



## Municipal Cooperation to Promote Cycling

### Accountability for local mobility

The primary responsibilities for planning and promoting cycling are held at municipal level; the Länder, German federal government and EU hold secondary responsibility in this matter. General mobility enhancement for pedestrians and cyclists is best promoted in localities themselves.

Local self-government has a long tradition in Germany. As a rule, matters of urban and transport planning are decided under the planning authority of municipal councils. With the exception of federal and Länder roads, municipalities, administrative districts and their cities and towns and cities with district status finance and maintain roadway and path networks. In this context, the administrative districts – particularly in rural areas – coordinate the planning schemes of their cities and towns. The district council makes decisions on the level and funding of public transport services, and regarding its own roads. In many administrative districts planning in the various localities is conceived to create broader transport – and cycling – networks.

Municipalities bring forth their interests at the state level – federal and Länder – through their leading municipal associations. The publisher of “Cycling Expertise”, the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu), was also founded by municipalities as a joint research centre in 1973. Difu has grown into a clearing house for cycling, offering many resources, such as the German Bicycle Portal at [www.nrvp.de](http://www.nrvp.de).

*Cover images: Cohesive cycling networks in regions require concerted municipal action*

### Jointly coordinated routes

To interlink communities with one another, and to allow cross-border cycling tourism with integrated routes, regional cooperation on cycling policy among municipalities is required. Uniform signposting on cycling paths has in many cases replaced community-specific signage, which was often instituted by mayors as a means to differentiate their city or town from neighbouring localities.

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The coordination of routes for cycling tourism corresponds to local tourism structures: municipal tourism associations for regions and the competent political instance in the individual Land. Due to this, tourism associations as well as administrative districts often take on responsibility for overseeing the completion of intermunicipal cycling routes. Cooperation among neighbouring municipalities (in areas such as public transport and wastewater management) traditionally takes place through common public institutions with their own funding, i. e. joint local authority ventures. This often leads to an efficient structure where one municipality handles the duties of its neighbours as well. This form of cooperation is now also being practised in the construction of jointly coordinated cycling routes.

## Active promotion of cycling policy through the Länder

In addition to municipal cooperation on individual routes, the individual Länder have assumed an active role in creating a network of cycling paths within their territories. They establish a conceptual framework by publishing manuals on the necessary infrastructures for a cycling path network, writing newsletters for municipal players and, above all, providing state funding for infrastructure. Specialized planning offices work in a supporting function until a route is officially opened, usually as part of a cycling awareness day in the spring. In this way an integrated network has been successfully created in just a few years – despite the roads and paths being under different ownership, fundings coming from different sources, planning conflicts with road



Images from the North Rhine-Westphalia bicycle route planner on the Internet at [www.fahrradfreundlich.nrw.de](http://www.fahrradfreundlich.nrw.de)

construction schemes, nature conservation and large privately owned plots.

The Land North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and its municipalities are in the vanguard when it comes to realizing a Land-spanning cycling network. Instituted as the ambitious project of a newly elected North Rhine Westphalian government about a decade ago, North Rhine-Westphalia has now completed an integrated cycling network with extensive tourist and practical everyday cycling routes. The user is offered detailed and high-quality directions that include an online route planner, a navigation system and bicycle parking facilities at major railway stations.

The initial signposting infrastructure for the Land-spanning network was financed for municipalities with a range of earmarked funding tools, notwithstanding municipal planning authority. The municipalities are able to augment the information on the network of cycle paths of their own accord with additional uniform signs.

## Municipal networking and cooperation

In the spring of 2009 (24.02.2009) the German Association of Cities (DST), the German Association of Administrative Districts (DLT) and the German Association of Towns and Municipalities (DSTGB) founded the Municipal Coordination Group for Cycling (KoKo-Rad). The establishment of KoKo-Rad was spurred on by municipal demands for more representation on matters of cycling policy. Koko-Rad consists of five municipal representatives from each of the three leading municipal associations and three transport officers.

