



Report

Bicycle Conference in Warsaw Poland
Friday 25 May 2012

Friday May 25, 2012 the Embassy of the Netherlands in Warsaw hosted a conference on bicycling organized in cooperation with the Dutch Cycling Embassy.

The objective of the conference was to let Polish professionals in traffic and bicycle infrastructure learn about the Dutch expertise on cycling. The program (appendix 1) consisted of presentations about the Dutch knowledge on cycling and a hands-on training where the Dutch design principles were applied to real Warsaw streets.

A team of two Dutch cycling on cycling managed the conference.

Some 40 Polish traffic professionals participated in the conference: officers from the city of Warsaw, its districts and some other cities, civil servants of the national road administration, representatives of cyclists organizations and some traffic consultants.



The conference was opened by Dutch ambassador Marcel Kurpershoek with a speech about his experience with cycling (appendix 2) that was an inspiration for the program of the day.

After that Dutch principles for bicycle inclusive planning and policy were explained by the Dutch experts in presentations about the history of Dutch bicycle planning and policy and about Dutch design principles. Also the Warsaw bicycle officer presented the bicycle policy of the city and a representative of the BGZ bank gave a presentation about their bicycle sponsor program.

In a working session the group was divided in two to apply the Dutch design principles to two Warsaw streets: the large and busy Al. Jerozolimskie, and Krolewska which is a smaller but still quite big compared to Dutch innercity streets. In two groups the question was addressed of what design would make the streets more attractive to cyclists without forgetting about other road users. Maps were studied, designs drawn, and discussions held about possibilities and challenges to realize the bicycle friendly design. In the process participants got a good idea of the way of bicycle inclusive planning in the Netherlands and the required expertise.



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Critical Mass Bicycle Ride

After the closing of the professional part of the conference, many participants joined the thousands of cyclists in the monthly Warsaw Critical Mass Bike Ride. This time the ride was colored orange with the t-shirts provided by the Dutch Embassy saying: 'Go Dutch, Go Green, Go Bike'.



Links:

The Embassy of the Netherlands in Warsaw, incl pdf's of the presentations.

<http://poland-pl.nlembassy.org/news/2012/05/warsztaty-rowerowe-think-bike.html>

Photo's and films about the critical mass:

by Polish tv station:

<http://www.tvnwarszawa.pl/informacje,news,pomaranczowe-natarcie-rowerowe,46227.html>

http://travers.pl/m_20120525/

http://travers.pl/m_20120525/imagepages/image315.html

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDkj_CIU4M

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33TLJA88Qbk&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCNTQydyzFE&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vreRFXtPPS4>



appendix 1

Program Bicycle Conference Warszawa

On: Friday 25 May 2012

At: Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, ul. Kawalerii 10, Warszawa

- 9.00 arrival**
- 9.15 opening by Ambassador mr. M. Kurpershoek**
- 9.25 Introduction of the Dutch team and the participants**
- 9.40 Cycling in the Netherlands as an international example**
Marjolein de Lange, Dutch Cycling Embassy
Past, present and future of cycling in NL, advantages and challenges.
- 10.10 Bicycle-inclusive planning and design**
Wim van der Wijk, traffic engineer at Royal Haskoning
Introduction to the Dutch way of cycling-inclusive traffic design and city planning.
Sustainable safety, bicycle facilities, Dutch standards for bicycle inclusive design
- 10.40 Bicycle Policy of the City of Warsaw in 2006-2011**
Marcin Czajkowski, former expert City of Warsaw/ Bicycle Transport Section
- 11:00 Presentation of the BGZ "I love bicycle – active sponsoring"**
Małgorzata Zdzienicka-Grabarz, director CSR and Sponsoring, BGŻ
- 11.30 Introduction of the group assignment:**
Applying Dutch standards for bicycle-inclusive planning to Polish streets
- 11.45 coffee/tea and 1st part of the assignment:**
Investigating the street and making a draft for the ideal situation for cyclists with the help of Dutch design standards.
- 13.00 Lunch**
- 14.00 2nd part of the group assignment**
Identifying goals for all users of the street and drawing a design solution.
And: investigating bottlenecks and opportunities for getting this new design realized.
- 15.30 Bicycle policy**
Marjolein de Lange, Dutch Cycling Embassy
How can the design standards be part of a comprehensive bicycle policy.
- 16.00 Presentation of the results and discussion**
Moderated by Marjolein de Lange, Dutch Cycling Embassy
Presentation of the design solution and the ideas behind it, and discussion about realizing the designs.
- 17.00 (maybe) Short presentation of ideas to the city of Warsaw**
In the presence of representative of the city
(Or) Commands on what participants have learnt and what they can do with it
- 17.15 Closing**
- 18.00 Critical Mass from Pl. Zamkowy**
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Appendix 2

Speech of Ambassador Marcel Kurpershoek

Welcome to our Dutch Embassy.

