

DCE Alignment with the SDGs:

Reflecting on the 2030 Agenda and Action Points for Positive Change



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EVERYWHERE



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Contents

01.

Introduction to the
SDGs and Relevance
for DCE

pp. 3-4

02.

Aims of the Analysis

pp. 5-6

03.

From Global to Local:
Translating the SDGs

pp. 7-13

04.

Strategic Partnership
as Best Practice

pp. 14-21

05.

"And Beyond":
Employing a Forward
-looking Perspective

pp. 22-26

06.

Concluding Remarks

pp. 27-29

07.

Notes

pp. 30-32



01. Introduction to the SDGs and Relevance for the DCE

Agreed upon in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a set of 17 interconnected global goals were adopted by the UN to address a wide range of challenges and themes such as poverty, health, climate change, and (urban) development just to name a few.¹ Following current practices, countries are not on track to meeting the SDGs by 2030,² making the next five years crucial for accelerating efforts and implementation towards their – at least partial – achievement.

1.1 Attendance at the 'Future for Sustainable Development' Workshop

From the 6th until the 8th of October 2025, the Dutch Cycling Embassy (DCE) participated in the "Future of Sustainable Development" workshop at the University of Groningen (RUG). Organised by the RUG Rudolf Agricola School for

Sustainable Development, IREES, Utrecht University, and the Stakeholder Forum, the three-day workshop aimed to grasp the needed interplays between science, civil society, private sector, and policy for accelerating progress on the SDGs until 2030 and beyond.³ As a link between all of these 'pillars' through its extensive network of public institutions, private bodies, NGOs, as well as research institutes and universities, the role of organisations like the DCE in forming links and synergies toward SDG progress is crucial for advancing the sustainable development agenda (also referred to as the 2030 Agenda).

02. Aims of the SDG Analysis

5

Next to discussing the urgency of speeding up progress and countering the status quo, the workshop served as a platform for stakeholders to discuss the roles that civil society, policy, private sector, and science could and should play toward this objective. With three separate thematic sessions to discuss each group separately (civil society, policy, private) and a fourth session to consider their interplay (alongside science), resultant action points provide a roadmap toward triggering progress.

Here, the focus is on the outcomes of the fourth session and operationalising ways in which all pillars can work together in reinforcing positive change, with the specific question of “what can DCE do?”. As an organisation that already links the various pillars in its everyday activities, the DCE is actively integrating various perspectives from the public/policy, private, and scientific perspectives toward positive change – albeit not always in a way that explicitly acknowledges alignment

with the SDG Agenda. Hence, the aim of this analysis is to dissect how the local activities of DCE support global scale SDG acceleration by making these connections apparent, as well as identifying SDG related gaps that DCE may be overlooking. As mentioned, the main takeaways of the workshop produced action points as necessary for meaningful change, around which this analysis will be tailored. These three action points are the following:

I. Translation of the global SDGs and 2030 Agenda within local contexts using language that is accessible and understandable for all audiences.

II. Promoting and engaging in strategic partnership approaches, as well as actively compiling successful collaborations as best practice.

III. Employing a forward-looking perspective; asking how to better integrate youth perspectives and nurture transformational leaders of tomorrow.

The following sections are structured according to these three action points; first ‘translating’ ongoing DCE activities and their alignment with the SDGs more broadly, then highlighting some examples that

showcase strategic partnerships, and finally ending with a forward-looking perspective at what the DCE has in store for the future for accelerating positive change by 2030 and beyond.

6



Participants at the SDG Workshop



Photo from the workshop

03. From Global to Local: Translating the SDGs

The first action point to be considered is that of promoting the 17 SDGs in a way that makes them tangible for all audiences. Suggested by its name and underlined in its mission statement, the DCE's vision involves realisation of "cycling for everyone, everywhere" as the ultimate objective⁴. While clear that the broader ideals of sustainability, equality, and resilience

are observed within the DCE's agenda and operations, drawing literal parallels between some of the UN goals and corresponding actions of the DCE can aid in this translation process. In this section, five of the key SDGs that are reflected in DCE's vision and everyday operations are 'translated' by drawing these crucial connections.



