CHAMP

Cycling Heroes Advancing sustainable Mobility Practice

Peer review Report

Kaunas

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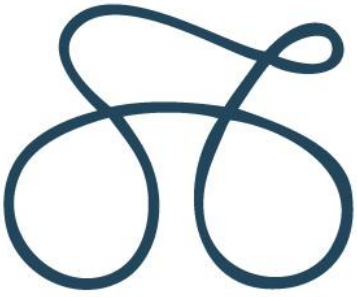
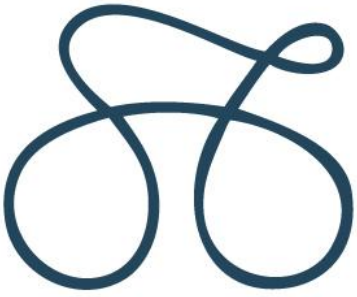


Index



Introduction

Context

The CHAMP project brings together 6 champion cycling cities and 1 climber city who want to further improve their cycling policy and collect new ideas for making cycling more attractive and safer for their citizens.

The focus of CHAMP is the exchange of good practice and lessons learned in leading cycling cities. The purpose is both to improve the cycling strategies in the CHAMP cities and to share good practice and lessons learned with other European cities to create safer and more attractive conditions for cycling in Europe.

One of the tools to realise these objectives is a peer review, which is intended as a mechanism for mutual reflection and learning to be used by a host city and a visiting team from other cities. Through a site visit and in-depth discussions with different stakeholders, both teams are expected to draw lessons that can be applied in their policies.

The peer review is intended to be an informal meeting between the visiting cities and the host city both with the mobility department and other stakeholders. The peer reviews have the purpose of improving policies, with a focus on processes and approaches rather than trying to assess results that may, or may not, have been achieved. Instead, the visiting team must take on the role of a "critical friend" that helps the host city improve: people that are familiar with city cycling policies and have faced similar challenges bring and share their wealth of experience with the cities they are visiting and reviewing, and can suggest new elements from their background. The peer reviewers also take back to their cities the knowledge and learning from the cities they review.

To report on the findings of the peer reviews, a peer review report is produced for every city based on the information in the self-analysis document, the interviews of different stakeholders and the wrap-up meeting with the mobility department.

A first version is produced by TRITEL as peer review coordinator; it is complemented by the reviewers and finally fine-tuned with the feedback of the mobility department of the city.

The peer review report is the main input for the gap analysis (WD 2.4) for each city. The development of a cycling strategy and

the choice of measures to be implemented in WP3 will aim at reducing the gaps that are concluded upon.

Structure of this report

This report is based on the different stages of the peer review.

To get a strong basic understanding on their cycling policy, the city was asked to fill in a questionnaire on their cycling policy, structured by 10 elements that determine the cycling policy: 5 elements on policy planning, and 5 elements on the taken actions. This questionnaire was the starting point for the peer review visit.

The peer review visit itself started with a cycling tour, during which the peer review team cycled independently through the city, passing by different important locations, such as public transport stations, schools, residential areas, business districts, ... Further, the peer review team interviewed different stakeholders on their role and view on cycling policy.

Finally the findings were discussed in a wrap-up meeting and finally feedback was given to the mobility department.

The table below gives a more detailed overview of the activities of the peer review meeting.

Tuesday, 27 March 2012	
Briefing for cycle tour	09:00-09:30
Cycling tour through Kaunas	09:30-12:00
Meeting with mayor Andrius Kupčinskas	14:30-15:00
Interview with Radeta Savickiene, head of the Environmental protection division	15:00-15:45
Interview with Aloyzas Pakalniskis, head of City keeping division	15:45-16:30
Interview with Povilas Mačiulis, council member (United Kaunas)	16:30-17:15
Interview with Paulius Bakutis, Lithuanian Cyclists' Community and cycling organization Velomanai	17:15-17:45
Wednesday, 28 March 2012	

Interview with Raimondas Kristaponis, director of Eco tourism hotel Babilonas	09:00-09:45
Interview with Rasa Serpytiene, director of Safe Traffic School	10:00-10:45
Interview with Paulius Keras, head of Transport division	11:00-12:00
Interview with Nerijus Jurkonis, vice dean of Vytautas Magnus University, Environment faculty	13:00-14:00
Wrap-up meeting	14:00-16:00

The findings of the desk review and the peer review visit are summarized in the next chapter of this report, structured by the 10 elements of the cycling policy that were used in the self analysis questionnaire.

The concluding chapter describes the main findings on the cycling policy, mentioning strong points and areas of improvement, together with some first proposals to further improve the cycling policy, based on the synthesis of the review team in the wrap-up meeting.

