

The campaign 'Cycle to Work' scores a lot of points.

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Introduction

In 1992 the Zeeland Platform for Sustainable Development (provincial NGO) started the campaign 'Cycle to Work'. Inhabitants of the province of Zeeland were being stimulated to cycle to their jobs as much as possible in the period from 1st April until 1st October.

The platform wanted to contribute to a sustainable development with this cycling campaign. 1992 was the UNCED-year, the UN World Conference on Environment and Development. The concept of durable development that was launched in 'Our Common Future', was the key and target. Climatic changes and the greenhouse effect were high on the agenda. Within the framework of the climatic treaty proposals have been formulated to reduce CO₂ -emissions in the rich industrial countries. Simultaneously the rich countries would support the developing countries with modern and clean technologies and the protection of the tropical forests.

The UNCED appeal to tackle the global environmental and development problems has been translated into AGENDA 21, an action programme for the 21st century. So far the UNCED-process continues on an international scale. On sequential conferences increasingly concrete agreements on issues such as CO₂-emission, conservation of biodiversity, the protection of the world seas etc. are made.

AGENDA 21 has appealed for action on a local scale as well. Citizens, local authorities, companies and social organisations too, had to make a move to contribute to a liveable world and a future for generations to come.

Against this background the concept of the action 'Cycle to Work' has been generated and set up. More cycling meant less car kilometres and therefore less emission of the greenhouse gas CO₂.

Benefits on five fields

After several years of gaining experience with organising the cycling campaign it has become clear that this campaign has much more benefits than the prevention of CO₂-emission by traffic alone. This campaign stimulates demonstrably commuter cycling and this realises benefits in at least five fields:

- Nature & environment (energy saving, less emissions, less extra roads)
- Health and absenteeism at work
- Less traffic jams and a better accessibility
- Quality of life in towns and villages (space, noise, nuisance)
- Support of sustainable energy projects in developing countries

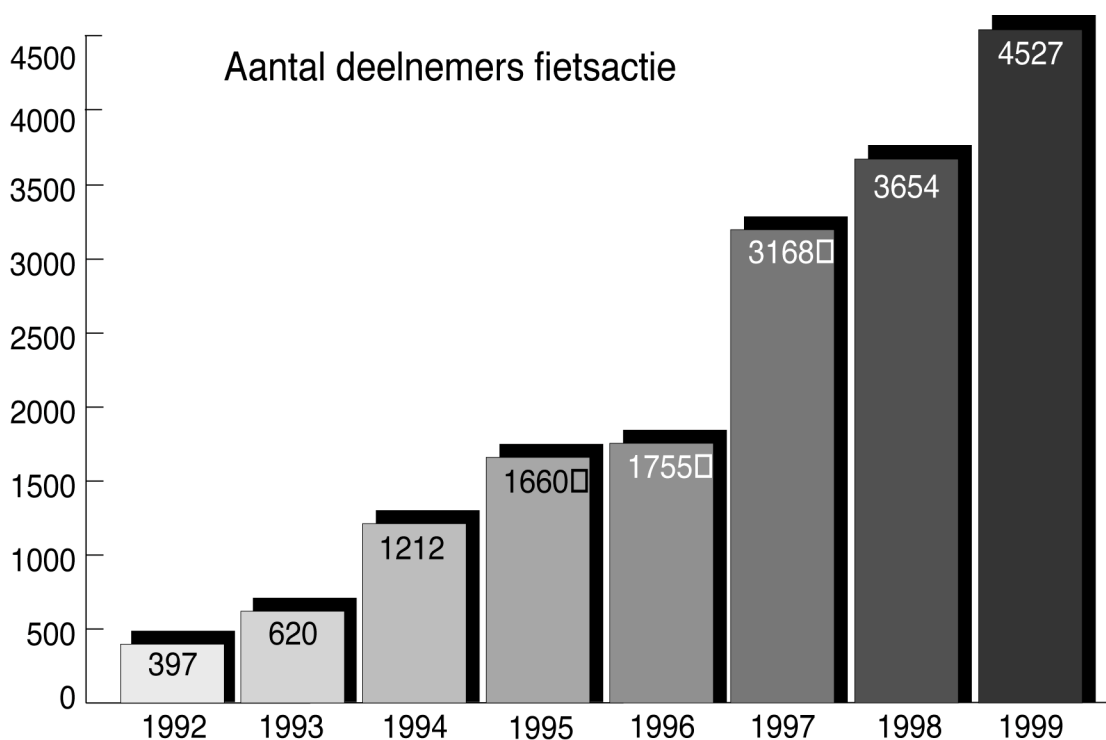
Moreover, taking part in the cycling campaign contributes to a positive image of the participating companies and institutions. Finally cycling is cheap. That is a benefit as well.

