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# **National policy recommendations on cycling for the Slovak Republic**



## Imprint

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# Introduction

In Slovakia, the current share of cycling traffic on the total transport work is almost negligible. Although, its actual share has not been determined in an exact manner, the latest survey conducted by the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR) estimated its level at approximately 2-3%. MDV SR, in its national strategic policy document, which was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 7 May 2013 under the title National Strategy of Development of Cycling Transport and Cycle Touring in the Slovak Republic, set the target of 10% share of cycling traffic on the total transport work by the year 2020. At the beginning of 2019, we note that the above-mentioned national target for the required share of cycling is unlikely to be met.

Regarding the state of sustainable mobility, the most alarming factors include the unsustainable and uncontrolled growth of individual motorised transport due to the rise in the standard of living of the population. Car ownership is constantly perceived as a symbol of status and personal prestige. Positive examples of the successful implementation of cycling in Slovakia demonstrate that political will and courage is the key element in promoting the necessary change towards sustainable mobility at all levels of public administration. The statements of city officials also highlight missing system education in this area, which is often built solely on officials' personal engagement and initiative. Sustainable forms of mobility in the form of walking and cycling are disadvantaged, which often results in long waiting times at crossings for pedestrians or dangerously, underdeveloped infrastructure for cyclists. Public

passenger transport is often considered an alternative, and not a rational choice about the preferred form of mobility within cities. An increasingly problematic issue is also the lack of parking policies in cities systematically addressing the growing volume of static traffic. Parking of vehicles on pedestrian walkways, which is in many cases limited only by respecting the mandatory free 1.5 m walkway width, has become common practice in Slovakia. It exacerbates sustainable mobility in cities, too.

In the case of larger cities, a gradual shift towards sustainable mobility has been observed in recent years. One of them is also promotion of the use of bicycles as a mode of transport. Bicycling, however, becomes a politically attractive topic, which often leads to situations where politicians include cycling in their own political programmes purely for their own ends. Urban and infrastructure planners also often ignore the existence of cycling transport. The position of the Slovak Police, which represents a strong opponent in the promotion of sustainable mobility instruments, is often problematic, which is frequently justified by the need to ensure the fluidity of road traffic. Another further key barrier is the role of cycling as a mode of transport at all levels of public administration, especially when it comes to its personal and related financial coverage. Understaffed capacities lead to the situation where cycling policy is based mainly on the activities of civic associations and local initiatives. A related problem is also the fact that cycling does not currently form an integrated part of urban transport systems and is not perceived as a fully-fledged mode of transport. On

the other hand, bike-sharing systems are much appreciated, which is demonstrated by residents' interest in such a form of mobility within urban areas. Good examples from abroad, an increasingly perceived theme of climate change as well as the rising traffic density lead at least some groups to prefer bicycle as an advantageous mode of transport. In this context, the positive impact of EU policies, favouring sustainable mobility, is also evident. Although cycling has been experiencing a certain degree of

a renaissance in Slovakia, inadequate development of infrastructure network, which is assessed as insufficient and dangerous, does not correspond to the growth of cycling. From an institutional point of view, the activities of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MŠVVaŠ SR) and the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (MZ SR) are assessed as insufficient, which is also reflected in the very low number of relevant strategic documents.

## National Policy Recommendations

Proposed national policy recommendations are measures, which aim to support the further growth of cycling at relatively low implementation costs. The recommendations represent measures with the possibility of their immediate and medium-term implementation, which are directed towards different stakeholders, and which mitigate identified barriers and focus on a few priority areas.

A key element of the national policy called the National Strategy of Development of Cycling Transport and Cycle Touring in the Slovak Republic is the fact that it recommends cooperating on the implementation of the measures proposed in the aforementioned umbrella document to the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS), the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (ÚMS) as well as to the self-governing regions, the National Union of Employers (RÚZ) and the Federation of Employers' Associations of the Slovak Republic (AZZZ SR). However, co-operation on the implementation is also required by other relevant ministries, i.e. the Ministry of the Environment (MŽP SR), the MŠVVaŠ SR, the MZ SR and others. Stakeholders

assume that the document would not have been approved without the activity of civic associations and local initiatives, therefore, as a response to a bottom-up demand.

