

09.11.2007

Greetings to *inbici*
First National Conference of Cycling in Italy
1a Conferenza Nazionale della Bicicletta
09. – 11.11.2007 Milano

Presidents, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of Cycling,

cycling is the big trend of this new century for several reasons. Before I shall mark out some of the most important aspects, I first of all want to congratulate:

Congratulations to the First National Conference of Cycling in Milan!

This is a very important step for cycling in Milano and in Italy, and I am very pleased to be here.

The *European Cyclists' Federation* is working for more and better cycling in Europe and often in global dimensions all over the world. To do this in its best way, we need you all, the cyclists, the planners and the politicians.

We need you, your commitments and efforts.

And we need you with your engagement and your love for cycling.

Congratulations also, that you all pull the rope together: The politicians, the local and regional governments and departments, the associations, federations, and even the cycling fair together with the bicycle industry, which is actually just now in Milan.

And you have one chance more to be successful in matters of cycling on the European level. At the last AGM, the Annual General Meeting of the ECF in Bern, an Italian candidate was elected into the management committee of the ECF. This is Vice-President Doretta Vicini, and I want to address her: "Doretta, thank you very much for your attendance to become a candidate and a member of our board, thank you very much for your engagement in the management committee and for the ECF. We are sure that this will be good for both, the ECF and Italy".

I have been the President of the ECF for two and a half years now. During this time a lot of very reasonable things happened – not belonging to me, but I have had the chance to be part of this on the European level.

I remember very well the **mid-term conference** in Brussels two years ago about the consequences of the Kyoto Protocol. For the first time then I met the Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport, Mr. Jacques Barrot.

Amongst 52 organisations, presenting all means of transport, we discussed the new White Paper. My own concern were the almost absent words: “cycling” or “bicycle” and I emphasised this lack to Jacques Barrot.

Vice-Präsident Jacques Barrot was personally a speaker at the VeloCity Conference in 2005, and he expressed himself openly towards a better implementation of cycling in traffic. And finally, when last I met Mr. Barrot in May 07, an amazing number of important things had meantime happened – in 2 years. These were:

1. First of all the European Commission and the ECF together will create a procedure to develop **more cycling friendly cities**.
2. The bicycle will be present in the **Green paper of traffic** at crucial points. It has already been presented and we can assure that. We use the time till completion to strengthen the positions.
3. Jacques Barrot will be a promoter of the next **VeloCity in Brussels** in 2009.

The VeloCity conference last June – this year, organised by the *ECF* and the host city Munich, was the biggest cycling conference ever held. 950 participants from approximately 50 countries were there together for one week. And part of these good results now are part of your conference in Italy. There was a video made of this VeloCity Conference in Munich with good impressions and important messages from this conference.

As Vice-President Vicini told me, you will have the opportunity to see this video during this conference in the afternoon.

A man from Italy, not very long ago, told me the following: We have a lot of traffic problems and pollution made by transport, made of course by cars. And the main reason therefore is, that in Italy we have less space in our cities; there is more city space in other countries.

Well, this is true. But it is only half of the truth. The other half is that everywhere in the world there is reduced city space. And there are two main reasons for that:

- The first reason is that cities all over the world are growing extremely fast.
- And the second reason is that cars are needing a great deal of space.

We know, that we cannot prevent cities from growing, but of course we need to stop that cars eat up our space.

One important question for the future of cities is: How much space do we have for traffic? And how much space do we need for traffic?

And here, in this conference, we feel we know something more: We know that cycling friendly cities are clean and friendly cities, indeed cities with a better quality of life. Under the aspects of the Kyoto protocol cycling must have an important role in the climate debate.

And we know, there are a lot of cities in the meantime, they show best Practise. Here in one opening speech we heard about Paris. This is a very good example. Paris was host city of VeloCity four years ago and since that time a lot of positive cycling development was shown and is going on. In Munich, the major of Copenhagen told us, that they reduced the space for cars and gave more space for cycling. What happened? Three very interesting steps:

1. more cycling traffic
2. much more cycling traffic
3. traffic jams, made by cyclists.

Looking outside, here in Milano, we see just today all streets jammed. Of course, this conference is organised very very well. And of course, the question is easy to answer: What will we prefer, traffic jams by cars or traffic jams by cyclists?

For a better quality of life in cities, we know, we need more cyclists, we need more cyclists producing clean air. Therefore, a short conclusion and last comment to climate change. Just to understand it in the right way:

We, the ECF, the European Cyclists' Federation, do not need climate change, **but our climate needs cyclists!**

For more cycling and its role in the climate debate and transport policy, the European Cyclists' Federation passed at its last AGM in Bern during May '07 ***"The ECF's Declaration of Bern"***.

The 10 most important points of this declaration are **a standard for what we united must do** in order to gain a better quality of life in our cities.

Bicycling offers the very best chances; even if so far – these excellent chances were hardly used so far. It is impressive and important for me to hear, that all the speakers before, here are addressing and underlining the great chances cycling will offer. So this is **my appeal** to all persons in charge, here on the panel, in the audience and outside to all planners and associations too, in order to structure our future with greater courage. **Be active, start now for more and better cycling.**

- This is why I wish this First National Conference of Cycling here in Italy immense success. Give us a starting signal for a more bicycle friendly future here in this beautiful country; for an even more splendid quality of life and health of its people. Good luck!
- *Voglio augurare un grande successo alla 1a Conferenza Nazionale della Bicicletta!*

Che sia un segnale di partenza per un futuro più amico della bicicletta in questo meraviglioso paese, per una qualità di vita ancora migliore per i suoi abitanti.

Buona fortuna!