITORING	32
6. CONCLUSION	35





FOREWORD

People sometimes wonder how we will travel around in 2040. Words such as *electric*, *hydrogen* or *self-driving* generally come to mind. It seems almost self-evident that we would think of a vehicle with 4 wheels as the answer to this question.

And that is unfortunate, because if there is one mode of transport that already offers countless benefits for short to medium-length journeys, it is the bike. The share of bikes in our journeys is growing, but there is still huge potential for more growth. And we need to capitalise on that. Today rather than tomorrow.

This ambition was drafted through bike-tinted spectacles. Not from the perspective of motorists, who often endure their fate almost on auto-pilot, even though a healthy, enjoyable, environmentally friendly and inexpensive alternative is at hand, but gathering dust in the shed.

With this paper, I want to pave the way for a world where cyclists dominate the streetscape. A world in which parents let their children cycle to school in the morning without worrying, and have the guarantee that they will be back home safely in the evening. Both functional and recreational cycling is possible for everyone in the greatest comfort, not just during one season but throughout all four seasons. When building or renovating a house, a bike storage facility, rather than a *garage*, is the obvious solution. The bike, combined with efficient public transport, is the obvious choice, even for longer trips. Employees have traded in their company car en masse for a company or leased bike, gratefully making use of the facilities provided by the company.

Naive? No way. Call it ambitious. Dream, Dare and Do. These three values are the red thread throughout this cycling ambition, an ambition that came about after conversations throughout this legislature with stakeholders and experts who provided valuable input.

These three values are translated into objectives and a package of measures. This package consists of actions that are already underway - because cycling has been a key focal point of my policy from day one - supplemented by measures with which we intend to shift up a gear to strengthen our position in the European peloton. This ambition can form the basis for further consultation towards bringing it about, and a renewed governance structure, which should culminate in annual follow-up reporting.

There is a strong tailwind. Our peloton is getting bigger and bigger. With the wind in our hair, let's get pedalling together towards 2040, where cycling will be a no-brainer.

Flemish Minister for Mobility and Public Works

1. What is the current situation?

1.1. THE USE OF BIKES

In 2020, 14.19% of journeys made by people in Flanders older than 6 were made by bike. Even then, e-bikes accounted for 2.85% of the total number of journeys.¹ The number of cyclists is rising year on year:

- Today there are more daily and weekly cyclists than 2 years ago, and fewer sporadic cyclists and non-cyclists (56% versus 49% and 44% versus 51%).
- In cities, the one millionth cyclist is being counted earlier and earlier in the year.²

However, bike use still has a lot of potential to grow. According to a projection by the Federal Planning Bureau (2022) for transport demand in Belgium under unchanged policies, the number of kilometres travelled on foot or by bike will grow by 17.5% between 2019 and 2030, and by 35% between 2019 and 2040.³

1.1.1. Cycling to work

In 2020, 63.95% of people in Flanders still used the car to commute to work, while 16.97% travelled the distance to work by (electric) bike.⁴ Bearing in mind that an individual in Flanders lives on average 15 kilometres from their workplace - a distance that is easily doable by (electric) bike - there is therefore still a lot of potential for making commuter traffic more sustainable.

Cycling is becoming increasingly popular for commuting to work:

- The 6th edition of the commuter traffic survey organised every 3 years by the FPS Mobility and Transport shows that the bike is the mode of transport that has enjoyed most growth in commuter traffic over the years.
- By 2021, 20% of workers in Flanders were already cycling to work.⁵

1.1.2. Cycling to school

In 2020, most school runs were already made by bike (28.18%) and 13.53% of students went to school on foot. Public transport also scored high in school travel, at 23.42% of journeys. However, 27.13% of schoolchildren were still brought to school by car in 2020.⁶

1.2. BIKE SAFETY

Active road users are still highly vulnerable in traffic:

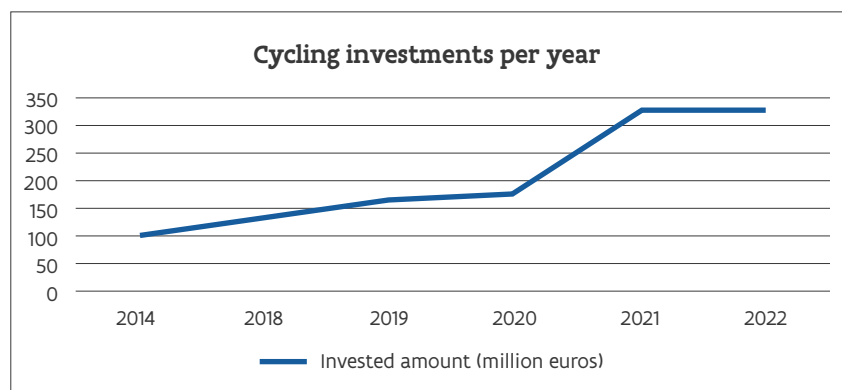
- Today, cyclists in Belgium are 3.5 times more likely to die per kilometre travelled than car drivers.
- In fact, for a cyclist aged 65 to 74, this statistic is almost 9 times higher than for the average car driver.⁷

There were 67 cycling fatalities in Flanders in 2021, and 73 in 2022. Injury accidents involving cyclists rose by 13.6% in 2022 compared to the previous year.⁸

1.3. CYCLING INVESTMENTS

Quality infrastructure is a basic requirement for safe cycling. Substantial investment is needed to build and maintain the necessary infrastructure. With the recovery funds released in the context of the corona pandemic, we have therefore made large-scale investments in cycling mobility.