SDG 11

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Photo: United Nations

As the goal most directly linked to sustainable (urban) transport, indicators within this SDG discuss access to safe and affordable transport systems, as well as capacity to engage within participatory processes to make this a lived reality for citizens⁵. The DCE's three-pillared approach to recognising 'hardware' (physical urban environment), 'software' (ideas, plans, policies), and 'orgware' (governance) as equally crucial elements for developing ideas toward sustainable, safe, and inclusive cycling environments⁶ falls directly in line with this goal. This key framing runs throughout all of DCE's initiatives; ThinkBike Workshops, Study Visits, and within presentations when attending conferences globally just to name a few.



Meeting City Council and Urban Environment Committee in Siheung, South Korea

SDG 3

9

This goal strives for lowering premature mortality and improving healthcare more broadly, and target 3.6 explicitly aims for halving the number of global deaths and injuries resultant from road traffic accidents by 2030.⁷ The DCE encourages implementation of cycling policy beyond just demonstrating accessibility or economic benefits, working hard to showcase the undeniable connections between cycling and improved safety, physical health, and mental wellbeing that arise when it is adopted as a regular mode. Active participation in conferences about this topic (e.g. WHO European Healthy Cities 2023⁸), as well as publications emphasising these links (e.g. Dutch Cycling Vision⁹) are just some of the ways this SDG is actively supported.



Presentation at the European Healthy Cities Conference in 2023

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13 CLIMATE ACTION

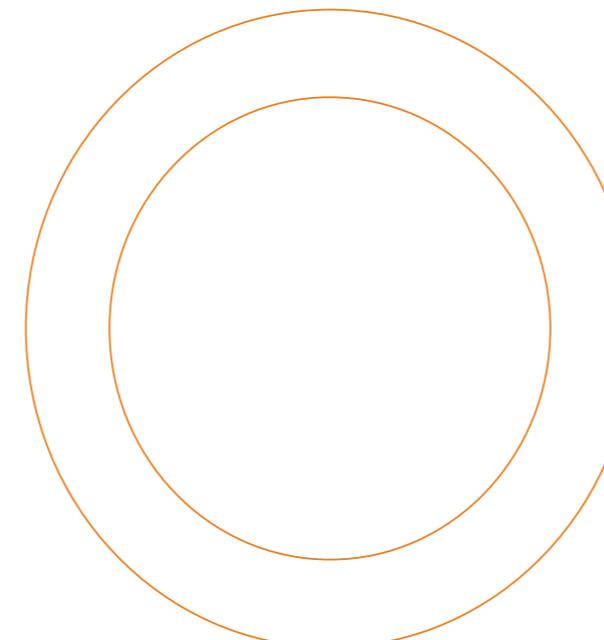
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Photo: United Nations



Dutch Cycling Vision 2023



Excerpt from Decisio Climate Impact Report

DCE ALIGNMENT WITH THE SDGS

SDG 13

A significant part of taking action on this SDG is by directly improving education and raising awareness about climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact reduction, another key element that runs in parallel with cycling promotion.¹⁰ Additionally, ensuring a positive environmental footprint is crucial for the DCE, whereby investigating the organisation's impact is continuously being examined. For example, in the summer of 2023, DECISIO was asked to investigate the extent of cycling changes required to offset the climate impact of the travel that DCE conducts in order to hold ThinkBike Workshops abroad. The report provided exact targets for bike parking spaces, kilometres cycled, and car trips needed to be replaced to offset emissions.¹¹

Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy

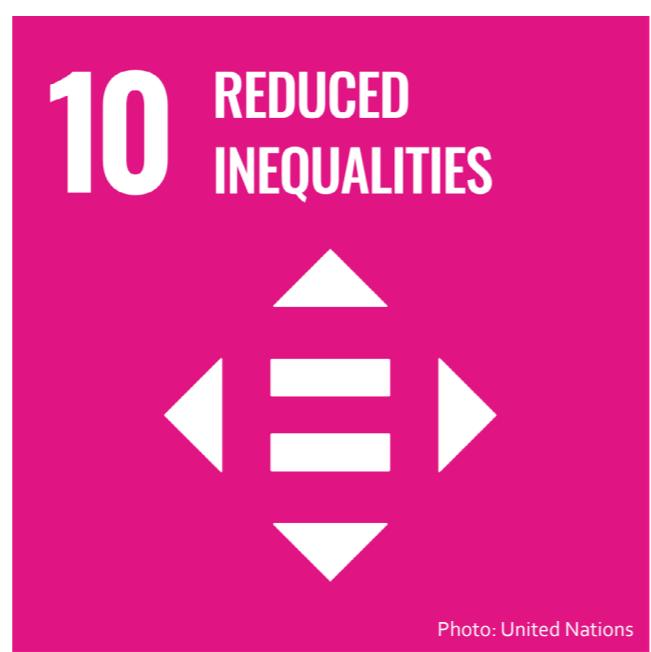
SDG 10

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“Cycling for everyone, everywhere” calls for the empowerment and inclusion of all within society, irrespective of one’s age, sex, disability, origin, or socio-economic status (or other). DCE emphasises the power of the (bi-) cycle (in its many forms) to reduce inequalities, as a financially more affordable option available to all – compared to cars, for example.

