

VELOINFO

European Network for Cycling Expertise:

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A proposal for a European Network for Cycling Expertise, VELOINFO, has been submitted to the European Community. The consortium that has developed this proposal is co-ordinated by I-ce Interface for Cycling Expertise in the Netherlands. The partners of the consortium are ECF European Cyclists' Federation, IVU Berlin, University of Nottingham, University of Maribor and UCI, Union Cycliste Internationale. VELOINFO will be presented to the European Community for subsidy as an accompanying measure for European policies.

Aim

VELOINFO aims to open up a system of expertise on bicycle planning, with own information as well with data-bases and expertise from all over Europe made accessible. The centre would make it much easier to find the relevant expertise on cycling and how the main actors in the process of bicycle policy development could make the best use of it.

It also guides information-seekers to the best examples of good practice on a wide range of topics as well as to the relevance of such different experience for application in their own particular national and local context. Good practice and guidelines in the various countries may constitute a very good basis for a policy that promotes cycling in a safe way. By structuring the information, VELOINFO will guide decision-makers and advisers in the EU to the information they need to integrate cycling in planning and design. VELOINFO will have the capacity to collect the current expertise, to put this expertise in a context for application and to transfer information according to demand. This way it will support the work of local, regional and national authorities, user organisations and transport providers, to plan local transport. By presenting data and good practice, VELOINFO will also become a benchmarking-instrument for learning about city transport - policies

Value

VELOINFO will develop from existing information centres on traffic and transport. The added value is the concentration of bicycle expertise and the direct access to cycling experts from all over Europe. VELOINFO will offer far more detailed information on cycling promotion than current expertise centres on traffic and transport and it will be kept regularly up to date. VELOINFO will include more details of appropriate contacts to follow up further information and a more detailed index, by type of initiative, by type of promoter and by level of Government, European, national, regional, municipal, etc. The information will be entered and monitored by people with a particular knowledge in cycling as opposed to the much wider range of topics found in the current expertise centres. This information will be entered by a staff under the direct control of the VELOINFO co-ordinator, to a consistent format and structure.

Operation

The information and data system will be developed in several stages. The aim is to create a system in which the requests from clients will be fine tuned through an interactive process where experts give an immediate follow up of the appropriate information, e.g. using best practices on European level.

Clients, having been led through self- research in the database will be guided through an interactive process where experts give an immediate follow up of the appropriate information, e.g. using best practices on European level. The need for an interactive process is emphasised. Expertise on cycling is currently disintegrated and the context in which expertise has been built is widely varied.

In the first stage, the information that is most demanded will be collected and classified after quality assessment and stored in an Internet application. A help desk will then be established by which experts will answer questions for further assistance.

SPECIFICATIONS

Content of the data base and quality assessment

The information about cycling regards:

- data relating to cycling,
- cycling policies and facilities,
- actors and organisations involved with cycling

The database will be divided into category sections. For each category section the information will be organised in the following way although it will be handled flexibly according to the subject matter (not all headings will always be appropriate):

- Section heading / Category of information
- Description/examples
- Diagrams, Maps, Photos, Video Clips, Statistical tables and diagrams
- Background and contextual information (e.g. geographical, topographical, economic, social, cultural, environmental, financial, legal)
- Financial information (capital and running costs)
- Sources of funding (public/private/other)
- Changes since first introduced
- Evaluation /monitoring: how and what undertaken, by whom and with what results
- Sources of further information/contact person details
- Comments on wider relevance

VELOINFO will identify areas relevant to the needs of it's customers and search for expertise sources that are of quality to complement and enhance the network. Several existing institutions, information centres and web-sites, projects and consultants detain information relevant to cycling or which could be although their main focus is not cycling but a connected matter such as air pollution, health, transport or road safety in general. VELOINFO will classify the sources according to their scope and set criteria on the selection to make the final list of "link with other sources".

Communication with these sources will take place to establish exchange, co-operation and a mutual link. It then will be decided how to guide the VELOINFO visitors to the other source and how to inform them about the quality check of the data and information.

As bicycle planning philosophies have developed over time, any information provided must be classified according to the fulfilment of actual international and national standards. Both the information provided on the internet and personal expertise must be appreciated.

It is proposed to attach a quality label to each planning information and each expert on the expert list. It will much more sophisticated than a "good – poor" category criteria.

Internet service and helpdesk

Getting access to information via internet has many advantages. One may find information quickly and cheaply. This is the most important for a system that will operate on European level. Still the accessibility must be a concern. The question is, how can users access the system and what is the best way to support them? What kind

of content should the system include (e.g. text, images, maps, statistics)? Also an inventory is needed to find out the best way of payment for the service or for certain services.

From user requirements and business logic, identified in demand analyses, an overall system architecture will be defined. User requirements will be converted into engineering requirements. The system will be structured into components and interfaces for these components will be described.

Monitoring of the use and usability of the system (internet site and helpdesk) will be essential, to ensure that it meets the requirements of the wide range of likely users cycling, environmental and transport groups, central and local government officials, especially planners and traffic engineers, consultants, academics, students and other researchers, public transport operators, medical professions, tourist offices, university and hospital administrators, etc.

It is recognised that the needs of these different users will vary considerably and also that it is important for all of them to be able to find the information they need simply, easily and quickly.

This means that the structure of the site should allow for the same categories of information to be reached via different pathways. However, it will also be necessary to ensure that the assumed pathways of most relevance to different categories of users do in fact correspond to their needs.

The helpdesk will answer questions of customers by E-mail, phone, fax or postal mail. It will guide customers to experts in the field, send leaflets and publication on demand, analyse the questions to see what the clients are looking for and report this to the experts and the people who are responsible for the control check of the system.

CONTINUITY

VELOINFO is an initiative taken by user organisations and experts who experience daily the need for an information centre on cycling. The partners want to establish a system for an indefinite time period. The needs for such a system will increase. The way of operation may change according to further technological innovations regarding transfer of information and expertise. Therefore the system will be flexible. A business plan will be developed for the first 3 years of operation.

To market VELOINFO, opportunities will be taken and meetings will be organised to engage the major European, national and local bodies responsible for transport, urban planning, environment, health, road safety etc. as well as user organisations and experts.