Since 2021, more than €300 million has been released every year for safe and comfortable cycling infrastructure (up from €166.7 million in 2019), and at the same time, additional funds have been envisaged for cycling interventions via, inter alia, the Copenhagen Fund, and a subsidy for safe school environments and routes. €15 million is made available every year for the Cycling Fund (up to and including 2020 this was €10 million every year), which we used to support cities and municipalities in building cycling infrastructure on the Supralocal Functional Cycling Route Network (Bovenlokaal Functioneel Fietsroutenetwerk in Dutch).



In 2021, € 102 million came from recovery funds; in 2022 the figure was € 150 million.

1.4. CYCLING EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS

The FietsDNA (Bike DNA in English) survey organised every 2 years by Fietsberaad Vlaanderen provides insight into what people in Flanders think and expect from the Flemish cycling policy:

- The survey from 2022 shows that Flanders is perceived as a generally bike-friendly region: some 46% of individuals in Flanders are satisfied with the overall bike-friendliness, up 5% from 2018.
- Moreover, this satisfaction increases the more often we cycle. People in Flanders also believe that bikes are a financially interesting, flexible and rapid mode of transport.
- However, people in Flanders are also concerned, for example, about the various novelties on cycling paths - e.g. (e-)scooters, cargo bikes and speed pedelecs - and about possible bike theft.
- People are dissatisfied in particular with the maintenance of roads and cycling paths: 40% of people in Flanders are not satisfied with this aspect.⁹

1.5. BIKE ECONOMICS

The corona period witnessed a veritable boost for the bike market:

- In 2020, 592,107 bikes were sold in Belgium, 4% more than in 2019.
- The market also held up well in 2021, with only a slight decline of 1.2%, partly due to supply problems.
- The market share of e-bikes was 38.7% in 2021.¹⁰

According to a conservative estimate, the bike sector employs 5,175 people in Belgium, ranging from bike repairers and sellers to innovative manufacturing companies, producers and players in the infrastructure and tourism sectors.¹¹

Furthermore, research shows that customers who go shopping by bike spend more money on a monthly basis than those who travel by car. Cyclists are also more likely to go shopping locally and visit restaurants more often than motorists.¹²



Bikes are becoming increasingly popular for commuter traffic. In 2021, 20% of workers in Flanders cycled to work.

2. Where do we want to aim for?

2.1. OUR MISSION: FOR CYCLING TO BECOME A SPONTANEOUS CHOICE OF TRANSPORT FOR EVERY SHORT TO MEDIUM-LENGTH TRIP

Cycling is not only fun, healthy and sustainable. It is often the quickest and cheapest way to get from A to B. If we list the many benefits, choosing the bike as a mode of transport is almost a no-brainer. But this is not yet visible in our travelling choices in Flanders: although the share of bikes in our journeys is rising, it still remains rather modest compared to other modes.

Because everyone benefits when we all cycle more often, cycling should be the go-to transport choice for every short- to medium-length journey. It should be as natural to jump on our bikes as it currently is to reach for our car keys. In short, we want to foster the cycling reflex among everyone in Flanders.


The most important basic requirement for this bike reflex is high-quality cycling infrastructure. We are therefore aiming for a veritable cycling ambition among the various road authorities in Flanders: together we are making larger investments more rapidly, in safer and more comfortable cycling infrastructure.

Safety is also a minimum requirement to make cycling a success story. We want more cyclists in Flanders, but we see that as bike use increases, accident rates unfortunately also increase. We need to reverse this trend, by intervening more quickly in dangerous situations and by always putting the safety of active road users first, with the child standard as the guiding principle.

Swapping the car for a bike more often is a significant behavioural change for many people, one that we cannot make overnight. Breaking a habit involves trial and error and demands an effort that should not be underestimated, but the Flemish government has various tools at its disposal to support and encourage this change. By making cycling in Flanders even easier, safer and more comfortable, we are making cycling a no-brainer in our mobility policy as the preferred mode of transport.

