



## FACT SHEET S-01 – GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

### Introduction

Mainly soft measures are considered as awareness raising campaigns and provision of information to increase levels of walking, cycling, car sharing and use of public transport. Often the expression “public relations for cycling” is used synonymously. They are distinguished from hard measures, which are provisions of infrastructure.

Soft Measures are considered to be an important instruments for a cost-efficient promotion of cycling. On the one hand they aim to change habits and perceptions to overcome barriers to cycling (awareness rising campaigns). On the other hand soft measures can be used to spread information, to educate and to teach experts and users (information campaigns).

Since many cities in Central Europe currently are facing the problem of bad, unsafe and insufficient cycling infrastructure, improving the cycling network might be more important for starter cities. Implementing soft measures will foster the use of bicycles, which can lead to increasing safety problems wherever the infrastructure is in bad conditions.

This fact sheet aims to help in professionalising public relation efforts. It therefore provides readers with information about who is active in public relations and some general success factors of public relations for cycling.

### Actors in public relation

Public relations for improving the image of cycling are implemented by many institutions and persons trying to gain benefit from the promotion of bicycle transport. Central MeetBike partners found the following:

**Municipalities:** Cycling usually is a local topic: most bicycle trips take place within one municipality and usually municipalities are responsible for most of the infrastructure on which cyclists ride. Implementing public relation is a promising and cost effective tool for cities to foster bicycle use, which ultimately contributes to savings in investments (less new car capacity required), traffic safety and improvement of life quality for citizens (often an important factor for enterprises when choosing locations for new settlements).

**Enterprises:** There are many enterprises with an interest in increasing use of bicycles. Health insurance providers realised the benefits of cycling for personal health. In addition there are bicycle producers and retail stores that want to sell products. Enterprises usually are experienced in promoting products and implementing campaigns.

**Employers:** They are obliged to ensure sufficient number of parking spaces at the workplace (depending on available facilities in the vicinity such as access to public transport). Usually those parking facilities are very cost intensi-

ve. However, in many European countries enterprises can decrease required number of parking spaces through implementing mobility management that also includes soft measures to promote alternatives to car use.



Figure 1: Poster of the Bike to work campaign organised by German Health insurance and German cyclists club

**NGO, associations:** NGO and local associations represent citizens and interests of special groups as lobbyists. NGO and associations connected to cycling (e.g. ECF – European cyclists foundation) are very enthusiastic in promoting cycling. However, they sometimes see cycling separated from other transport modes and do not consider its potentials as an integrated part of a local mobility coalition.

Municipal public relations often suffer from bad financial support. Therefore it is recommended that cities seek partnerships with enterprises and NGOs or associations to use synergies and exploit new funding opportunities.

*More sustainable transport in Central European cities through improved integrated bicycle promotion and international networking*

### Key factors for success of public relation

A study analysing public relation campaigns in Germany showed key factors for successful campaigning for cycling (see figure 2):

**Public relation strategy:** All measures related to cycling should be incorporated into a strategy for public relations. This strategy is necessary as the basis of work for decision makers and administration and informing the public at the same time.

**Continuous campaigning:** Continuous presence in media is a precondition for being recognised by target groups. Single campaigns will not be enough to embed cycling in peoples' minds and to induce a mobility behaviour change.

**Separated budget for public relation:** It is recommended to ensure sufficient financial support for public relations for the long term. Deciding on a separate budget can help improve financial basis over several years.

**Involvement of marketing experts:** Efficient public relations require expertise in marketing. Cycling experts in municipalities often do not have a lot experience in that field. However, many cities installed public relations departments, which should be involved in cycling campaigns to increase expertise.

**Targeted campaigns:** Identification of target groups is a precondition for successful campaigning. It helps to use existing money efficiently. Against the background of constant addressing of people through marketing campaigns,

targeted campaigning is promising in order to increase recognisability of cycling campaigns. More details about target groups can be found on CMB fact sheet S-02 Targeting public relations.

**Involvement of decision makers:** Politicians depend on public attention. Therefore cycling campaigns should include events where politicians can present themselves. This might increase political support for cycling in general. Additionally the role of politicians as being a model for citizens should not be underestimated.

**Local VIPs as forerunners and models:** Well-known persons can be multipliers for cycling promotion. This can be local or national VIPs.

**Early information on measures:** Providing citizens with information on plans and measures in an early stage of the project is recommended. Involving

the public might prolong projects, but it increases understanding of problems and can therefore lead to improved support for future measures.

**Preparing common campaigns:** Often municipalities face the problem of financing public relations. Preparing a campaign on a superior (e.g. regional or national) level and making it available for municipalities can increase efficiency by taking advantage of synergies. This provides cities with options to implement campaigns with less budget requirements.

**Corporate design and label:** It is recommended to develop a corporate design for all means connected to the local public relation campaigns. This can be accompanied with establishing a label for bicycle promotion. This increases visibility and recognisability of campaigns.



Figure 2: Factors influencing design and success of campaigns (based on Prenzel (2012), p.175pp)

**Lessons learned:** Soft measures, especially campaigns creating a positive image of cycling, are considered as an important and cost-efficient tool to promote cycling. This fact sheet collects key factors for success of campaigns. Among them are: developing a public relation strategy that fosters professional campaigns on particular target groups. Continuous campaigning requires reliable and sufficient financial resources. The involvement of many actors is promising to exploit synergies and to save costs.

For further resources, links and best practice examples visit the Sustainable Urban Transport Project website: <http://www.sutp.org/>

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