

# NATIONAL CYCLING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The following is a brief and very selective review of this very useful document which was viewed at the following site:

<http://www.cyklostrategie.cz/download/publikace.pdf>

The comments are intended to highlight the selective nature of what gets implemented .. and in some cases, even what gets published.

The following is from a very well known EU publication available on the web yet one can ask, (why) has any Australian cycling strategy or plan used this document eg as in the following extract?

## 6. Urban planning

From the point of view of urban planning it is necessary to keep in mind some interesting data of the official handbook for cycling<sup>3</sup> from the European Commission: "In the city, it is possible to transport on a 3.5 meter wide path (the standard width of a road lane) in one hour 22,000 individuals by rail vehicles, 19,000 people on foot, 14,000 people by bicycles, and only 9,000 people by bus and 2,000 people by cars. While the total surface of road lanes for cars in the Czech Republic outweighs the total surface of sidewalks, railways and cycle paths, 30% of all car trips are shorter than 3km, even though a bicycle is faster than a car for the distance of 5km in the city and it is still comparable to cars and the train transport up to 8 kilometres."

<sup>3</sup> Cycling: the way ahead for towns and cities, J. Dekoster, U. Schollaert, European Communities, 1999

Safety is also very selective so here we see either a lot of cyclists being killed so it must be very dangerous or, a lot of cyclists being killed, therefore there must be a very large number of cyclists assuming the roads are typical. If not typical, there is little in the Czech strategy to address this problem and as in Oz, 'lack of safety that is provided by the road authorities' becomes a reason for NOT cycling or walking.

2. From 1998 to 2002, there were over 722 cyclists killed in the Czech Republic, 4,168 were seriously injured and 21,796 were lightly injured. These alarming numbers prove the danger which cyclists face on their journeys. On the basis of this statistical data available from the hospitals, it is shown furthermore that each year over 2,000 children and approx. 5,000 of adult cyclists suffer a serious head injury. It is therefore desirable that cyclists use a helmet.

As noted above, here this important EU document has been translated into Czech whereas in Australia, it is rarely referenced, and in some cases, appears to be unknown. Why is this if the Australian road authorities are really interested in making roads safer, including for pedestrians and cyclists?

#### **5. Publication of the DG ENV: "Cycling – the way ahead for towns and cities"<sup>6</sup>**

The publication was translated by the Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic<sup>7</sup>. The handbook shows the potential of the bicycle for the transport purposes and brings strong arguments against several false prejudices often associated with the use of bicycles for daily trips. It also offers specific simple, inexpensive and popular measures, which can immediately be implemented. The publication has the following structure:

- 1 Why bicycles?
- 2 New attitudes
- 3 New examples of bicycle-friendly cities
- 4 Safety: responsibility
- 5 Courage to re-divide the traffic space and financial means
- 6 What should be known?
- 7 Others will help you
- 8 How to begin

<sup>6</sup> Dedicated to all the cities personally by the European Commissioner for the Environment - Margot Wallström

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.env.cz/C125696C00059652/01A7537D7910CC39C125696F004ACF257EBCA5F574B36A5CC1256C480029D932/\\$file/cykli.pdf](http://www.env.cz/C125696C00059652/01A7537D7910CC39C125696F004ACF257EBCA5F574B36A5CC1256C480029D932/$file/cykli.pdf)

As in many other places, the safety "concerns" tend to mean an assumption that "bikepaths" are the solution, thus the cause of the "safety" problems is not addressed. Marketing of "bikepaths" by governments is very effectively marketing that the roads are, or must be, "unsafe" otherwise, why are the "bikepaths" so important, or even necessary?

## FINANCING AND BUILDING OF CYCLE PATHS

*Sub-chapter 13*

### **1. Initial conditions**

Up to now, financing and construction of cycle paths have not been solved systematically and there is not efficiently developed the principle of partnership for construction and maintenance of cycle routes. All these activities are financially demanding which slows down their development. It is not possible to determine only one and final source of financing for the development of cycling infrastructure.

Interesting that hills are not a problem yet they are in Brisbane for example which regularly published material that suggested that cycling would always be limited because Brisbane is hot and hilly. This of course indicates that the authors either are ignorant of gears or are looking for reasons to limit cycling.

The Czech Republic is not a flat country, however surveys of financial support for cycle transport in Czech cities show that the topographic elevation of landscapes is not crucial, as the technical development of bicycles is of high level. At the current time, the cities such as Ústí nad Labem, Jihlava, Žďár nad Sázavou invest the same finances in the cycle transport as typical cycling cities, like for ex. Olomouc or České Budějovice.

Then you find facilities like this (although nothing about the context, setting, etc) which appear to be much better than available in Australia (noting that most governments prefer to show their "good" facilities).



But here below is a real gem from the Czech strategy ,... which would never happen in Oz ...!



5...

The following is also an interesting focus eg it raises questions as to why the federal government withdrew its funding for the very successful "Smogbusters" programme and seems to still be reluctant to get involved in any such activities still.

### **GOAL 3.3**

#### **Ensuring the ecological education, training and awareness raising and other educational programs for the support of cycling and a healthy life style**

Regarding to the significant environmental impact of the transport, especially in municipalities, it is necessary to develop a complex program of ecological education, awareness raising and training focused also on the support of cycle transport and its desirable effects on health, transport and the environment. The goal is also to change the life style, which would bring significant individual and social benefits. The prevailing life style suffers from a lack of movement which leads to growth of the incidence and a number of social diseases, especially in the movement functions and cardio-vascular system.

And here is a very obvious and relatively easily understood walking and cycling facility that could well be a globally accepted "model" except that in Australia, facilities like this are almost impossible to implement because some regulation or other prevents it ... and road authorities don't appear interested in changing such constraints.



Like many other plans and very much like those in our NCS versions, the Czech goals are extensive but most are not able to be measured and many are classified as "ongoing" or "permanent" ... thus no time line is created allowing infinite time for implementation rather than a specific time for implementation of specific goals, and where implemented, are difficult to evaluate against the goals.

Michael Yeates  
Cyclists Urban Speedlimit Taskforce  
Bicycle User Research Group.