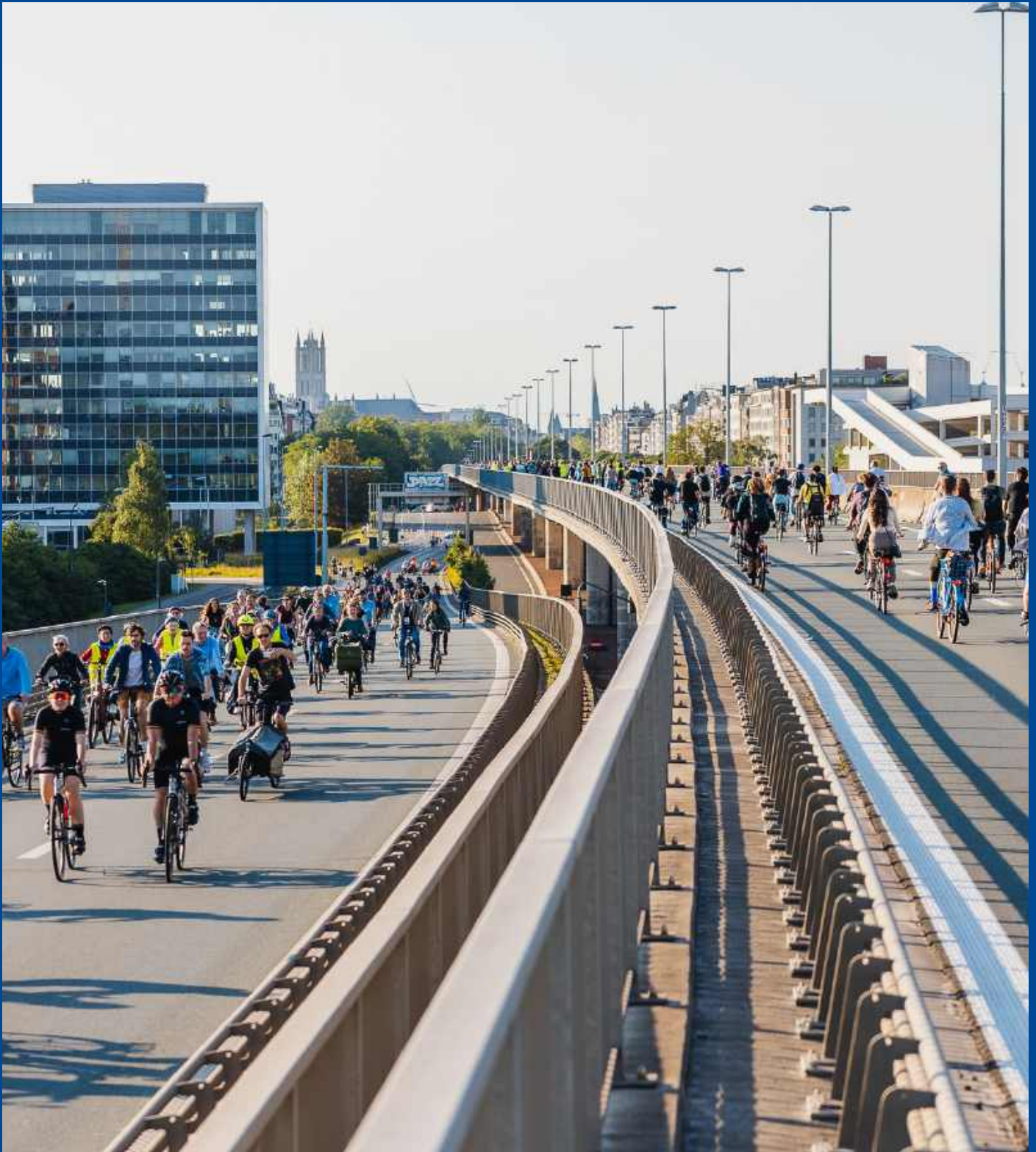


# VELO-CITY CONFERENCE





**Programme**

18:00 - 18:45 Opening Ceremony  
18:45 - 19:30 Plenary 1  
19:30 - 21:00 Coffee break & exhibition opening  
21:00 - 23:00 Parallel sessions