Within this SDG, target 10.b addresses encouraging direct (developmental) assistance to lower income countries as a way to lower global inequality. Specifically, the DCE has taken various actions to make Dutch knowledge more accessible to lower income contexts by conducting freely accessible webinars, as well as organising ACTIVE workshops (supported by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) which aim to train 10,000 mobility experts in the ‘Global South’ over the coming decade.¹²

DUTCH CYCLING EMBASSY



SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

12

SDG 17

The final key goal is that of promoting sound collaboration, partnership and knowledge transfer to attain the SDGs.¹⁴ Without partnership from all states and regions globally, the 2030 Agenda would not stand to mean much – with a comparable sentiment toward partnership prevailing within the DCE. The DCE underlines that for mobility practices to change for the better, all pillars of society globally must interact and work together towards this shared goal. This is why for any workshop, study visit, or other undertaking, the DCE strives to include diverse actors from its extensive network community of around 100 participants of public institutions, private companies, NGOs, and universities, as well as local partners and knowledge.¹⁵ Recognising the unique knowledge that individuals bring is a first step – or pedal – in the commitment toward a sustainable future.

DCE ALIGNMENT WITH THE SDGS



DCE network participant Community site



ACTIVE initiative logo



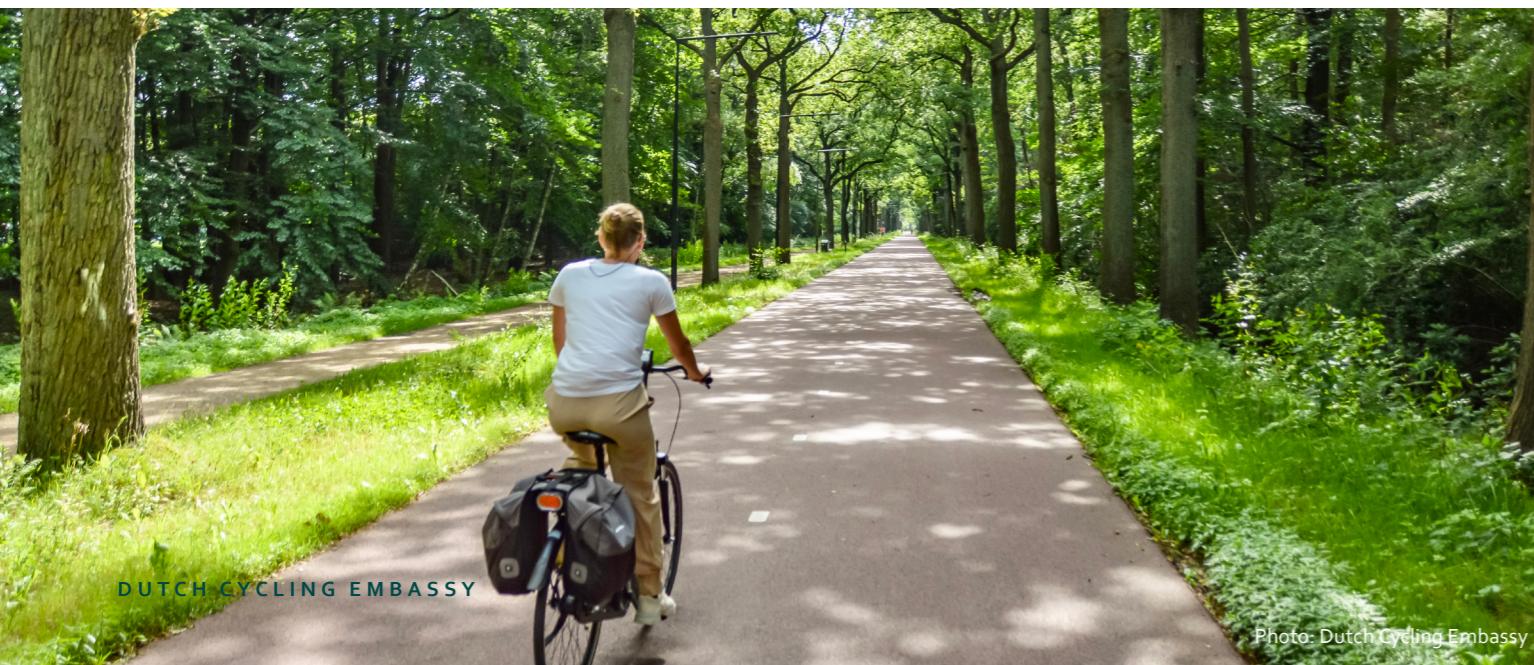
DCE Q2 Network Participant Meeting 2024