Findings on the 10 elements of the cycling policy

In this chapter, the main findings on background information and each of the 10 elements of the cycling policy are analysed. It combines findings from the desk analysis of the self analysis report, the cycling tour and the interviews with the various stakeholders.

Background information

The city of Kaunas has around 340 000 inhabitants, but the population is declining, as well as ageing. Different districts' centres are located relatively close to each other (5-8 km). However, the hilly topography and especially the cold climate conditions can be seen as a barrier for cycling.

Public transport (including private minibuses) is with 66% of all trips the most important transport modes for the citizens of Kaunas. Cycling has a share of 4%, which has been increasing over the last years. Nevertheless, with approximately 150 000 bicycles, around 45% of all citizens owns a bicycle.

Cycling policy is developed by the Environmental Protection Department, which includes the development of bicycle paths. The Economy Department is responsible for the construction of all roads, including cycling paths, where the Transport Management Department is responsible for general transport issues, safety and the marking of cycling paths.

User needs

General user surveys on cycling or other mobility issues are part of the planning process for important policy documents such as the Specific Cycling Plan and the City Master Plan. Also additional research on the cycling network and its state, bicycle availability and accident analysis is carried out. Besides this, user needs of specific target groups such as employees and school

children have been analysed in specific projects, such as SMOOTH and COMMERCE.

During the implementation of projects, workshops for users are organised. Cycling organisations are also invited to participate in the monthly working group for cycling policy and implementation to share their point of view on important issues. On these working groups, complaints of citizens that were communicated via the user groups or the municipality website are analysed.

Commercial parties can share their opinion on various mobility issues during meetings with the Chamber of Commerce.

Coordination & organisation

The responsibilities for cycling are rather dispersed in the city municipality. The Environmental Protection Department is responsible for the general cycling policy, making proposals to the other divisions of the municipality. The organisational structure still reflects the historically grown role that cycling used to have in the last decennia in the city: the transport department is strongly oriented towards public transport and car traffic, without a traffic engineer working on cycling.

The different representatives from the city municipality are assembled monthly in the working group for cycling policy and implementation, together with politicians, non-governmental organisations and the Safe Traffic School. Whenever new roads are planned, the possibility of cycling infrastructure is analysed, together with the Urban planning Department, but it is not a priority.

On national level, there is a cycling working group in the Ministry of Transport, preparing recommendations on cycling infrastructure planning and implementation and on improvements on the cycling conditions in the municipalities.

Cycling plans

The city does not have an Urban Mobility Plan. Cycling policy is developed in the Kaunas Specific Cycling Plan, which is complemented by the Cycling Paths Scheme (2011). This scheme represents a desired cycling network with both

recreational and residential cycling paths. Promotional activities for cycling are not included in the planning process.

In the short run, there is a maintenance and repair program for cycle paths. Sustainable mobility is also anchored in the Master Plan of the city, although compromising between conflicting needs of other policy fields.

Financing

Cycling is mainly financed by the environmental protection department. Its main source of income is a pollution tax for companies. Although the budget has fallen back significantly during the last two years (2010-2011), 300 000 Lts (almost € 90 000) are foreseen in 2012 for the extension of the cycling network to residential areas. This budget does not include promotional activities; therefore the available budget for promotion is not fixed and depends strongly on the available financing of the environmental department.

To increase the cycling budget, the city applies as well for regional, national and European funding.

Evaluation

Several cycling indicators are assessed in the annual reports of the Environmental Protection Department. The Safe Traffic School collects data on accidents where children were injured.

Data on bicycle theft and accidents are only available per parish, and is not collected in a central database.

Infrastructure & safety

There are a number of off-road cycling lanes in the city, but most of them are located in recreational areas (parks, river banks, ...), making them less suitable for daily use. Some streets with limited traffic can be used to cycle safely in the city, but on the main streets, where cars dominate and on-road cycling paths are not established, most cyclists prefer cycling on the sidewalk together with the pedestrians. To cycle between important locations, cyclists have to cycle alternately on the street or on the sidewalk. In one-way streets, cyclists are not allowed to cycle in the other direction. The main shopping/horeca street is free from motorised traffic; space for cyclists is indicated with white marking in this pedestrian area.

Cycling paths suffer from the cold climate, so large maintenance works are necessary after winter, taking a big bite out of the cycling budget. The comfort and safety of the cycling network could be improved as well by installing dropped curbs and cycling provisions at intersections.

Availability of the bicycle

Bicycle parking is provided at a number of places, but not on a structural basis. In some locations, the bicycle parking facilities face also accessibility problems. As cycling is mostly used during summer time, shelters are considered as unnecessary and are therefore not available.