**18:00 - 18:45** Parallel sessions

- 18:00 - 18:45 Parallel session 1
- 18:00 - 18:45 Parallel session 2
- 18:00 - 18:45 Parallel session 3
- 18:00 - 18:45 Parallel session 4
- 18:00 - 18:45 Parallel session 5

**19:30 - 21:00** Parallel sessions

- 19:30 - 21:00 Parallel session 1
- 19:30 - 21:00 Parallel session 2
- 19:30 - 21:00 Parallel session 3
- 19:30 - 21:00 Parallel session 4
- 19:30 - 21:00 Parallel session 5

**21:00 - 23:00** Parallel sessions

- 21:00 - 23:00 Parallel session 1
- 21:00 - 23:00 Parallel session 2
- 21:00 - 23:00 Parallel session 3
- 21:00 - 23:00 Parallel session 4
- 21:00 - 23:00 Parallel session 5

**Technical Visits - Practical**

- Play up a boy's ball and a girl's ball
- It might be sunny, it might rain, it might snow to have appropriate kit
- Be at time of the start location for the assembly point for your visit
- Enjoy the view



## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**

Our purpose, as BestCities Global Alliance, is to harness the power of collaboration and community to create positive impact through business events. Our research, initiatives such as Incredible Impacts and the Madrid Challenge, our interactions with clients and destinations - all tell us that education is a priority if the industry is to understand the positive impact that can be created from events and their role in making it happen.

We have created several case studies which we hope will provide inspiration and learning about how a destination has benefited from hosting an international congress and how the association has moved closer to its mission as a result of holding the congress.



## BACKGROUND TO THIS CASE STUDY – VELO-CITY CONFERENCE

Velo-city Conference is the flagship event of The European Cyclists' Federation and is considered the world's leading annual cycling summit, aimed at promoting active and sustainable mobility, enhancing cycling infrastructure and increasing daily bicycle use. Velo-city significantly impacts the global active mobility sector, benefiting host cities by accelerating cycling policy and infrastructure development.

Velo-city energizes thousands to promote cycling in their communities and leaves host cities committed to further developing their cycling infrastructure, making it European Cyclists' Federation's (ECF) most significant annual achievement and the global cycling community's most influential event.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

European Cyclists' Federation's (ECF) is the umbrella organisation for cycling for both transportation and leisure. With more than 70 member organisations (national cycling organisations) in over 40 countries, it is the only civil society voice at the pan-European level and is the world's largest and best-known cyclists'

advocacy organisation. Their mission to improve and increase cycling across the whole of Europe is based on four key pillars – More Cycling, Safer Cycling, Stronger Political Support and Higher Investment.

### LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE (LOC)

The biggest benefactor of Velo-city is the host city itself. Cities use the conference to accelerate cycling policy and infrastructure developments in their destinations and deliver lasting environmental, societal and health benefits for its citizens and visitors.

Host cities are chosen where there is a definite potential for them to benefit from

hosting Velo-city and that they align with Velo-city's mission for local impact. Through combined legacy efforts, ECF and the host destination work in partnership to create lasting impacts on sustainability practices globally, stressing the significance of partnerships in achieving long-term success in community sustainability initiatives.



# OVERVIEW OF EVENT / EVENT HISTORY

The Velo-city story began in 1980 in Bremen with deep ties in the founding of the European Cyclists' Federation. The European Cyclists' Federation's (ECF) has been organizing the conference annually since 2009. It attracts approx. 1,500 delegates from over 60 countries and has been hosted in cities worldwide including three BestCities destinations; Copenhagen, Vancouver and Dublin.

Velo-city is slightly different from other association conferences in that its sole mission is to create impact. It is ECF's flagship event and is a key tool for the Federation to influence decision makers in favour of more and better cycling for all and making cycling more accessible for the whole community.



*It is by design, made to have an impact. For us, it's the whole conference.*

**Caroline Cerfontaine**  
**Director Velo-city**



# LEGACY INTENTIONS AND OUTCOMES

ECF is very clear on what they aim to achieve from this annual conference. It is essentially a knowledge and policy transfer platform where the entire cycling community comes together – industry, academia, local advocacy associations, civil society movements and politicians – all the elements required to change a city, improve the infrastructure and co-create solutions needed to support the transformation of cities towards more sustainability.