Having undergone the translation process, it's crucial to underline that while these five SDGs are those most relevant to the DCE, they belong to one cohesive agenda. As separate, yet equally important parts of a whole, they must be viewed as such in the translation process. Connections can be drawn to SDGs beyond just these five, but in its primary operations around cycling promotion "for everyone, everywhere", the DCE contributes to and relates to the ones outlined more directly than to others. This does not mean that the significance of other goals is overridden in the DCE's vision, instead positing that cycling can be actively leveraged as a pathway toward all the other SDGs too – for example contributing to poverty

04. Strategic Partnership as Best Practice

Looking beyond alignment of the DCE core values with the SDGs, the second action point for analysis focuses on transforming this translated evidence of alignment into tangible results – in this case as evidenced by successful partnerships and collaborations as best practice. In its essence as a universal global programme, the 2030 Agenda encourages not only cross-sectoral collaboration (between public, private, civil societal bodies) but fundamentally depends on this happening across borders – going beyond development

as an individual enterprise, and towards it as a *collaborative, international project*.¹⁶ Well-known as a cycling nation, moving by bike is more than just getting from A to B in the Netherlands – it is associated with liveability, accessibility, and connection. This is a point of pride and expertise for the Dutch, with the DCE existing to share this knowledge beyond the Netherlands, engaging in a process coined 'cycling diplomacy'; urging other nations to embrace the mode as a relational tool that fosters mutual understanding and cooperation.¹⁷



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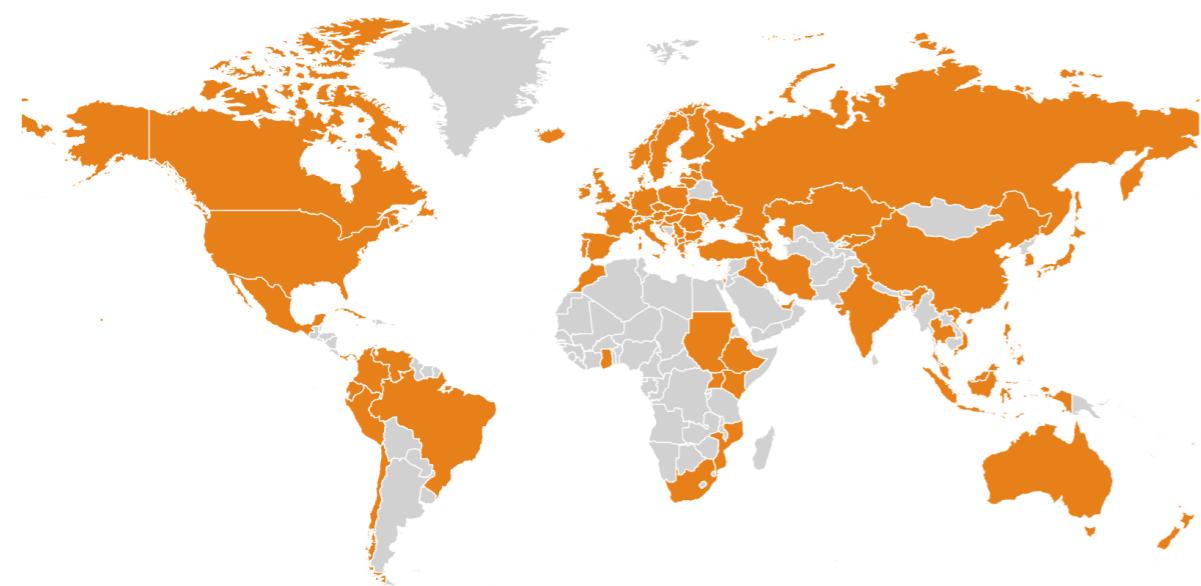
Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy



DCE ALIGNMENT WITH THE SDGS

The DCE carefully tracks its collaborations, including the countries from which its partner organisations, individuals, and institutions originate. The most frequent countries collaborated with include the USA, Germany, UK, France, and Canada – although partnerships extend far beyond just the European and North American context (particularly in recent years). According to an analysis conducted at the beginning of 2025, the DCE has seen growth in requests and partnerships from various Asian, Latin American, and African states, notably showing that requests are

becoming more geographically diverse in their origin. Within this section, five collaborations from the last year are shown to highlight successful partnerships in action, connecting Dutch and international actors from all walks of life – united by the joint goal of making cycling accessible for all. The cases chosen represent countries beyond most frequent collaborators, representing areas that have shown a growing interest towards Dutch cycling knowledge, portraying the growing impact by DCE in terms of diversifying partnerships in recent years.



Origin countries of incoming requests in 2024

4.1 ACTIVE Workshop in Oaxaca, Mexico

In this two-day ACTIVE workshop organised by DCE in February of this year (funded by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management), key topics like network planning for cycling and walking, integration of cycling and public transport, and infrastructure design were discussed by experts Roberto Ascencio of Arcadis (from the Mexico office) and Adrian Puentes of BD+P. The workshop aimed to engage with local knowledge, each presentation being followed by break-out sessions that challenged participants to critically examine infrastructure in their own context.¹⁸

The collaborative workshop connected a wide variety of stakeholders including representatives from Oaxaca's Secretaría de Movilidad, the Oaxacan municipality, surrounding municipalities, traffic/municipal police, and civil society – explicitly bringing a diverse group of people to engage in one discussion and innovate together. 'ACTIVE' is a programme supported by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management in collaboration with the Dutch Enterprise Agency RVO with the aim to train 10,000 mobility experts in the 'Global South' over the coming decade. Directly aligned with sharing knowledge and innovating by engaging in cross-sectoral as well as cross-border partnership, this workshop can be considered as a best practice toward promoting strategic collaboration and significant advancement of the SDGs.



ACTIVE workshop held in Oaxaca, Mexico

4.2 ThinkBike Workshop in Dubai, UAE

17 Also in February, the DCE travelled to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to host a ThinkBike Workshop for Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA). As a city that experienced rapid growth skewed toward accommodating infrastructure for private car use, now grappling with continued expansion and the accompanying challenges this brings in the face of climate change, the RTA is shifting its priorities to better serve active and sustainable travel modes.¹⁹

Lieven Nijs from the City of Rotterdam and Niels van Oort from TU Delft provided their expertise on the strategic development of active mobility, network design and multi-modal connectivity. Conducted surveys before and after the workshop showed an increase in participant support and proficiency towards topics of multimodal connectivity and understanding of user needs. Bringing experts with various roles and competencies into contact with one another resulted in an enriching process of knowledge sharing and brainstorming – united by common objectives and targets, broadly also encompassed by the 2030 Agenda.



ThinkBike Workshop in Dubai, UAE

4.3 ACTIVE Workshop in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

18 As another workshop on behalf of the ACTIVE initiative, this two-day event organised in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia was held in close collaboration with the city's Sustainable Urban Transport Project and the World Bank. DCE's network experts Teijle Gorris (GO-bility) and Ben Schaipp (FietsMeester) led a series of interactive modules focusing on cycling network planning, infrastructure design principles, the Safe System approach to road safety, and climate adaptation for cycling.²⁰

The workshop marks new synergies between the Dutch and Mongolian commitment toward supporting cities worldwide in developing safer, more sustainable, and more inclusive mobility systems. Additionally, the workshop challenged participants and experts to adapt best practices to the unique climatic and urban context of Mongolia, as opposed to applying international and Dutch models directly – emphasising cross-border learning and integration of knowledge.



Interactive session from workshop



Participants in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

4.4 Denizli Metropolitan Municipality Visit

19

In May, the DCE welcomed a Turkish delegation with a strong interest in sustainable mobility and cycling infrastructure.²¹ As a valuable opportunity for knowledge exchange, the visit involved sharing best practice, and exploring future collaboration in promoting active and sustainable mobility in Denizli and within the broader Turkish context – furthering DCE's commitment to sharing cycling knowledge internationally in alignment with the SDGs.

