

Campaigning to increase cycle commuting in Denmark



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In brief

Bike to Work is a national campaign that promotes cycling as a mode of transportation to and from work. Denmark is generally known for its large number of cyclists and the annual campaign encourages a number of new people to cycle and motivates others to launch the so-called bicycle season.

Context

Since 1997 the Danish Cyclists' Federation has invited all work places in Denmark to participate in Bike to Work - a campaign encouraging employees to cycle to work. Commuting by bike has played a key role in Danish infrastructure since the end of the Second World War. But from the 1970s the percentage of cyclists has been declining and a growing share is now commuting by car.

The share of cyclists is also changing drastically in big and small municipalities - from 33 per cent in Copenhagen to 5 per cent in Samsø - mainly because of distances to work, the availability of bicycle lanes and cultural customs. According to Denmark's recently published national bicycling strategy, a total of 16 per cent of Danes cycle.

In action

The Bike to Work campaign addresses different challenges ranging from heavy congestion in Copenhagen to unsafe rural highways. It is focused around team spirit and emphasises the bicycle as democratic means of transportation that doesn't require a certain level of fitness. Almost everyone can part take. The structure of the campaign relies on participants that already cycle to work. They play the part of an ambassador or 'kick-starter' that can encourage and motivate colleagues that commute by car. They are the main 'gate-keepers' of the campaign. These people are key when recruiting and during the month of campaigning. Throughout the month of May they need to make sure that their team is sticking to cycling through different kinds of support.

A large portion of the motivational communications is therefore directed towards them and how they can engage their team participants in their new lifestyle. Furthermore the campaign will in 2015 build a larger and more pronounced focus on the advantages of commuting by bike - not only the personal gains like calorie-counting and saving money but also on a socioeconomic level that shows companies how much they save when their employees are healthy and the levels of sick-leave start dropping. Placing a larger focus on those types of results has moved the topic of biking onto the political agenda. Companies can also monitor the amount of CO2 emissions saved during the campaign month and use the statistics to promote a greener and more environmentally friendly approach.

Results

In 2014 the campaign was responsible for a 2.5 per cent shift from car/public transport to cycling and has motivated thousands to begin their seasonal biking. A total of 71 000 people across the country took part in the campaign – a number that, despite national efforts to boost cycling, has been dropping since 2008. However, 98 per cent of participants said that they would take part in the campaign the next year, and 99 per cent said they would recommend the campaign to a colleague. The campaign therefore has a core audience that needs to be considered when taking the campaign to the next level.

Challenges, opportunities and transferability

The campaign has encountered continuous challenges in recruiting participants largely because the participation fee is passed on from the employer to the employee. The campaign has also suffered from a lack of renewal alongside a growing competing market for exercise campaigns in Denmark. Bike to Work is, generally, the same as it was in 1997 and that complicates the process of recruiting new participants. This is one of the main points of critics of the campaign, though at the same time it is perhaps what keeps previous, regular participants coming back.

In Depth

The Bike to Work campaign runs in Denmark during the whole of May each year. See below for more information.

- [Vi Cykler til Arbejde \(in Danish\)](#)
- [Danish Cyclists Federation \(in Danish\)](#)
- [Bike 2 Work project](#)

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Related Case Studies

[Becoming a bicycle-friendly employer in Graz \(Austria\)](#)

[Developing cycling highways in Greater Copenhagen \(Denmark\)](#)
