



ARTICLE FROM THE BOOK:

Cyclists & Cycling Around the World – Creating Liveable and Bikeable Cities

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Published by Fondo Editorial, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013

ISBN: 978-612-4146-55-8

Cycling Organisation - Lobbying for cyclists' in Germany

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The German Cyclists' Federation (ADFC) was founded in 1979 in Bremen. Now with 135,000 members it is the largest national interest group of cyclists in Europe. It is represented in all 16 German states by state associations. District and local associations exist in over 450 districts and municipalities; in 80 cities, there are offices which advise in all aspects relating to the bicycle.

The situation in Germany

Germany is geographically located at the centre of Europe and is divided into 16 federal states. With approximately 82 million inhabitants, Germany is the most populous country in Europe, with a population density of 229 inhabitants per square kilometre. About 85% of the German population is distributed over 80 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, of which four cities have more than one million inhabitants.

The automotive industry has always been an important economic sector in Germany. In 2008, sales amounted to nearly € 346 billion and provided 747,000 jobs. This high rating is also reflected in the population. For example, in Germany there are more than 51 million registered vehicles. 83% of households have at least one car. Germany has built 13,000 km of motorway and is the only country in Europe with no speed limit on motorways.

However, especially in the urban regions of Germany a change in thinking is taking place. More and more people are using the bicycle as their means of transport and do without a car. In some cities, the share of cycling in the modal split has increased to more than 39%, but due to the large regional differences (Wuppertal below 1%) the total share of cycling in Germany lies at 10%.



Fig. 1: Cyclists on the motorway at the annual ADFC rally (Sternfahrt) in Berlin
Photo: ADFC/René Filippek

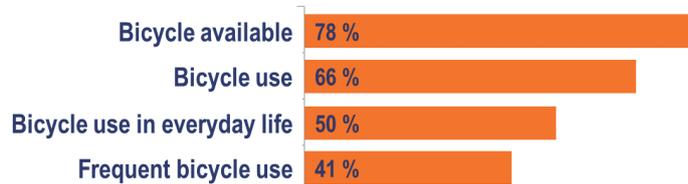


Fig. 2: Bicycle use and availability in Germany measured in relation to the total population [cf. Fahrradmonitor Deutschland 2011]

A representative survey in 2011 in cooperation with the ADFC also indicates that 78% of the respondents have a bicycle available and 50% use it in everyday life (see Fig. 2). Compared to the 2009 survey there are no significant changes.

Recreational cycling is particularly popular. From this a new branch of tourism has developed, generating 10% of the total revenue in tourism in Germany with a turnover of about €10 billion. Holidaying in Germany is popular. Of the 4.9 million German cycle tourists 86 % prefer to take their holiday in Germany!

The German Cyclists' Federation

The German Cyclists' Federation was founded in 1979. On 18 April 1979, it was crowded at the Tebbe family kitchen table. All those present agreed: something must finally be done about the rise of the automobile and the decline of the bicycle. But opinions were divided as to how to implement this project in a country where the prosperous economy was due to the automobile. A bicycle lobby is needed, a worthy opponent for the ADAC automobile club. And so those present around the traffic consultant Jan Tebbe founded the General Cyclists' Federation. The association should only endure if 100 members joined within 2 weeks. 179 members exceeded expectations and the club continued.



Fig. 3: Federal Minister of Transport Peter Ramsauer receives the ADFC; f.l.t.r.: Ulrich Syberg (Federal Chairman, ADFC), Peter Ramsauer (Federal Minister of Transport), Ludger Koopmann (Deputy Federal Chairman, ADFC), Burkhard Stork (Federal Managing Director, ADFC)
Photo: BMVBS.

The visions of Jan Tebbe could not be understood by all the members. Often dubbed “Jan flight of fancy” [Jan Höhenflug] because his goal to attract 10,000 members and an office with permanent staff was illusory at a time when meetings must be held in private living rooms. On 27 September 1979, it was done: the first national office was opened in Bremen. Then everything happened very quickly. Just seven years later, the target membership was exceeded. 12,800 members joined the club. Still the basis for the enforcement power of the ADFC is a large membership. Through offering a wide range of services for the bicycle and abandoning polarising maximum demands it managed to reach the current membership of 135,000 members, which is still rising. The ADFC is a bicycle club for everyone.

In order to further improve the political influence of the ADFC it must put more focus on lobbying. An important step in this direction was completed in 2011, when a representative office was opened in the capital Berlin in addition to the national office in Bremen. The opening of this office primarily serves to intensify contacts with politicians and other organizations. In this way, personal contacts can be established and maintained directly.