As part of a visit organised by Goudappel, experts included Emma Stubbe (DCE) and Tuen Zeegers from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW), offering insight into the Dutch approach to cycling infrastructure, national strategies, and integration of cycling into broader mobility frameworks. The workshop serves as a good example to showcase partnership toward objectives outlined in the SDGs on multiple levels of government, with key individuals from the delegation being from national ministries, local government, as well as experts from private firms.



Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Denizli Metropolitan Municipality Visit

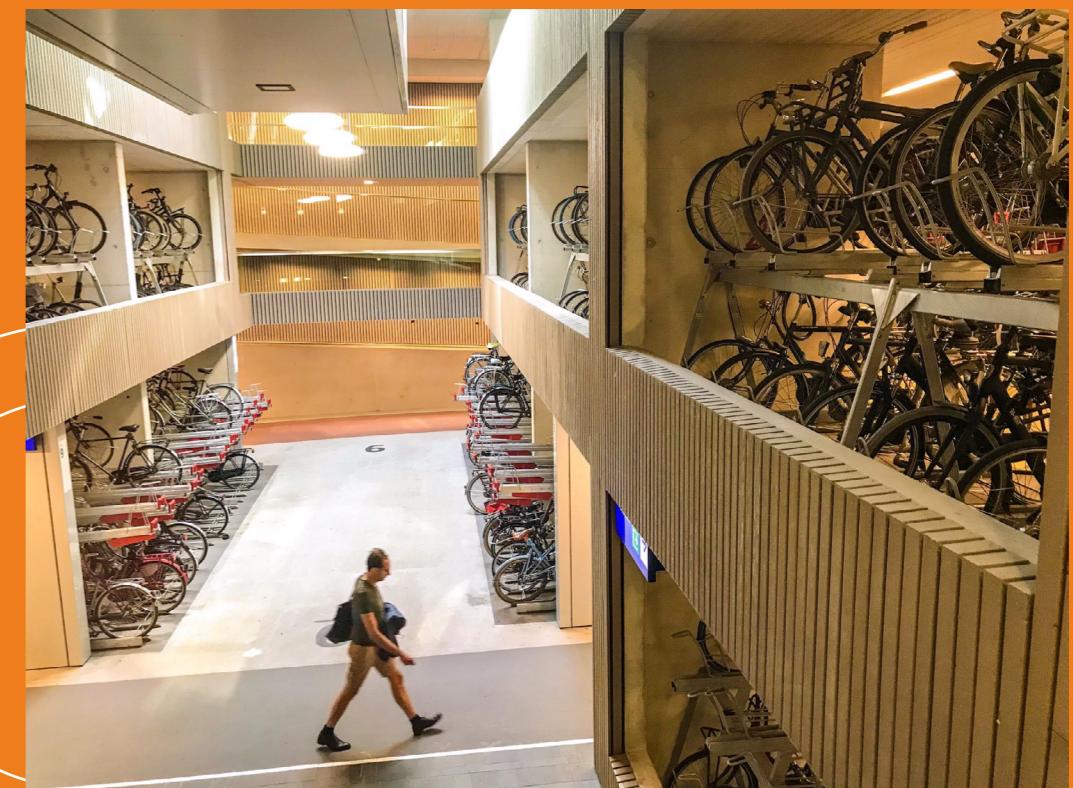
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4.5 Study Visit with Sama Velo from Daka, Senegal

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In November, the DCE welcomed a small delegation of advocates from the Sama Velo organisation in Daka, Senegal. As a shorter half-day session, the visit was part of a larger study visit that included meetings with DCE network participants November:city, SportUtrecht, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The visit included a presentation, as well as a cycling tour of Utrecht, visiting the Centraal station's bike parking, the Catherijnesingel, and world's busiest cycling intersection Vredenburg.²²

Partnering with a civic organisation like Sama Velo shows DCE's continued strive to engage with various stakeholders involved in the promotion and knowledge sharing needed for cycling to be adapted as a mode – not only limited to decision-makers. The visit also strengthened connections with partners in Senegal, showing the widespread growth of synergies and broadening geographical impact of DCE.