The key conference objectives are:

- Disseminate high quality knowledge about cycling and sustainable transport planning at an international level.
- Give international visibility to best practice cycling policies.

- Grow the recognition of cycling as an efficient, healthy, green mode of transport.
- Encourage the integration of cycle planning into wider transport, climate, land-use, health, social, economic and other relevant policies.
- Seek involvement from all relevant stakeholders (policy decision makers, cycling advocates, associations, academia, industry, experts).
- Involve and support local cycling associations and civil society organizations
- Boost local cycling developments.
- Showcase the latest innovations to better equip cities for more cycling during the exhibition.

## ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN AT VELO-CITY CONFERENCES TO CREATE IMPACT

With over 400 speakers the conference programme includes a series of plenary and parallel sessions that deliver inspirational insights, the latest innovative thinking and the sharing of best practice in the cycling world. Careful curation of the program makes sure that voices from all different backgrounds and from all over the world are heard.

This conference stands out for its unique feature of attracting both politicians and civil society to exchange ideas and knowledge. Attendees range from high-ranking politicians to local cyclists' advocacy groups. It is a platform that fosters political participation, drawing a growing number of politicians and elected officials from around the globe to network and learn, empowering them to advocate for change in their home countries. Civil society is vividly represented by daily

cyclists, who are part of movements striving for safer roads. The resulting exchange is refreshing and inspiring.

Velo-city is committed to promoting inclusion and gender equality in the cycling sector. A notable initiative, which itself was the result of people coming together at a previous conference, is the creation of the Women in Cycling network. Launched initially online due to Covid, the network had its first physical meeting at Velo-city Lisbon in 2021 and continues to use Velo-city events to amplify women's voices. Velo-city continually strives for gender balance, achieving 45% women speakers in 2023.

Efforts also include supporting diverse backgrounds by providing travel grants for speakers from low and middle-income countries, underscoring Velo-city's





dedication to diversity and inclusion. The Opening Ceremony at Velo-city 2024 in Ghent focused on fostering a more inclusive bicycle culture, featuring a talk by Isabelle Clement, a hand biker and the Director of Wheels for Wellbeing.

Included in the conference programme is a dedicated track for the academic sector enabling universities to present their latest research whilst also bringing academia together with local advocacy associations, civil society movements, politicians, and the industry to co create solutions needed to deliver the transformation of cities towards more sustainability.

The conference promotes knowledge exchange through technical tours and networking opportunities, helping both advanced and emerging cycling cities to learn and improve. Overall, it creates a sustainable network of cycling advocates and officials who continue to collaborate and push for cycling-friendly policies long after the event concludes. Integrating local events and activities, not only showcases the city's cycling initiatives but also fosters collaboration between local activists, planners and officials.

The annual Bike Parade, which takes place annually at all Velo-city conferences is a vibrant event that invites both attendees and the general public to celebrate cycling. By engaging locals, it raises awareness of cycling's benefits and showcases its strong community support. The parade encourages people to dust off their bikes and rediscover the joy of cycling, fostering a lasting appreciation for this sustainable mode of transport. This event not only highlights cycling's societal advantages but also unites diverse participants in a shared cause, promoting a healthier, more connected community.

In Leipzig 2023, the conference facilitated a positive shift in the local narrative around cycling and led to a stronger partnership between activists and the city government. Velo-city in Dublin in 2019 highlighted the need for better cycling

facilities and prompted, in 2020, the Irish government's coalition agreement to allocate 10% of the transport budget each to cycling and walking. The strengthened relationships, which developed in the organising and hosting of the conference, between activists and government, meant Dublin had a strong network of people well placed to deliver on this initiative. These collaborations continue post-conference, illustrating the lasting impact and legacy of the event.


The Smart Pedal Pitch is an innovation developed by ECF and Cycling Industries Europe and launched at Velo-city Dublin in 2019. This program aims to transform urban cycling by discovering cutting-edge solutions from start-ups and SMEs. Companies are invited to present market-ready innovations that address specific urban cycling needs. The top finalists pitch to a global audience, with winners receiving cash prizes and opportunities to pilot their solutions in the host city. Highlighting successful outcomes such as Nüwiel's e-powered cargo bike trailers at Dublin Velo-city 2019, the Smart Pedal Pitch drives healthier, more liveable cities by promoting scalable, innovative cycling technologies.