The tasks of the coordinating group include aiding the transport officers of the leading municipal associations in drawing up issue-related opinions, formulating suggestions to improve the promotion of cycling in municipalities (lobby work) and preparing the programme for the annual municipal cycling conference. Two of the first municipal policy issues addressed by Koko-Rad include incorrect bicycle parking and the implementation of traffic law changes relevant to cycling.

Koko-Rad coordinates and advises the municipal representatives of the advisory council on cycling at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS), helps update the body of rules and regulations and supervises ancillary research for BMVBS projects. A management team coordinates the work of KoKo-Rad.

**On the joint cycling strategy of the various levels of government see: Cycling Expertise No. O-1 "Germany's National Cycling Plan: a Cooperation between the Federal Level and the Länder".**

## Municipal Cycling Conference

The joint Municipal Cycling Conference of the three leading municipal associations has established itself as a key annual meeting place for experience sharing among those responsible for cycling policy in public administrations. Their aims are:

- to network players across Germany;
- to involve the leading municipal associations;
- to activate initiatives in the given hosting region (provide incentives);

to address the leadership in administrations and politics. The municipal cycling conferences are organized in the framework of the Bicycle Academy by the German Institute for Urban Affairs (Difu). Only local government administrators are invited to the conference – user associations, consultants and cycling industry representatives are not invited to participate.

Following discussions at the first Municipal Cycling Conference, a Municipal Coordination Group for Cycling (KokoRad, see above) has since been established; it mainly acts as an advisory panel to the leading municipal associations. Municipal networking activities in the Länder can also be directly traced back to Bicycle Academy events.

The popularity of this event is underscored by the growing number of participants, from 125 participants (Göttingen 2007) to 158 participants (Frankfurt am Main 2008), and, finally, to 186 participants (Potsdam 2009). The 2010 Municipal Cycling Conference will convene in Karlsruhe.

## Municipal alliances for the Land

In more and more Länder, municipalities are forming bike-friendly alliances. They aim to improve experience sharing and jointly promote their interests. Devising common campaigns and producing joint informational flyers for cyclists and planners is more efficient than undertaking such measures as an individual municipality.

In many cases it were Länder ministries who launched such initiatives with the aim of implementing cycling policies at Land level more effectively and simplifying the administration of state funding through self-organization on the part of municipalities. Germany's Länder took quite different approaches. This made the structure somewhat confusing.

An Internet-supported database was established for municipalities on the National Bicycle Portal [www.nrvp.de](http://www.nrvp.de); here, administrators can search for specific cycling funding programmes in the Länder, EU funding, etc. (funding handbook). On the other hand, the complicated federalist structure facilitates innovative approaches and makes it easier to compare their effectiveness. Some examples are given in the following sections.

## Consortium of bicycle-friendly cities, Administrative Districts and Municipalities in North Rhine-Westphalia e.V. (AGFS)



North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is a densely and highly populated Land in Germany; the population totals 16 million and many parts of its territory are still dominated by traditional industries. An association was established using locally available resources that link bike-friendly municipalities and cities with one another and strengthen them through dialogue: For the member cities, administrative districts and municipalities of AGFS cycling funding from the Land NRW is available. Yet the obstacles to joining are by no means small: an explicit council resolution to ambitiously promote cycling, an action programme and a “successfully passed entrance examination” administered by a review commission for cycling in cities.

Apart from offering an array of brochures on specialist topics, conventions, competitions, etc., the AGFS has also developed a guideline for new members in which it presents its view on how to pursue a successful cycling policy.



Map showing AGFS North Rhine-Westphalia member municipalities

### Sources

Second German federal government cycling report on the state of cycling in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2007: [http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original\\_1018367/Zweiter-Fahrradbericht-der-Bundesregierung-barrierefrei.pdf](http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_1018367/Zweiter-Fahrradbericht-der-Bundesregierung-barrierefrei.pdf) (in German) <http://www.nrvp.de/foerderung-bund/foerderung-nrvp/massnahmen.phtml> (in German)