### Obligatory Establishment of Bicycle Parking Spaces in New Residential Buildings

The further development of cycling in Slovakia is hampered by the limited possibilities of comfortable and safe parking and storage bicycle facilities in residential properties, standards and regulations favouring individual motorised transport as well as problems with cycling infrastructure solutions at more complex intersections. One of the arguments why residents refuse to use bicycles in cities is their problematic storage and parking. Outdoor spaces (such as bicycle parking racks) designed for short-term parking cannot be considered as a sufficient solution, especially in the case of residential properties. A related and often discussed problem is a very high rates of bicycle theft, which highlights the need to adopt a systemic and safe

form of bicycle storage. Currently, there is no legislative obligation for building contractors to set up the mentioned bicycle rooms.

Examples of good practice suggest that a possible starting point from an unsatisfactory state is the introduction of a legal and enforceable obligation on establishing rooms designated for parking and storing bicycles in new residential buildings. The proposal must be developed in such a way that would ensure not only the fulfilment of statutory provisions but also the real use of such premises by the real estate residents for the intended purpose. Particularly interesting is the possibility of so-called policy transfers from other countries, e.g. Austria with a similar experience.

### **Better Visual Labelling of 30 km/h Zones in Towns and Municipalities**

The labelling of 30 km/h zones as one of the key elements of traffic calming is inadequate, which often results in failure to respect this road sign by motor vehicle drivers. The problem of non-compliance with traffic signs is becoming more and more serious, as the Police only exceptionally enforce the maximum permitted speed in 30 km/h zones, as well as in residential, pedestrian and school zones with the maximum permitted speed of 20 km/h. Stakeholders evaluate the 30 km/h zones as one of the primary solutions of the so-called traffic calming in cities and towns. It has been emphasised that the creation of the 30 km/h zones is not a financially demanding measure. The reason drivers do not respect the 30 km/h zones is often caused by the insufficient visibility of vertical road signs. This effect is more substantial in

larger cities due to a significant advertising smog, respectively in the areas with scraggly greenery. Finally, a separate issue is the need to ensure compliance with the above-mentioned speed limit by the Police, which currently measure the maximum allowed speed in these zones only exceptionally, and the fact that the local police forces are not yet entitled to collect fines for exceeding the maximum permitted speeds within their territory.

The proposed solution is to prioritise the combination of the vertical traffic signs with clear and uniformed horizontal ones. The increased respect for the 30 km/h zones by drivers will also lead to an increased sense of traffic security, especially in a group of more vulnerable road users. In addition to the aforementioned positive effects, the expected impact of the proposed policy change is an increase in number of cyclists on roads.

### **Enactment of the Mandatory min. 1.5 m Lateral Distance of the Overtaking Vehicle from Bicycle Riders**

Bicycling at the right edge of the road is currently not safe. The underlying problem is also the poor road surface, which exacerbates the need for a sufficient manoeuvring space for cyclists.

As a result of the incorporation of mandatory min. 1.5 m lateral distance to the Act No. 8/2009 Coll. on Road Traffic, new drivers will be taught to respect this distance during their driving schools' courses. An alternative soft measure is the implementation of informative traffic signs on respecting the safe lateral distance along roads which are frequently used by cyclists.

## **Establishment of Certified Trainers in the Field of Cycling Transport**

Nowadays, there is a lack of systematic and effective education of children and young people on safe bicycle riding. In addition to the annual Bike to School campaign and the own initiatives of some schools, there is no systematic approach to this issue. Concerns about child safety are among the main reasons why parents do not support this mode of transport. The systematisation of teaching children and youth about the advantages and benefits of cycling, is one of the key ways to raise awareness of this target group. The change of children's behaviour from a lower age lead to the substantial positive impacts in all areas of social life. The related issue is also the insufficient knowledge of the Police about the current technical specifications in the field of cycling infrastructure development.

A certification process will provide the necessary information of the topic for the trainers in order to teach children and youth under real-life conditions at negligible financial costs. After the successful completion of the training, local and regional cycling coordinators, the members of interest groups involved in cycling, will be also able to pass their knowledge to the public transport authorities' drivers (please see Recommendation No. 6 for more information). The certification scheme will be implemented based on the cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MŠVVaŠ SR), the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR) and the Presidium of the Police Force.

## **Systematic Collection of Data on Cycling in Towns and Municipalities**

In Slovakia, there is no systematic collection of data on cycling and the actual 2-3% national cycling share is only an approximate value. It is essential for towns and municipalities to collect data on each mode of transport. Particularly relevant is the form of point counters, which allows implementing cycling-friendly measures (i.e. building new cycle paths, increasing the capacity of existing biking trails, reorganising intersections, etc.) in those places which are used by cyclists most frequently. Another alternative is representative mobility surveys among residents.