As you know the Netherlands is the country of bicycles and cyclists. Actually, we do not do especially well in the Tour de France. For instance, Lance Armstrong does not come from a country that is usually associated with cycling. Rather America is the country of cars. And, as you also know, cars and bicycles are natural enemies. Something like wolves and deer, or wolves and lambs. It needs a miracle to have them lie peacefully side by side. So this miracle we try to make it happen.

The success of the bicycle in the Netherlands is usually explained by the fact that our country is very flat – there are hardly any hills, let alone mountains, none of them. On the other hand we have a lot of wind, which has almost the same effect as going uphill if the wind is against you. Then, we are very densely populated – more bicycles fit into a street than cars. More important, I think, bicycling gives you a feeling of independence and freedom. You don't have to wait at the bus or tram station, the *przystanek*. You don't need to go to the gas station, you don't have to waste your money on expensive fuel and maintenance. And to crown it all, every round of the pedal you are pushing brings us closer to a better world – a world without CO2 emissions, climate change, unhealthy air and pollution. Not to mention your own health. Yes, we are pedaling for a better, healthier, safer world, not only for ourselves, but for future generations, for our children, for human life on earth. It is a small individual contribution, but nevertheless, many small ones add up to a big one.

Anyway, we like it. I myself, during my 8 year posting in Holland, rode my bicycle to work from Leiden to The Hague and back, every day, I can proudly say I did not miss even one day, which in total is a distance of more than two times around the world. I became addicted to it. Most of our citizens are. Almost one third of all movements in our country is done on bicycle: 4,5 billion bicycle trips per year and 15 billion kilometers. On average, almost one thousand kilometer for every Dutch person per year on bike (for me it was more than ten thousand). We have 18 million bikes, more than people. Unfortunately, every year somewhere between half a million and one million bikes are stolen in the Netherlands. Perhaps that is the price of popularity, but still it is too much.

So we also have our problems.

When you are Dutch you are born on a bicycle. It is unthinkable that a Dutch person cannot cycle, if not handicapped. Likewise is unthinkable that a Dutch person cannot swim. It is hard to imagine for us, but it is a strange fact that in some countries this is not always the case. Anyhow, I can observe that bicycling is becoming more and more popular in Poland. Still, there are some dilemmas. In Warsaw I use a mountain bike.

Because often I have to go up the curb and the sidewalk and jump off again. Boom boom.

The safe place for a cyclist is to join the pedestrians. They don't seem to mind the cyclists as company. There are some bicycle lanes.

But they suddenly stop somewhere, without any warning. Nobody, no sign tells you what to do. I don't feel comfortable to join the cars on the main road. So better continue in the grass, the sand, whatever, away from the asphalt. Also, there are many potholes in the street. Being a cyclist in Poland is still something of an adventure. A challenge. You have to be a little bit brave, which is nice.

Safety is an issue. The main roads in Poland seem rather unsafe, not only for cars, but even more so for bicycles. For instance, cars also use the side lanes. Remarkably, safety for bicycles is becoming more and more of an issue in the Netherlands. As the number of fatalities in car accidents has dropped to one of the lowest in Europe, attention is focusing more and more on the accidents involving cars and bicycles, especially in the cities. This happens a lot, even though we have almost 30 thousand kilometers of special bicycle lanes.

This is what I was told by our minister for Infrastructure, Melanie Schultz van Haegen, who visited Poland this week. By the way, she uses an innovation I did not see myself yet, but apparently is becoming more common in my country. In the morning she transports her two young children to school by bicycle, and also luggage attached to her handlebars. One child on the back seat, and the other one standing in front of her on a board attached to the frame while holding on to the handlebars for balance. But I believe in Vietnam even more people travel on just one bike.

In any case, the bicycle cannot be stopped. It is there to stay. It will be there even when we run out of fuel or money or both. So let's not wait and start enjoying bicycling now. I wish you a very good conference and it is a special pleasure to have you here, being a bicycle enthusiast like you.