2.2. OUR VALUES: DREAM, DARE, DO!

- **Dream:** Think out of the box and with a forward-looking approach on how to win over non-cyclists, and how to ensure safety and comfort for cyclists.
- **Dare:** Make bold choices to improve road safety and comfort for cyclists, and make cycling more attractive, even at the expense of traffic fluidity for other road users or of tired old clichés.
- **Do:** Thanks to MIA (Mobility Innovative Approaches), we have a policy approach that allows us to achieve our objectives together and faster. MIA will be an ideal ally in achieving and monitoring our goals.



Everyone benefits if we all cycle more often. For every short to medium-length journey, the bike must be a spontaneous choice of transport.

2.3. OUR AMBITION FOR 2040

We need to set the bar high in order to create a veritable cycling reflex. Through various ambitions, we will therefore sketch an ideal picture of what cycling could look like in 2040. Not all ambitions are complete or achievable immediately and everywhere, but by setting them out as targets, we want to inspire, challenge and give direction to Flemish cycling policy.

- By 2040, we will make more than 30% of our journeys by bike.
- By 2040, everyone in Flanders will have access to a (shared) bike and the bike will be a logical link between other sustainable modes.
- By 2040, parents will let their children cycle to school without any worries. The child standard is then the obvious approach in designing school environments.
- By 2040, cycling in Flanders is *inclusive*. Everyone can cycle safely and comfortably, regardless of age, gender, social class, culture or health. Children or adults with disabilities will also have a place on cycling paths with a tricycle, handbike or buddy bike.
- By 2040, bikes define the streetscape in Flemish cities and municipalities.
- By 2040, a strategically designed global bike network, the entire cycling highway network, the Supralocal Functioneel Cycling Route Network (Bovenlokaal Functioneel Fietsroutenetwerk in Dutch), tourist bike networks, will ensure rapid and safe accessibility to residential centres, schools, hotspots and major employment poles.
- By 2040, individual motorised traffic is eliminated as much as possible from school environments, sports and youth facilities, and cultural infrastructure.
- By 2040, recreational and functional cycling blends seamlessly.
- By 2040, all road users - car drivers, cyclists and others - are responsible in traffic by acting courteously and respectfully toward one another.
- By 2040, cyclists will no longer come into conflict with motorised traffic and cyclists will no longer find themselves in the blind spots of vehicles.
- By 2040, cyclists spontaneously wear helmets because they are aware that accidents can always happen, even if there is no other road user nearby.
- By 2040, innovative cycling wear will ensure that bad weather is no longer an excuse not to cycle. There is no such thing as bad cycling weather, only bad cycling clothing.
- By 2040, there are more company and lease bikes than company cars.
- By 2040, the collaboration with the private sector to make cycling extra financially attractive motivates even more people to get around by bike.
- By 2040, all companies have high-quality bike parking and infrastructure to make it as comfortable as possible for employees who use the bike.

- By 2040, the buttons on traffic lights will be removed and replaced by intelligent systems that guarantee smooth traffic flow for active road users.
- By 2040, bike use is supported by smart technology and apps that encourage and help cyclists reach their destinations safely and comfortably.
- By 2040, smart speed assistance will ensure that vehicle speeds are reduced near places where there will likely be a lot of cyclists and pedestrians.
- By 2040, cycling path gritters ensure that even in snow and freezing weather, every cyclist reaches their destination smoothly and safely.
- By 2040, the historical backlog of building cycling infrastructure will have been eliminated, thanks to investment and structural maintenance. Unsafe cycling paths are consigned to the history books.
- By 2040, Hoppin points are set up as quality and well-equipped *bike magnets*.
- By 2040, our cycling paths and bicycle highways are equipped with dynamic and nature-friendly lighting.
- By 2040, climate-adaptive cycling paths are no longer the exception. Solar roofs may also appear in the streetscape, for example on busy bicycle highways, to provide shelter in bad weather or heat.
- By 2040, there is an abundant supply of covered bike taxis in cities so that even less mobile people can use them for their last-mile journey.
- By 2040, packages will be delivered by bike couriers in urban environments.
- By 2040, Flanders will be the absolute benchmark when it comes to cycling and bike use, and delegations from other countries will come to draw inspiration on yet another *good practice visit*.
- By 2040, young people will watch a documentary in disbelief when they learn that pedestrians and cyclists used to be killed in traffic accidents.

2.4. OUR OBJECTIVES

Of the more than 40,000 kilometres of cycling paths in Flanders, only 8,000-9,000 kilometres fall under the jurisdiction of the Flemish Region (the Agency for Roads and Traffic and De Vlaamse Waterweg). But for cyclists, it is irrelevant who manages the cycling paths they use, and whether a given cycling path is for functional or tourist use. Bike routes need to be safe and comfortable, regardless of who is responsible for them. Only then do they become a real motivator to further highlight the other benefits of using bikes.

To achieve our ambition, we have set out a number of overarching goals:

CYCLING IS SAFE ¹

Cyclists must feel safe and also be safe from an objective perspective. Parents should be able to send their children to school by bike with peace of mind, the elderly should be able to continue cycling without worrying, and people with disabilities should be able to get around safely by bike. The risk of bike accidents must be reduced to the absolute minimum.