Without information, it is not possible to make informed decisions and to support the creation of so-called evidence-based policies. The collection of data itself, is in the interest of towns and municipalities so that they could make the most effective decisions about their own public policies. The Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR) as well as the actors associating Slovak towns and municipalities should support such solutions.

## **Training of Public Transport Drivers on the Needs of More Vulnerable Road Users**

There is no systematic training and further education of public transport drivers focusing solely on the needs of more vulnerable road users now. A partially positive example is, for instance, the Bratislava Transport Company (DPB, a.s.), which keeps the drivers' code of ethics. Nevertheless, bicycle users emphasise

the feeling of being endangered by public transport vehicles in a variety of situations in road traffic. The mentioned feeling makes the cyclists ride on sidewalks, which has the effect of limiting and threatening of pedestrians as well as the fining of cyclists.

It is necessary to provide certified training capacities, which would provide training at regular intervals. The role of cities as an operator or provider of public transport is essential in implementing this measure. In addition to the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR), a key role is also played by other counterparts such as the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS) and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (ÚMS), whose declared objectives are in line with the proposed measure.

### **Incorporation of the Cycling Transport subject into the RTVS' Programme Structure**

In Slovakia, the most severe and persisting issue is the insufficient education and the missing awareness-raising measures targeted at the general public. Although there are several campaigns and initiatives that support bicycling as a form of sustainable mobility, for example, the Bike to School, Bike to Shop, or Bike to Work, they are often perceived only as a formality with a weak impact. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on activities with a greater impact, which will spread the awareness of the bicycle transport benefits in a natural transparent form, especially among those groups of people who are not otherwise interested in the topic.

Direct cooperation between the Ministry

of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR) and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (MK SR) with the Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) is needed in order to identify possibilities of incorporating the theme of cycling into the RTVS' programme structure (children education programmes and programmes for a wide audience, etc.). A programme in the public interest is defined as a programme aimed at matching the information and cultural needs of listeners or viewers, including programmes aimed at educational and informing purposes for minors as well as programmes promoting healthy lifestyle, environmental protection and security as amended by the Act No. 308/2000 Coll. on Broadcasting and Retransmission. The broadcasting of programmes fulfilling this function by the RTVS stems directly from the Act No. 532/2010 Coll. on Radio and Television of Slovakia.

Table No. 1: National Policy Recommendations (Slovakia)

Priority Topic	No.	Recommendation	Status Quo Description	Proposed Policy Change Description	Date for Implementation	Affected Stakeholder(s)	Final Recipient(s)
Legislative Changes	1	<p>Obligatory Establishment of Bicycle Parking Spaces in New Residential Buildings</p> <p>(compulsory legal instrument of public policy)</p> <p>Key words: bicycle parking, capacity building</p>	<p>Currently, there is no legislative obligation for building contractors to set up the mentioned bicycle rooms, neither to consider any other requirements of cyclists, unless there are cycling paths close to the building or there is no planned cycling route.</p>	<p>Examples of good practice suggest that a possible starting point from an unsatisfactory state is the introduction of a legal and enforceable obligation on establishing rooms designated for parking and storing bicycles in new residential buildings. It is necessary to define the spatial requirements of the designated spaces depending on the number of housing units and their size as well as other technical specifications of this proposal.</p>	2022	<p>organisations (interest associations and societies) involved in cycling transport</p> <p>private companies (developers)</p> <p>Association for Better Housing Management (ZLSBD)</p>	<p>Section of Construction, Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)</p>
Legislative Changes	2	<p>Better Visual Labelling of 30 km/h Zones in Towns and Municipalities</p> <p>(mixed information-based instrument of public policy)</p> <p>Key words: emission reduction, road safety</p>	<p>30 km/h zones have only a minimal impact on the length of the roads realised. This element of traffic calming also leads to a reduced risk of threatening more vulnerable road users as well as to reduce noise and emissions. The reason drivers do not respect the 30 km/h zones is often caused due to the insufficient visibility of the vertical road signs.</p>	<p>The proposed solution is to prioritise the combination of the vertical traffic signs with clear and uniformed horizontal ones.</p>	immediately	<p>organisations (interest associations and societies) involved in cycling transport</p> <p>Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)</p> <p>Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS)</p> <p>Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (ÚMS)</p>	<p>local authorities (towns and municipalities)</p>