ADFC Services

The increasing popularity of cycle tourism in Germany may well be due to the strong commitment of the ADFC and a decisive criterion for the well-being of cycle tourists is accommodation. It must offer a good standard of comfort, good nourishment, and a

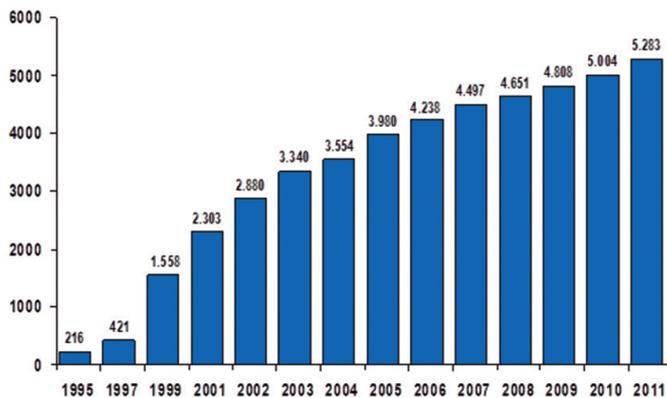


Fig. 4: Development in the number of Bett+Bike enterprises.
cf. Bett+Bike Deutschland

storage room for bicycles. From this developed the simple idea of “Bed+Bike”: all hotels, guest houses and pensions can receive the ADFC quality award if they are ready to accept bicycling guests for just one night. Also they must have a secure storage space for their bikes, an opportunity for drying wet clothes and equipment, bike tools, maps and information about the surrounding area, rail and bus connections, and on the next morning be offered a full breakfast. Currently there are over 5,200 certified ADFC bicycle-friendly establishments. Thus cyclists today find it increasingly easier to find accommodation.

“Oh, just for one night?”

The “Bed+Bike” project was initiated by the ADFC in the 90s in response to the continuously growing bicycle tourism. The cycle tourism experts active in the national technical committee “bicycle tourism” had many unpleasant experiences during their tours. These mainly included the cancellation of accommodation providers, particularly in holiday regions, when cyclists expressed their wish to stay only one night. In response, in 1995, a list of criteria for cyclist friendly accommodation facilities was developed. The echo from the trade specialists, the press, and especially in the hospitality industry was very positive. This was the starting point for “Bed+Bike” with the following objectives:

- Establishment of a Germany-wide network of cycle-friendly accommodation and catering services with clearly defined minimum requirements
- Qualification of accommodation establishments, so they can better meet with the wishes and needs of cycling guests
- Promotion of regional and Germany-wide bicycle tourism



Fig 6: Annually conference of the 16 representatives from the ADfC state associations
Photo: ADfC

Fig. 5: Cover of „Radwelt“, the exclusive ADfC members' magazine ADfC/Zweiplus

Another home brand has evolved with the ADfC tour portal. Bike routes with a total length of 300,000 km are stored in a database. The cycle routes are covered and evaluated by trained ADfC scouts and the portal continuously expanded. The cyclists receive important information about the route, such as route course, quality, and sights of interest from cycle paths, in order to perfectly plan their trip. Map details or GPS tracks can be obtained for a small fee. Members have a free kilometre quota.

On evenings or weekends, day or multi-day tours are offered. Nearly 4,000 volunteer ADfC tour guides were in action in 2011 and made it possible for over 213,000 participants to take a short break in their own region on a total of almost 18,000 trips. The average length of tours was 56 km. Overall, 12.7 million kilometres were covered by bike in 2011, which corresponds to 302 circumnavigations of the earth. The ADfC is thus the largest tour operator in Germany. ADfC members can participate at significantly discounted prices in the paid tours.

Another service is the members' magazine "Radwelt" [Bike World], which appears six times a year. The professional magazine is available exclusively to members and is characterized by the wide range of topics. Besides cycling, tour reports, technical matters, consumer information, and legal advice can be found.

The ADFC member will always be offered expert advice. Over the members' hotline, questions about planning holidays, buying a bike, to technical bicycle matters and local involvement are answered. In addition, each member has liability and legal expenses insurance via the ADFC.

The ADFC is facing major challenges. Although almost every household has one or more bicycles available and there are over 30 million daily cyclists, the ADFC has only 135,000 members. The largest automobile club in Germany, the German Automobile Association (ADAC) has 18 million members. In addition, ADFC members are on average older than the total population. The association is lacking in young adults. There are not enough volunteers for the active work on the ground, and not enough full-time employees can be paid. The more members the ADFC gains, the greater the financial strength of the association, and the stronger the association's voice can be heard in society. To recruit more members the ADFC will significantly expand its service, because service is the central argument for recruitment and retention. Membership in the ADFC has to become more attractive.

Despite everything, service is not the most important task of the ADFC and must not be operated for its own sake. But only with a large membership organization can the ADFC reach its goal of promoting the public interest in bicycle traffic and to provide for the further prevalence of the bicycle.

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