CYCLING IS COMFORTABLE

Cycling should be easy, accessible and relaxing. Cycling routes, signage and traffic rules should be as simple as possible, and cycling infrastructure should be pleasant to use.

CYCLING IS EFFICIENT

Cyclists should be able to get to their destination in a short time, via fast, reliable routes with as few detours, interruptions and conflicts as possible, without traffic jams.

CYCLING IS ADVANTAGEOUS

Cycling provides many benefits, both in monetary and health terms. These benefits must be reinforced to convince even more people to get around by bike.

¹ This Cycling Ambition is COMPLEMENTARY to the Road Safety Plan for Flanders 2021-2025, which puts the focus on active road users. The main road safety objectives and measures as regards cyclists are revisited in this ambition, but in terms of road safety, the Road Safety Plan is the primary reference document.



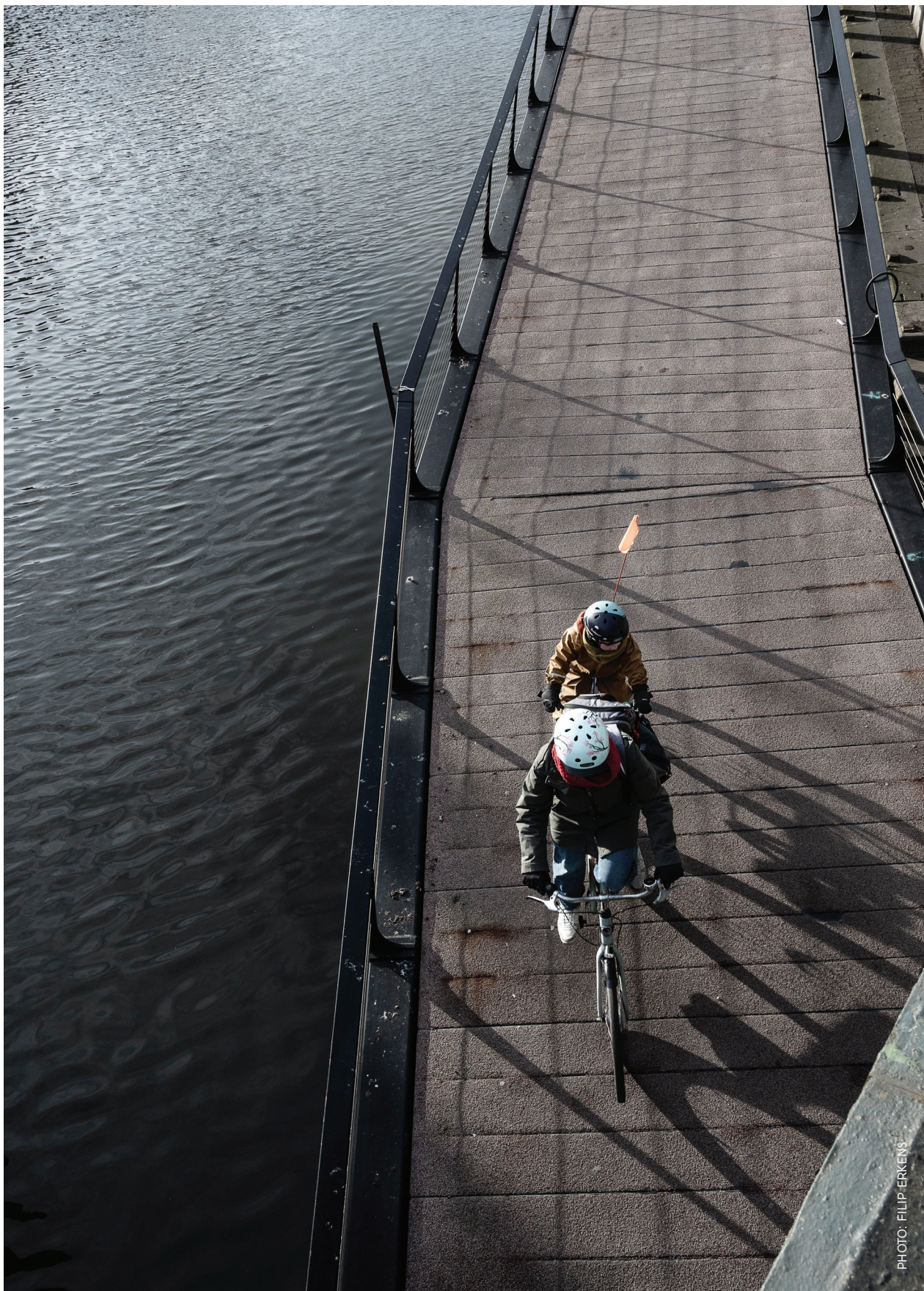
Cycling is safe!

