



Biking has become a serious alternative to the car in many European cities. In Copenhagen [62 % of all inhabitants](#) use their bike to work every single day and [50 % of all city-center trips](#) are made by bike.

Today on 3 June 2018 we celebrate the very first official World Bicycle Day, to appreciate the role that bicycles play in promoting good health and in building sustainable cities. The day encourages UN Member States to develop a culture of cycling in society in order to strengthen physical and mental health and well-being.

Many see Copenhagen as a cyclists' paradise. An important principle [for Copenhagen city planning](#) is that biking has to be the *easy* option, and not just the healthy one. Although many people know that taking their bike to work is good for both their health and the environment, they might not choose this option until it

becomes both faster and more convenient than taking the car.

In Amsterdam, another European city known for biking, a Bicycle Mayor has been appointed. “A Bicycle Mayor is the human face of cycling in a city, representing all cycling citizens,” says Inge Janssen, the network coordinator of the global Bicycle Mayor and Leader Program. Cities across the United States, India, Brazil, South-Africa, Lebanon and Australia participate in the program, which has a so-called 50by30 vision: 50% of all city trips by bike in 2030.

In an ideal cycling city like Copenhagen bikers enjoy wide bike lanes, raised platforms near traffic lights so cyclists can rest their feet while stopping, and customized garbage cans tilted towards the road at an angle so they can easily discard rubbish without having to slow down. When it snows, the city clears the bike lanes before it clears the car routes.

“An ideal cycling city is spacious, clean and social!” says Jansen, the Bicycle Mayors’ coordinator. “You can cycle from home to work on a network of streets with enough space for bikes, cargo bikes, small electric slow vehicles without stopping at busy intersections.”

Many who are favourable to cycling find it hard to put theory into practice. Philippe Chabot, an ICT Manager at UNRIC who works in Brussels, cycles 30 km to work every day, and then the same distance back home in the countryside in the afternoon.

“It started when I stopped smoking ten years ago. I needed to do some sports, but I didn’t have time to go to the gym”, he says. “As I started to get into it, I smoothly progressed. In the beginning I was slower, and it took me almost an hour to do 17 km. Now I am doing 30 km in 50 minutes. It’s completely different.”

Cycling can be faster, more convenient and social too!

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