A bicycle rental point for bicycles exists, but as it only operates during summer, it aims mainly at tourists and other forms of recreational cycling. Private initiatives aim at putting bicycles at the disposal of tourists as well.

The police offer free bicycle security marking, but bicycle theft is still considered as a problem.

Information & education

Education for safe traffic behaviour for children (5-18 years old) is the main responsibility of the Safe Traffic School. This charity organisation organises cycle trainings, cycling exams, information campaigns, leaflets, posters, games, newsletters, workshops in other schools, accident analysis, ... It deals with different topics, such as accident prevention, safe cycling behaviour, organised events, ... Children under 14 are not allowed to cycle alone without a certificate. Furthermore, helmets are compulsory under 18 years old. The Safe Traffic School also target parents, by stimulating them to promote physical activity for children, and other road users, by letting the children write letters to car drivers.

Information on cycling routes is provided on the website of the Environmental Protection Department.

Promotion & partnerships

The city works closely with cycling organisations to organise various promotional activities, such as cycling events (Bicycle Marathon, Bicycle Parade, critical mass rides, European mobility Week). These events are promoted on the website, in public

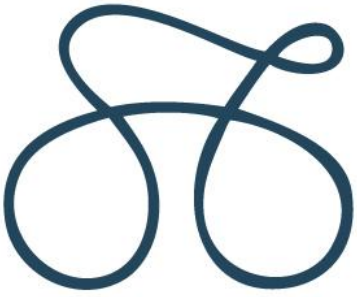
transport, posters, ... These events are attended by 200-400 cyclists.

Private partners also promote recreational cycling, for example the hotel Babylonas will organise cycling tours and a bicycle rental service for tourists.

Complementary actions

In general, the mobility policy of the city is car-oriented, without strong speed limitations for cars. The installation of the pedestrian area in the main street and differentiation of parking prices are however an important step forward for sustainable mobility.

Mobility plans on a lower level have been prepared, such as travel plans to work or school.



Conclusions & recommendations

Strong points of the cycling policy are identified, as well as areas where improvements are still possible. It is based on the input of all peer review team members that was discussed during the wrap-up meeting at the end of the peer review visit. The conclusions will be the basis of the gap analysis, and in a later stage also for the action plan and the implementation plan in WP3 of the CHAMP project.

Strong points

Although the city does not have a long tradition of cycling, there are different initiatives to promote cycling. Both people from different city administrations, private partners and user organisations work closely together. The most important plan is to extend the cycling network significantly in the long run. To fully realise this, long-term commitment is needed, including the necessary financial support. All involved partners do efforts to increase the budget for cycling in various ways, such as using the funding from the environment protection department and applying for funds at other policy levels.

The cycling network consists of a number of important cycling routes, mainly for recreational cycling. The cycle path in the pedestrian area is an important route for tourists and citizens, and makes cycling and cyclists more visible. Different stakeholders organise promotional and educational activities.

Areas of improvement

The planning of the cycling policy lacks a sustainable transport plan that integrates all modes of transport, with a prominent role for cycling. This plan should include besides infrastructural measures also complementary actions to curb car use and the promotion of sustainable transport. It is crucial to link the plan to a financial plan, to ensure its realisation.

On the field, the focus is currently on the realisation of recreational cycle routes, whereas the The majority of main roads are not equipped with cycling provisions, forcing the

cyclists to choose between cycling on the sidewalk or next to motorised traffic. Road design focuses on motorised traffic and car parking, even though it would be possible to paint on-street cycle lanes in order to give them their own space and visibility.

This network should be extended linking all important residential and economic centres for daily use. As mentioned before, this should be done according to a balanced plan, distinguishing between shared space in areas with low motorised traffic speeds and intensities, off-road segregated cycling lanes as alternatives for busy roads, and variations in between. This should be complemented by a more cycle-friendly environment, with reduced car speeds, car-free areas and one-way streets that are accessible for cyclists in both directions. As it takes time to realise a complete cycling network, a first step could be to increase the visibility of cyclists by realising a limited number of cycle routes between important locations. This would increase the number of cyclists in certain neighbourhoods, before extending the network to the rest of the city. The routes to the university can play an example role; students can be easily targeted as they do not have their fixed mobility patterns yet.

Furthermore, the realisation of cycling infrastructure should be accompanied by the promotion of cycling as a means of transport and its environmental and health benefits. Up to now, safety campaigns, information provision and cycling training are focusing on how to cycle safely and how to avoid accidents. Also car drivers should be targeted more, as they are not used to sharing space with cyclists; these campaigns should be accompanied by actions to curb car use, like mentioned above.

Furthermore, it is important to use different messages and channels for promotional campaigns. The city should also keep on making cycling visible in the city, like the cycling events that are already organized.