Cycling is comfortable!

Cycling is efficient!

Cycling is advantageous!

Cycling, of course!



3.
What are the
opportunities
and points for
consideration?

3.1. OPPORTUNITIES

To promote the use of bikes, the current Government of Flanders promised in its 2019-2024 coalition agreement to set a steep growth path to €300 million for cycling infrastructure by the end of the legislature.

Given the road safety statistics and the need for better cycling facilities, it was decided in 2020 to shift up a gear. A significant portion of the funds from the Flemish Resilience recovery plan has been used to invest in more and better cycling infrastructure. The Copenhagen Fund has provided financial incentives to local and provincial governments to make additional investments in local and supralocal cycling infrastructure. The annual resources for the Cycling Fund have risen by 50%, and within the budget of the Mobility and Public Works policy area, a commitment was made to set aside a minimum of €300 million every year for safe and comfortable cycling infrastructure.

With such historically high budgets, the desired snowball effect was set in motion. Parking spaces made way for wider cycling infrastructure, numerous unsafe cycling paths were given a makeover, there were more additional kilometres of bicycle highways and cycling paths, and the construction of bike tunnels and bridges reduced conflicts with other modes of transport.

With major investments, we can build more quality cycling infrastructure. This attractive infrastructure encourages more people to use their bike, which in turn leads to increasing demand for even more cycling investment.

Moreover, strong support and demand for cycling and cyclists in Flanders has developed over the years. Thanks to e-bikes and speed pedelecs, longer distances can be covered easily and efficiently. That makes cycling attractive to a broader group.

Companies are increasingly betting on sustainable travel and discovering the benefits of bike leasing. Bike-sharing systems are becoming ever more popular and innovations such as cargo bikes are creating new opportunities for sustainable goods transport, especially in urban environments.

After the Netherlands and jointly with Denmark, Flanders is currently the second cycling region within Europe, and we want to maintain this top position. With the introduction of innovative concepts such as bicycle highways and cycling paths, we are getting a good reputation internationally and are steadily managing to get more people in Flanders on their bikes. We are determined to continue this positive evolution.

3.2. POINTS FOR ATTENTION

The proportion of cyclists involved in traffic accidents rises proportionately with use. Despite all the efforts, a historical lack of safe and comfortable infrastructure fosters a sense of road insecurity that can put people off cycling.

The resources to change this have been set aside, but implementation often takes too long. Time-consuming and complicated processes and procedures are the main culprits in this regard. With our new governance approach MIA (Mobility Innovative Approaches), we want to change that.

The growing diversity of bikes, and the associated differences in mass and speed, and the presence of other road users, may create additional conflicts. Racers, electric variants, longtail bikes, mobility scooters, tricycles and cargo bikes are just some of the variants currently using our cycling paths. This diversity could once again show up in accident statistics, and merits the necessary attention.

Widening and optimising cycling infrastructure is therefore crucial from a road safety and climate perspective. Safe and comfortable cycling infrastructure is in the public interest and requires a suitable permit or exemption policy, whereby interventions such as rebuilding existing road infrastructure, widening existing cycling infrastructure and constructing grade-separated cycling paths can be implemented smoothly and quickly.

Furthermore, the domains involved in implementing the various plans are highly fragmented, meaning that cycling policy is not always clear or transparent. Different actors can provide valuable input, but cooperation between them is not yet sufficiently structured. More data and research are also needed on which to base policy. A comprehensive and coordinated data strategy is a key priority in this regard.

Thanks to e-bikes and speed pedelecs longer distances can be covered easily and efficiently. That makes cycling attractive to a broader group.



4.
How do we
want to
realise our
objectives?

The use of bikes is on the rise. The corona period provided a strong tailwind. We need to hold on to these gains and capitalise on them. That is why we have already made unprecedented efforts in recent years to boost the cycling reflex and cycling ambition. The realisation of our objectives is therefore already well underway. The package of measures would not be complete without mentioning the actions already taking place. That is why they are split up: what is already happening and where are we shifting up a gear?

4.1 WHAT ARE WE DOING ADDITIONALLY?

We are building cycling infrastructure to the maximum extent possible in accordance with the highest safety and comfort standards

New cycling paths are sufficiently wide and constructed with a comfortable road surface, the course of the routes is clearly visible, they have high-quality illumination, and shielded from motorised traffic as much as possible. The updated dynamic Vademecum on cycling facilities provides the necessary tools in this regard.

We are stimulating innovations and experiments in building cycling infrastructure

We are putting pilot projects on innovations and experiments in building cycling paths on the market - for example, for new materials and structures with advantages in terms of comfort, safety or environment - which we then evaluate and, if the results are positive, implement in practice.

We are making dangerous crossings bike-friendly

We are giving preference to grade-separated cycle paths at busy intersections, and to conflict-free traffic light arrangements as much as possible. Where logical, we are applying measures such as 'square greenery'. We are developing an action plan with clear priorities. This includes not only infrastructure, lighting and markings, but also awareness-raising.