### Länder Links

<http://www.mv-bike.net>  
[www.fahrradfreundlich.nrw.de](http://www.fahrradfreundlich.nrw.de)  
[http://www.radroutenplaner.nrw.de/RRP\\_home\\_02\\_en.html](http://www.radroutenplaner.nrw.de/RRP_home_02_en.html) (in English)  
[http://www.radverkehrsnetz.nrw.de/downloads/Rad\\_info\\_english.pdf](http://www.radverkehrsnetz.nrw.de/downloads/Rad_info_english.pdf) (in English)  
<http://www.fahrradland-bw.de>

## Mecklenburg-West Pomerania Network

The basic conditions in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (MV) are starkly different from those in NRW; this Land has a low population density, little purchasing power, shrinking populations and dynamic cycling tourism (beyond the Baltic Sea coast). Because responsibilities for cycling path infrastructure in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania lie with various ministries (Transport, Agriculture, Tourism), an Interministerial Working Group on Cycling Policy (IMAG Radverkehr) was established; the responsibilities are bundled in this committee. It deals solely with cycling transport and general cycling infrastructures, and its main task is to coordinate the use and provision of signs on existing cycling paths.

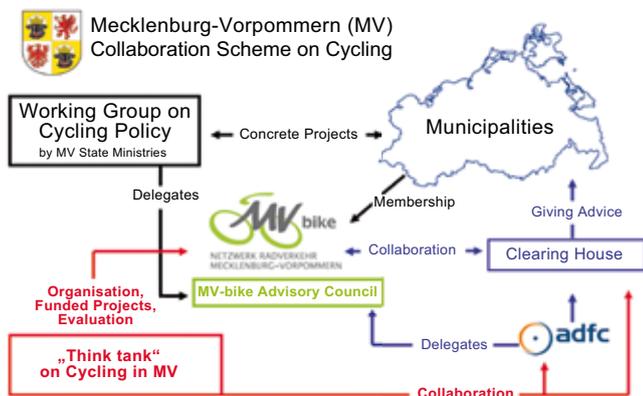


Fig. 1: Cycling promotion in Mecklenburg-West-Pomerania – cooperative structure

It is complemented by MV Bike, a committee that concentrates on promoting experience sharing among municipalities. Representatives from tourist associations, the MV Transport Ministry and the MV Transport Patrol Agency also have seats on the advisory council. This allows all parties to jointly discuss and share approaches to solving existing problems. When necessary, members can consult the “Think Tank on Cycling”, an academic think tank at the University of Wismar. The user organization ADFC is actively involved with its own networking office. Financial contributions are not collected from municipalities; this low-threshold initiative aims to make it easier for less affluent municipalities to join.

Member communities and cities are represented by their cycling policy commissioners in the Expert Working Committee (FAK). Various subcommittees deal intensively with a specific policy area. The FAK is headed by an elected executive board; moreover, an elected advisory council works in a consultancy capacity.

## Consortium of Bicycle-Friendly Municipalities in Baden-Württemberg (AGFK-BW)

In Baden-Württemberg (BW), players from the private sector, civil society and government administration first convened at a “BW Cycling Round Table” in 2006 to lay a new foundation for cycling policy. In May 2010 a consortium was founded in BW, an affluent Land with many high-tech industries and a long tradition of municipal independence. The mayors of the municipalities themselves lend high-ranking representation. The consortium works closely with the cycling management authorities of the Land.

The new AGFK-BW aims to advise its members and offers an array of services designed to support and disencumber employees in member municipality administrations in their task of information gathering. This requires a political resolution and member contribution from municipalities.



Fig. 5: Karlsruhe, home to the inventor of the bicycle

The Land BW also provides the network with financial support through:

- an internal AGFK-BW project office at BW’s public transportation organization;
- specific member projects;
- the project-run internet portal [www.fahrradland-bw.de](http://www.fahrradland-bw.de) – a central communication platform (providing news, practical examples, forthcoming dates in the cycling calendar).

## Conclusion

Horizontal municipal networks aimed at promoting cycling have been regionally established to help implement projects such as cycling routes. They pool municipal resources for cycling promotion at Land level and facilitate access to state funding. Municipal networks advise the leading municipal associations on how to lobby more effectively at the federal level to promote cycling.



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### Figures/Images

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