Leveraging the media is hugely important to ECF. They collaborate with select media outlets to maximise coverage of the event. These partnerships are valuable as they often lead to in-depth interviews with the host city, providing deeper insights that are otherwise hard to obtain. Engaging with local press is a valuable way to influence those previously unfamiliar with cycling to offer a more balanced perspective. This effort often results in a noticeable shift in coverage during Velo-city. Additionally, the enthusiasm generated by seeing the entire city embrace cycling, coupled with the presence of international experts and high-level attendees, creates an infectious excitement around the event.

Asked about unintentional legacies as a result of Velo-city conferences, ECF

gave the example of an attendee to the event in Brazil in 2018, who brought her babysitter to the conference to look after her children. The babysitter, from an Indigenous background in Brazil, was so

inspired by what she heard, she is now the President of the Brazilian Cycling Union.



*Dublin's hosting of the 2019 Velocity international cycling conference was a valuable experience at many levels, but not least because it brought together many of the leading actors in cycling policy and practice from across the globe in the Irish capital. This included engineers and officials from across many of Ireland's Local Authorities and Agencies, as well as cycling campaigners, advocates and academics from around the country. The mixing and mingling of these actors with their counterparts from across Europe and beyond has helped to disseminate knowledge and ideas on sustainable transport throughout professional and other Irish networks.*

*These exchanges and new connections are now bearing fruit at a time when investments in active travel and public transport have increased, and there is a desire to seek out best practices in the creation of local transport policies and scheme designs.*

**Dr. Damien Ó Tuama**  
**National Cycling Coordinator**  
**Irish Cycling Campaign and An Taisce**  
**Vice-President, European Cyclists'**  
**Federation (2016 - 2021)**



# THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

ECF believes that successful conferences like Velo-city can foster meaningful change by working in partnership with host cities and the local cycling community. They really want to make an impact with the conference and are very conscious about choosing a host city that wants to host it and wants to make an impact locally. When asked for three tips or recommendations for meeting planners looking to intentionally plan for impact and legacy in their conferences, Director Caroline Cerfontaine suggested:

**1.** Involve all stakeholders, even those who you might not think are traditionally on your side or support your cause. ECF pushes their host city to get in touch with the local cycling associations and organisations even though there can sometimes be frosty relationships between the different groups. The result is a network of people in cycling working together to action change – and this continues long after the conference leaves.

**2.** Make the decision to do it and plan for legacy. Planning for legacy from the beginning, being intentional about what you are aiming to achieve means that impact is all the greater.

**3.** Incorporate legacy into your rfp. ECF works very closely with its destinations ensuring they will benefit from hosting the congress. The main goal of the conference is to leave all participants as well as other target groups enriched and inspired.

One of the key strengths of Velo-city conferences, which undoubtedly contributes to their success, is their highly participative nature that fosters networking among delegates and engages local residents. The conference brings together academia, local advocacy associations, civil society movements, politicians, the industry, the local resident and the daily cyclist. Alongside a robust lineup of plenary speakers and parallel sessions, the programme includes guided bike tours showcasing the host city's latest cycling developments, an exhibition for organisations to promote innovations in cycling and urban planning, and numerous social events – the main one being the annual bike parade, which provides an invaluable opportunity for the

host city to promote cycling locally.

Velo-city is undoubtedly a hot-bed of creativity and innovation that strives to build a truly global cycling community that has leverage and power to make change.



*Investment in, and delivery of, cycle infrastructure in Ireland has dramatically increased since 2019. There are key structural reasons for this increase, chiefly the Programme for Government 2020–2025 committing 1.8bn to active travel projects over 5 years, and the significant changes to the nation’s trip making, due to Covid 19 pandemic, which brought increased focus on provision for cycling and walking.*

*However, alongside these reasons, the Velo City Conference had a positive ‘cultural’ impact in creating both an increased impetus for change amongst the local authorities who attended and in promoting knowledge sharing and upskilling of Irish professionals in cycle infrastructure design and delivery.*

**Finola O’Driscoll**

**Senior Programme Manager, Active Travel Investment  
National Transport Authority | Údaras Náisiúnta Iompair**

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