We are also giving cyclists sufficient room to wait at crossings and traffic lights, and avoid excessive waiting times by applying *free right turn/ straight on* where it is safe to do so, and by working on intelligent traffic control systems (iVRIs in Dutch) and active detection systems for cyclists. Road safety takes precedence over traffic flow.

We are giving cyclists adequate space in the streetscape

We are taking the increasing diversity and differences in speed on cycling paths into account as much as possible. At the same time, we are encouraging local and supralocal governments to continue pursuing concepts such as bike streets, highways, zones and boulevards. We are avoiding confusion for road users by using unambiguous and clear signage.

The STOP principle applies as a guiding road safety principle

Our transport system is based on the STOP principle as much as possible. Public spaces will be designed in such a way to allow as much use of bikes as possible, but safely.



We are opting for the child standard as a guiding principle for the public space

From a road safety perspective, we are further expanding the 8-80 standard or the child standard, in cooperation with interest groups, youth and senior citizen organisations. Young children should be able to get around safely by bike not only to and from school, but also to and from sports and leisure facilities. In these environments, motorised traffic can only be a guest in safe conditions. In addition, the elderly and people with disabilities also need to feel safe when cycling in traffic.

We are making it easier for cyclists to report problems with cycling infrastructure

The Roads reporting centre will be a more accessible, user-friendly and efficient contact point. It is also available as an app and guarantees follow-up of any reports. The citizen participation platform *citizens4safety* currently under development by IMOB (Hasselt University) in the context of the new governance approach MIA (Mobility Innovative Approaches) will provide valuable input to this end.

We are ensuring bike accessibility and safe bike traffic during infrastructure works

When infrastructure works are carried out, we ensure smooth, comfortable and safe bike accessibility and bike traffic, with a focus on clear communication and signage.

We are motivating companies to choose bikes for their employees' commuter traffic

With subsidies for the (re)development and/or improved access of business parks, we are helping to make these locations more bike-friendly and to improve bike accessibility. Resources from het Pendelfonds (the Commuter Fund in English) will be used more strategically, to enhance the social impact of the fund, in order to achieve a modal shift to cycling on a larger scale. We are encouraging companies that want to think creatively about encouraging bike use by their employees. Cross-company mobility management is supported by, among other things, joint awareness campaigns to inform companies that new cycling infrastructure has been built, or sharing systems have been launched in their neighbourhoods. We are also taking the initiative to look at strengthening the bike allowance and optimising the mobility budget with the federal level.

In the new route philosophy, the cyclist is central

Together with the transport regions and their regional mobility plans, we are mapping the most intensively used connections between residential areas and major attraction poles, taking into account safety considerations. These routes will be integrated, where appropriate, into an optimised cross-municipal Supralocal Functional Cycling Route Network (Bovenlokaal Functioneel Fietsroutenetwerk in Dutch).

We are ensuring that all Hoppin points have essential cycling infrastructure

At strategically placed multimodal Hoppin points - located in and around stations and business parks, among other places - we are making the transition from cycling to other modes and sharing systems as smooth as possible. Depending on the type of Hoppin

point, in addition to bike racks, with space for oversized bikes, shared bike systems, bike lockers, e-bike charging stations, bike pumps, bike repair facilities and safes may also be provided. The Hoppin points Design Guide (Ontwerpwijzer Hoppinpunten in Dutch) serves as a guide.

We are coordinating bikes and public transport with each other as effectively as possible

We are working closely with all governments (Flemish, federal, provincial and local) and mobility partners (SNCB, De Lijn) to coordinate bikes and public transport as effectively and consistently as possible. With the SNCB and Infrabel, not only are we working together on the Hoppin points, but also on the construction of bicycle highways along railways. People with reduced mobility can use covered bike taxis for their last-mile journey.



PHOTO: AGNES VAN PARIS | BRIDGE OVER THE NETE IN RUMST

We are developing a data strategy for bikes to collect the necessary data to inform bike policy

We are making agreements between the different entities of the Mobility and Public Works policy area, the provinces, cities and municipalities and the federal government, and guarantee the exchangeability of data collected by different stakeholders. We are systematically and comprehensively mapping the relevant parameters so that policies are based on reliable cycling data. Specific attention is given to the following data:

- Share of bike within *modal split*
- Cycling mix in Flanders
- Bike accessibility of schools
- Improved access of attraction poles
- Comfort and safety of all cycling paths in Flanders
- Non-existent cycling infrastructure
- Data on and analysis of bike accidents

We are focusing on the potential of bikes for sustainable logistics

We are exploiting the potential of bikes for logistics (cargo bikes), first and foremost by accelerating pilot projects around the use of cargo bikes in urban environments. Indeed, bikes also offer various opportunities for goods transport, which is part of the shift to greener, more efficient and synchromodal small-scale logistics.

