



EUROPEAN CYCLISTS' FEDERATION

THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN CYCLISTS FOR OVER 25 YEARS

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PRESS RELEASE

Opinion of ECF President Manfred Neun on the FOCUS interview (22.03.10) of the German Federal president Horst Köhler

Brussels—March 23, 2010

President Köhler is right: „After all we should be the ones ashamed in front of our children“.

The German President Horst Köhler doesn't just want to awake the politics; he is talking about everybody and that in a amiable and positive way. In his appeal after the re-election he already mentioned once: „Do trust in the people“. Now he has started the discussion once again.

“We should think about, if the fuel price shouldn't tend rather to be higher than being lower.“

The German ADAC, representing the drivers' point of view, immediately reacted saying that this statement would be unsocial.

Unsocial in fact is how, within the last 50 years, the public space has been biased in favour of vehicle users. Children, seniors, pedestrians and cyclists found less and less space within the past years. Worse public areas lead to a decrease in terms of public security. Even more, the general loss of quality is unsocial because it changed the class patterns in our class. We know and are already reaping the effects of our lifestyle, but we keep on ignoring the causes. If children find less space to move safely in public spaces, soon enough they will not be able to move freely anymore, which will further lead to loose social contacts. Such a fact will cut down basic childhood experiences, which presently should be treated as a right that shouldn't be taken away from anybody. We burden them with more than debts; probably with way more a child growing up can take.

In this situation the president is making it easy for everybody with his „good will“ to take a turn to better ways. In his speech concerning the “Deutschen Umweltpreis 2009“ *he said clearly that maybe we should take the hints seriously, which are telling us that our current lifestyle is limiting us a lot for the future. We wrongly claim to have lively and liveable city centres. We are rather exchanging green space to build shopping centres. Citizens living next to main road have to give up their right to calmness; children or seniors sometimes have to even give up their free moving space in front of their houses. Commuters give*

Mission Statement of ECF:

Founded in 1983, the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) is the umbrella federation of 60 bicycle user and related associations from Europe and beyond. On behalf of our members, we are pledged to ensure that bicycle use achieves its fullest potential so as to bring about sustainable mobility and public well-being.



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up important quality time with their families, friends and children because of traffic jams. Together alone! A major part of our daily life is about giving up our rights and possibilities; we just don't get it yet.

Because if we did understand it, we would realise that a better quality, more comprehensive public transport system would lead to a higher quality of living. This would result in less noise, less wasting of public areas and less time wasted which are stuck in traffic jams in our private cars. Nevertheless he thinks that there is hope and an already ongoing progress, which tells us that it's „cool“ to take the bike instead of driving an SUV through the city.

Not just in Germany; worldwide, cycling Federations are advocating ways to win back lost public space, not only for the benefit of cyclists, but resulting in a significantly higher quality of living for everybody. The bicycle is the ultimate “zero emission vehicle”. We have to give space for cycling though, public space. If we find the right/intelligent mix of vehicles we can develop the triangle of sustainability: social – ecological – economic. We do not just have to develop environmental friendly vehicles we also have to think about different concepts of mobility. The world is waiting for it.

The best concepts on cycling-mobility from all over the world addressed to the whole world are to be discovered at the “Velo-city Global 2010” conference in Copenhagen from 22nd-25th June this year. The world's biggest cycling congress is organised by the cities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg in cooperation with the ECF. With the climate summit half a year behind the world is waiting for further stimulus.

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