Within the framework of the workshop 'Cycling as exercise' attention will be paid to the positive health effects of commuter cycling in particular.

Development of the campaign

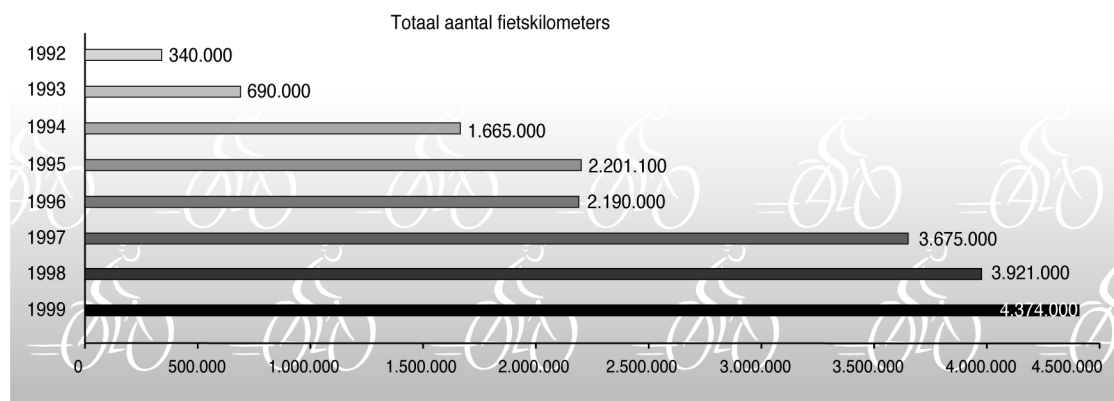
The campaign started in the province of Zeeland with 400 participants in 1992. (With its 370.000 inhabitants Zeeland is one of the smallest Dutch provinces. Only 2.5 percent of the Dutch population lives in this region) Since then the number of participants has increased annually to a current number of 4000 to 5000.

Figure 1. Increase of the number of participants in the cycling campaign in Zeeland



Proportionally the number of kilometres cycled has increased.

Figure 2. Total number of kilometres cycled.



These graphs show that the campaign has a growth-model. The approach is clearly bottom-up, in which the initiative has been taken by a small NGO. An increasing number of companies, institutions and local authorities has joined in.

The growth happens step by step. Three years ago a process was started to organise this provincial campaign in other provinces as well. In 2000 there is a nation-wide covering with 15.000 to 20.000 participants. The objective is to expand to 50.000 participants in two or three years time.

The campaign organisation is characterised by a decentralised approach. A web of provincially working NGOs (COSs: centres for international co-operation and sustainable development) carries out the campaign in each province. On a national level there is a small campaign office and a number of means of action are being developed. (Newsletter, posters, exhibition, campaign manual, website) The provincial COSs play an important part in the canvassing for companies and participants, the communication with companies and the media and the consultation between the local and provincial authorities and other NGO's.

The campaign model

Participants in the campaign cycle from 1st April until 1st October (the campaign period) to their jobs as much as possible. During that period they keep up on a participants chart - a kind of calendar- the number of kilometres they cycle every day in the commuting traffic.

Before the start, when enlisting, every participant indicates how many kilometres he or she wants to cycle or thinks he/she will cycle in the total campaign period. We call this the 'target distance'. This is a personal target for every participant. At the end of the campaign period the participants hand in their completed participants charts and the actual distance that was cycled is calculated.