We are paying more attention to the safety of cyclists in driving lessons and driving tests

We are working with the driving lesson and testing industry to make drivers more aware of the presence of cyclists on and next to the road. We are re-examining the classification of certain errors when the safety of the cyclist(s) is compromised.

We are making the highway code more bike-friendly

We are revising the highway code to make bike-friendly measures such as bike streets and zones easier to apply and without confusion. We are also looking at whether additional measures are needed to improve the safety of new bike variants, such as speed pedelecs, recumbent bikes or cargo bikes. Through accessible communication, we are listing the most important rules in the highway code for cyclists.

We are enhancing bike safety and comfort on towpaths

Together with De Vlaamse Waterweg nv - the towpaths authority in Flanders - we are implementing a new policy vision for towpaths, to manage the growing diversity of users and the increasing bike traffic here.

We are utilising innovations as much as possible, to make cycling safer and more comfortable

We are optimising the Mobilidata project in cooperation with the Department of Economy, Science & Innovation to make data on all modes as available as possible, and to use this data smartly, for example to guarantee better traffic flow for cyclists at traffic light-controlled intersections, but also to automatically reduce the speed of motorised traffic in an environment with a lot of cyclists and pedestrians.

We are putting additional effort into theft prevention

We are taking initiatives to curb bike theft. With the federal government and the other regions, we are working on an efficient, uniform system to prevent bike theft.

4.2. WHAT ACTIONS ARE WE CONTINUING?

Our ambition must be to continue the current level of investment of €300 million per year within the Mobility and Public Works policy area, and provide sufficient funds for structural and regular maintenance.

The most important projects for functional bike journeys, as reflected in the Supralocal Functional Cycling Route Network (Bovenlokaal Functioneel Fietsroutenetwerk in Dutch), and locations that require special attention, such as dangerous spots, are given priority in this regard. Moreover, we are accelerating realisation by drawing lessons from the MIA (Mobility Innovative Approaches), where the focus is simplicity, and an accelerated and bottom-up approach: when structural solutions take too long, we opt for creative alternatives. We consistently and transparently monitor and supervise the implementation status of projects, with specific attention for a possible fine-tuning of the implementation capacity.

We are supporting local governments in achieving their cycling ambitions

Today's young cyclists are the cycling ambassadors of tomorrow. That is why we continue to maintain the subsidy for safe school environments. Not only does this motivate children to keep using their bikes, it also helps their parents and less young cyclists to have a subjective sense of security. By sharing knowledge and expertise and through a clear and efficient subsidy package, we are supporting provinces and local governments in realising the local and supralocal cycling network. We are also making relevant framework contracts on the construction of cycling infrastructure available to local and provincial governments.

We are providing local governments with user-friendly assessment frameworks to improve road safety

- With the Assessment Framework for introducing 30 km/h on regional and municipal roads within built-up areas, we want to create the safest possible speed regime, taking into account pedestrians and cyclists.
- With the Assessment Framework conflict-free as much as possible at traffic light-controlled intersections, we are helping local governments ensure the safety of active road users at these spots.
- We are supporting local governments in safely directing traffic flows, so that heavy traffic and rat-run traffic is avoided as much as possible in residential areas or outlying areas at places and times when there are a lot of active road users.



We continue to promote the many benefits of cycling



We continue to promote the many benefits of cycling

Through cycling campaigns, we are informing the people of Flanders about the benefits of cycling in terms of (physical and mental) health, environment, travel time and budget spent on mobility, among other things.

We are urging all road users to be courteous, and are calling for robust enforcement

With broad courtesy campaigns, we are calling on all road users to have mutual respect for, and make eye contact with, each other. Together with relevant partners, we are also focusing on a strong and efficient enforcement chain.

We are continuing to raise awareness of the problem of blind spots

We continue to focus on education and awareness-raising on the dangers of blind spots. For example, we are encouraging businesses to invest in mirror adjustment areas for trucks, and we are raising awareness among both (lorry and bus) drivers and cyclists - especially young people, who are a high-risk group - about the dangers of blind spots. Using additional, currently non-mandatory technology to prevent blind spot-related accidents is strongly encouraged. The transport regions take active road users into account as much as possible when designing the freight route network, in the context of the regional mobility plans.


We support associations which offer cycling training for vulnerable target groups

Through subsidies, we support the mobility projects of various associations which focus on bike safety. An important focal point in this regard is education for the most vulnerable users (children, seniors, etc.), cyclists with disabilities and for the most recent (and therefore least trusted) and fastest members of the bike family, such as speed pedelecs. The emphasis is on cycling skills and risk perception.

We encourage cyclists to wear helmets and high-visibility clothing

We continue to motivate and raise awareness among cyclists to wear bike helmets, and we always stress the importance of good visibility (both bike lighting and clothing). We work first and foremost with schools in this regard.