Priority Topic	No.	Recommendation	Status Quo Description	Proposed Policy Change Description	Date for Implementation	Affected Stakeholder(s)	Final Recipient(s)
Legislative Changes	3	Enactment of the Mandatory min. 1.5 m Lateral Distance of the Overtaking Vehicle from Bicycle Riders (compulsory legal instrument of public policy) Key words: road safety	Bicycling at the right edge of the road is currently not safe. Although the Police of the Slovak Republic recommend respecting the safe lateral distance, which is, however, often not respected by drivers while overtaking cyclists.	The incorporation of mandatory min. 1.5 m lateral distance to the Act No. 8/2009 Coll. on Road Traffic.	2020	organisations (interest associations and societies) involved in cycling transport  Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)	Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (MV SR)
Capacity Building	4	Establishment of Certified Trainers in the Field of Cycling Transport (mixed administrative instrument of public policy) Key words: road safety, awareness-raising measures, education, emission reduction	Nowadays, there is no systematic and effective teaching of children and young people about safe bicycle transport at primary and secondary schools.	The essence of this proposal is the establishment of a so-called certified trainer in the field of cycling transport. Teachers (e.g. of physical education) at primary and secondary schools will be asked to be certified. Moreover, local and regional cycling coordinators, the members of interest groups involved in cycling may be certified, too. A systematic implementation of this measure will be ensured by its inclusion in the curriculum. The certification will be carried out by the Slovak Police whose task is to ensure the safety and smooth flow of road traffic as well as to have up-to-date knowledge on cycling infrastructure.	2020	organisations (interest associations and societies) involved in cycling transport  Presidium of the Police Force  Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)	Regional Directories of the Police Force (PZ SR)  Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MŠVVaŠ SR)

Priority Topic	No.	Recommendation	Status Quo Description	Proposed Policy Change Description	Date for Implementation	Affected Stakeholder(s)	Final Recipient(s)
Capacity Building	5	<p>Systematic Collection of Data on Cycling in Towns and Municipalities (compulsory administrative instrument of public policy)</p> <p>Key words: data collection, evidence-based decision making</p>	In Slovakia, there is no systematic collection of data on cycling. Actual 2-3% of national cycling share is only an approximate value.	Data collection in case of cycling transport can be realised through financially low-cost applications and the authorities should be better informed about these possibilities. Particularly relevant is the form of point counters or representative mobility surveys among residents.	immediately	<p>organisations (interest associations and societies) involved in cycling transport</p> <p>Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)</p> <p>Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS)</p> <p>Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (ÚMS)</p>	local authorities (towns and municipalities)
Education and Raising Awareness	6	<p>Training of Public Transport Drivers on the Needs of More Vulnerable Road Users (mixed administrative instrument of public policy)</p> <p>Key words: road safety, awareness-raising measures</p>	There is no systematic training and further education of public transport drivers focusing solely on the needs of more vulnerable road users now.	Systematic training and further education of public transport drivers on the needs of more vulnerable road users is a tool that would help to understand the perspective of cyclists in road traffic. The Association of Public Transport Operators in the City Agglomerations of the Slovak Republic should be involved in the mentioned initiative implemented by certified trainers (please see Recommendation No. 4 for more information).	2021	<p>Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)</p> <p>Presidium of the Police Force</p> <p>Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS)</p> <p>Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (ÚMS)</p>	<p>Association of Public Transport Operators in the City Agglomerations of the Slovak Republic</p> <p>local public transport of cities (transport undertakings), resp. local government (cities)</p> <p>contracted public transport operators, resp. local government (cities)</p>

Priority Topic	No.	Recommendation	Status Quo Description	Proposed Policy Change Description	Date for Implementation	Affected Stakeholder(s)	Final Recipient(s)
Education and Raising Awareness	7	<p>Incorporation of the Cycling Transport subject into the RTVS' Programme Structure (mixed information-based instrument of public policy)</p> <p>Key words: PR, awareness-raising measures, education</p>	<p>Although at the national level there are several campaigns promoting the development of the cycling transport, these campaigns are rated only as formal ones with a weak impact.</p>	<p>Direct cooperation between the MDV SR and the MK SR with the RTVS in order to identify possibilities of incorporating the theme of cycling into the RTVS' programme structure (children education programmes and programmes for a wide audience, etc.). The broadcasting of programmes fulfilling this function stems directly from the Act No. 532/2010 Coll. on Radio and Television of Slovakia.</p>	immediately	<p>Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MDV SR)</p> <p>Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (MK SR)</p> <p>Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (MZ SR)</p> <p>Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MŠVVaŠ SR)</p>	Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS)

Source: strategic status quo analysis, interviews with stakeholders (MDV SR, MZ SR, Presidium of the Police Force, Ekopolis Foundation), working meetings with non-profit advocacy expert group Cycling Coalition and the MDV SR, feedback from participants at the workshop Cyclurban Slovakia