It is important that all data on target distance and the actual distance that was cycled is published. Therefore, all data are entered into a database and are reported a few times. This happens by Newsletters, via the website (www.fietsactie.nl) and by way of the participant lists that are sent to companies.

Participants can enlist individually or via the company for which they work. Companies can enlist as well for the campaign and can take part with a number of employees as a group. Each participating company appoints an action co-ordinator who canvasses for participants, who communicates about the objectives and who presents the results. Over 80% of the participants participates via the company. Several prizes are raffled off between the participants, such as new bikes, bike accessories and bike magazines.

Participating companies stimulate their employees to take part in the cycling campaign by sponsoring every cycled kilometre with 1, 2, 5, 10 cents or more.

At the end of the campaign period the sponsor sums are calculated and are transferred to a fund (the climate fund). With the money from that fund small-scale sustainable energy projects in the developing countries are supported.. This money will be contributed via the channel of the Sustainable Development Treaty to a solar-power project in Bhutan in the year 2000.

In some cases a municipality opts for a power or cycle project of a twin town in some other developing country.

A link is made by sponsoring between action here (more cycling, less driving) and action in the developing countries (sustainable power projects). A link is made between the global environmental problems and developing problems and local actions (Think globally, act locally). The cycling campaign makes it clear in a nutshell what sustainable development is about. The cycling campaign offers an educational model to bring international problems to the attention and gives a concrete action perspective. Citizens, companies and local authorities can contribute themselves to a solution of a global problem.

Results and effects.

The portraying of the **results** is one of the cornerstones of the campaign. Based on the completed participant charts it can be indicated exactly how many companies and participants take part and how many kilometres are being cycled.

This both produces appealing results and makes it clear that all small individual contributions towards a better environment together have a meaning after all.

It is illustrating to make a few comparisons. The more than 4 million kilometres that were cycled by the participants in Zeeland in 1999 were compared to a distance equal to 100 times around the world, or 12 times the distance to the moon. The CO₂-emission that was avoided for this cycling distance is 800.000 kg. This is comparable to the CO₂-absorption of 120 hectares of forest.

The results of the fund-raising are important as a stimulus to the participants as well.

In 1999 the Zeeland campaign yielded more than 42.000 guilders. This sum was doubled with a subsidy by the ministry for international co-operation and development assistance (Neda). With this sum more than 50 solar panels can be put on clinics and schools in Bhutan.

More difficult to ascertain, but equally important is the **effect** of the campaign.

The effects of the cycling campaign in which the authorities and the policy makers are interested in particularly, may be itemised into several fields.. They want answers to the following questions.

- * Environment: How much CO₂-emission and other emissions are avoided?
 How much fossil fuels are being saved?
- * Health: Will participants of the campaign get more active?
 Are inactive employees reached?
 Are participants healthier by being more active?
 Is there a decrease of absenteeism?
- * Accessibility How many cars will there be less on the road?
 Will there be more parking space?
- * Liveability Is there less nuisance of car traffic in residential areas of towns and villages?
- * International co-operation: what projects can be realised?

In order to be able to say something about these effects, research is necessary. Some research is being carried out on the effects of the campaign 'Cycle to Work'. This has yielded some interesting conclusions already. The most important of which are:

- Commuter cycling is a normal phenomenon in the Netherlands. On the one hand the cycling campaign ‘organises’ and regulates an existing phenomenon and, on the other hand , stimulates a further increase in the use of the bike.
- Participants of the cycling campaign cycle 30% more kilometres.
- Thirty percent of all kilometres cycled within the framework of the campaign is substituting the car.
- Participants of the campaign drive weekly 25 kilometres less. Part of this is realised outside the scope of commuting.
- The cycling campaign succeeds to motivate a substantial number of relatively inactive employees to go and cycle.
- One third of the participants may be included in the group of physically inactive employees before the campaign started.