5. Governance & monitoring

A high-angle, close-up photograph of a person riding a bicycle on a grey asphalt road. The person is wearing dark trousers and white sneakers. The bicycle is a silver-colored road bike. On the asphalt, a white bicycle symbol is painted, which the rider is currently over. The background shows the continuation of the road and some white circular markers on the right side.

The cycling ambition must be the same at all levels of government and for all road authorities. Competences and duties need to be better aligned, so that the objectives can be pursued together. In addition, the various stakeholders from the broad cycling domain also have an important role to play. Indeed, by sharing knowledge and know-how, the policy can be strengthened. To effectively look for and find support, engagement is an ongoing point for attention.

We therefore need a clear, effective governance structure that clarifies the responsibilities, steers the implementation of cycling policy in the right direction and ensures proper coordination with, and integration into, Flemish, regional and local mobility plans. Our current governance therefore needs to be scrutinised and adapted where necessary.

This optimisation exercise will be detailed in the vision paper published after this ambition. Among other things, this paper will take into account the findings of Audit Vlaanderen (Audit Flanders in English) as set out in the *Global report on the construction and maintenance of bicycle highways (2022)*¹³ and the report *Cycling paths in Flanders (2017)*¹⁴ prepared by het Rekenhof (Belgian Court of Audit in English). This exercise is also in line with the 2019-2024 coalition agreement, which states that the project team within the Mobility and Public Works policy area will be reorganised and ensure results on the ground.

Based on renewed governance, we will monitor the progress of the measures (together with the stakeholders) with an annual follow-up report, and adapt where necessary based on new data and insights.



We are working on a clear, effective governance structure that clarifies the responsibilities and steers the implementation of cycling policy in the right direction.

6. CONCLUSION

More than ever, cycling is a game changer for our vision of mobility. Increasing bike use is good news for the climate, our health and the economy, but it also brings new challenges, such as the need for a framework to manage and sustain this growth.

We need to take advantage of the broad support for cycling as much as possible to choose a sustainable U-turn today. The package of measures proposed in this cycling ambition can help achieve our objectives. 2040 is the time horizon, but we will of course consider anything that can be achieved more quickly.

We are careful not to polarise. More focus on cycling does not mean that we are ignoring other modes. In traffic, mutual respect remains crucial.

With permanent monitoring as a compass, we adjust our course where necessary. Occasionally we will have to step up a gear, but we won't be slowing down.

Cycling is safe!
Cycling is comfortable!
Cycling is efficient!
Cycling is advantageous!

Cycling, of course!

References

1. 'Onderzoek Verplaatsingsgedrag Vlaanderen (2019-2020)', Institute for Mobility commissioned by the Flemish Government - Department of Mobility and Public Works, November 2020
2. 'FietsDNA 2022', Fietsberaad Vlaanderen, December 2022
3. 'Vooruitzichten van de transportvraag in België tegen 2040', Federal Planning Bureau, April 2022
4. 'Onderzoek Verplaatsingsgedrag Vlaanderen (2019-2020)', Institute for Mobility commissioned by the Flemish Government - Department of Mobility and Public Works, November 2020
5. 'Federale enquête woon-werkverkeer 2021-2022', Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport, February 2023
6. 'Onderzoek Verplaatsingsgedrag Vlaanderen (2019-2020)', Institute for Mobility commissioned by the Flemish Government - Department of Mobility and Public Works, November 2020
7. 'De impact van fietsen op gezondheid, klimaat en economie in België', Vias Institute commissioned by the Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport, September 2022
8. 'Verkeersveiligheidsbarometer - Het jaar 2022', Vias Institute, February 2023
9. 'FietsDNA 2022', Fietsberaad Vlaanderen, December 2022
10. 'Belgische fietsmarkt houdt stand (-1,2%) na sterk coronajaar', Traxio, July 2022, <https://www.traxio.be/nl/artikels/belgische-fietsmarkt-houdt-stand-1-2-na-sterk-coronajaar/>
11. 'De impact van fietsen op gezondheid, klimaat en economie in België', Vias Institute commissioned by the Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport, September 2022
12. 'De impact van fietsen op gezondheid, klimaat en economie in België', Vias Institute commissioned by the Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport, September 2022
13. 'Globaal rapport over de aanleg en het onderhoud van fietssnelwegen', Audit Flanders, October 2022
14. 'Fietspaden in Vlaanderen - Realisatie en resultaten van het Bovenlokaal Functioneel Fietsroutenetwerk', Report of the Belgian Court of Audit to the Flemish Parliament, September 2017

Colophon

COPYRIGHT © 2023 - No part of this publication may be reproduced, by printing, photocopying, computerised databases or by any other means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Publication date

31 March 2023

Publisher

Filip Boelaert
Secretary General
Flemish Government - Department of
Mobility and Public Works

Layout Filip Erkens and RCA



Vlaamse
Regering