Cycling, exercise and health

When we consider the effects of the cycling campaign on the employees’ exercise pattern and link our knowledge of the relation between exercise and health to it, then it becomes clear what the perspectives of the cycling campaign are.

More than half of the Dutch adults are too inactive. As a standard the ‘Dutch Standard of Healthy Exercise’ has been developed. The standard for adults (18 – 55 years) is: *“Half an hour moderately intensive physical activities on at least five , preferably all days of the week”*.

The risks of too little exercise are sufficiently known in medical circles.

Cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, geriatric diabetes, hypertension, obesity, certain types of cancer, depression en stress all are serious medical symptoms that show a strong relation to too little physical exercise. Physical inactivity causes about 35% of all numbers of death as a result of cardiovascular diseases.

European research showed that few people realise the health risks caused by inactivity.

More exercising does not only improve our health and the quality of our lives but a huge saving of costs is possible as well.

Apart from medical costs by all sorts of Western diseases, more exercising has a favourable effect on absenteeism on the workplace.

It has been calculated that trade and industry could save 1.2 billion guilders on absenteeism on an annual basis in 1996 if employees would exercise more.

More exercising, -cycling in the open in particular- is an effective means against stress. Stress and complaints about the position at work (RSI, hernia) are the main causes of people becoming recipients of disablement insurance benefits.

Participating in the cycle campaign is in fact a guarantee to get sufficiently into action. Roughly eight (or twice four) kilometres per day of cycling (16 km per hour or more) suffices to reach the standard.

The power and effect of commuter cycling lies in frequency and regularity. Moreover, the exercise does not have to be as intensively as with sporting activities or fitness activities. The stress on joints and the risk of injuries is negligible.

In the past few years much has been invested by the authorities and trade and industry in industrial fitness to fight the employees' inactivity.

The stimulating of commuter cycling hardly came into focus. This is remarkable as commuter cycling can contribute to the solution of other bottlenecks such as lack of parking space or the accessibility.

Dutch employees live on average some eight kilometres from their work. A distance that can be bridged easily by bicycle in half an hour. Many commuter cyclists, that participate in the cycling campaign, cover distances considerably larger.

A strong stimulus of commuter cycling tackles both the traffic jam problem and the inactivity. In this country both problems are currently considered to be the most important social problems and political challenges.

A nation-wide endorsed campaign such as 'Cycle to Work' can give an important impulse to stimulate commuter cycling.

Governmental support hard to gain

The most important bottleneck to a strong and fast development of the cycling campaign is money. Despite the campaign's positive effects the attitude of the authorities, on a local, provincial and national scale is quite ambivalent. Some municipalities and provinces are supporting the campaign financially and others definitely are not.

Two explanations may be possible for this.

In the first place the fact that the campaign is effective on the authorities' various policy fields has turned out to be more of a disadvantage than an advantage so far. Administrators, policy-makers and civil servants are not able to see the campaign in its right perspective. They can not decide very well how to fit the campaign in which policy field and are indecisive from which fund or from what savings the campaign is to be paid or subsidised. Is it environmental policy, energy policy, mobility policy, is it national health, is it cycling policy or international co-operation? As they cannot answer this question unambiguously, there are choices to be made and this leads quite often soon to a process of shifting, postponement and eventually cancelling.

While the cycling campaign is a sound example of an integrated approach of various social problems and fits in very well in the process of sustainable development, the lack of integration of the governmental organisation on a local, provincial and national scale is frustrating the raising of adequate (financial) support from the part of the government.

In the second place the government, both on a national and a local scale, thinks in the case of cycling policy primarily of the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, not of manipulation of behaviour. The campaign 'Cycle to Work' is aimed on a change in behaviour in particular. A publicly private campaign, in which investments in a comfortable and safe cycle infrastructure go hand in hand with campaigns aimed at manipulation of behaviour, can stimulate the popularity of cycling considerably.

After the Master Plan Bicycle, that as a Dutch product gained almost as much fame as our mills, clogs and tulips, the government's interest in the bicycle has worn off. The bicycle as a Dutch symbol of sustainable development must return on the agenda.