The visit included Utrecht Centraal's bicycle parking facility

DCE ALIGNMENT WITH THE SDGs

Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy

In its core, the DCE exists to promote all things cycling and advocate for partnerships and knowledge sharing about related topics beyond the Netherlands – striving for cross-border, cross-sectoral, and cross-cultural engagement towards the shared goal of achieving safe and accessible active mobility for all. By connecting Dutch expertise to internationally oriented initiatives through **'cycling diplomacy'**, the DCE is fostering a community that is dedicated to sustainability, health, and liveability both domestically in the Netherlands by forming a diverse network (of public, private, NGO, and knowledge actors), and across borders by deploying this network globally to encourage local networks elsewhere.



Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy

05. "And Beyond": Employing a Forward-looking Perspective

This discourse of promoting knowledge, partnerships, and unity across diverse contexts is one that aligns directly with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – in particular with the bridging nature of SDG 17. The outlined examples are just five of some 120 projects that DCE organises and partakes in yearly, having been chosen in order to showcase partnerships which extend beyond the 'Global North'. The reach of DCE as an organisation is expanding yearly, with 2024 figures showing an approximate 800 requests for collaboration, information, event participation, and other purposes, from over 80 countries.²³

The final action point acts as a bridge between the ongoing Agenda and the 'beyond 2030' timeline, emphasising the importance of proactive action as we approach the imminent failure of achieving the SDGs in their entirety. The key message for this point is that of resilience and continuity, that just because the goals are not met in their entirety, we must not lose sight of what they stand for and must retain the sentiment of what they represent; a universal, global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and address challenges like inequality and climate change. As another key takeaway, a look into the future should include the youth of today as the leaders and change-makers of tomorrow. Hence, this action point also questions how

stakeholders from all sectors can better integrate youth and their perspectives and experiences, and nurture transformational leaders of tomorrow.

This section can be broadly divided into three sub-points on how the DCE is currently adopting a forward-looking stance in its operation – in line with the 2030 Agenda 'and beyond' – and what more the DCE can do to align explicitly with the SDGs. The section is structured along the following points: (1) introduction of the DCE Strategy 2026, (2) how the DCE is nurturing change-makers and engaging with youth, and finally, (3) the launch of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport as a lens going forward.

5.1 Dutch Cycling Embassy Strategy 2026

In its strategy for 2026, the DCE has set out core values, its mission going forward, stakeholders involved in this mission, as well as defining what success means for the organisation. Setting out the strategy means a continued look into the future and an emphasis on working proactively towards newly revised goals. The DCE's mission for 2026 is to achieve a healthy and cycle-friendly world, today and tomorrow (mirroring the Agenda's 'and beyond' narrative), as well as the continued emphasis on inclusivity through its motto of "cycling for everyone, everywhere" (focusing on the three facets of hardware, software, and orgware). The values that DCE places as central in its agenda going forward strongly correlate with the 2030 Agenda, specifically centering collaboration, positivity, empowerment, inclusivity, and a knowledge-driven course of action. The DCE strives to continue into 2026 in close cooperation with its various network members, (inter)national partners, and stakeholders, valuing the diverse insights that each group has to contribute towards the shared goal of inclusive, sustainable, and cycle-friendly cities everywhere.

5.2 Nurturing Change-makers & Engaging Youth

The SDG workshop drew consensus from all participants about the importance of empowering and equipping the youth of today to become change-makers and leaders of tomorrow. The DCE recognises this point too, striving to engage with younger generations through its various initiatives and projects. An important pillar of the DCE's network encompasses knowledge institutions and universities, including TU Delft, Breda University of Applied Sciences, HAN University of Applied Sciences and Hogeschool Windesheim.²⁴ These network participants are crucial in their role of linking students with cycling knowledge and expertise through their various programmes spanning topics related to sustainable mobility and urban planning. Additionally, DCE often conducts workshops and study visits with universities from abroad, inviting both students and staff to participate. Recent examples of collaborations with international universities include a study visit with students from Queen's University Belfast,²⁵ a guest lecture at the University of Cincinnati's School of Planning,²⁶ and a keynote presentation at Duke-Kunshan University in China²⁷ (among many others).



Photo: Dutch Cycling Embassy

Another initiative taken by the DCE to engage young professionals spanning beyond universities and towards its other public and private network participants is that of "DCE Young". The DCE Young event aims to bring together members from the DCE network to encourage participation as experts in study visits and share their valuable expertise and perspectives as young professionals, also emphasising the critical role of knowledge sharing within the mobility sector.²⁸ As a relatively new initiative, three DCE young events have been hosted so far (the most recent in November 2025), each one proving to be a success in fostering a sense of community among participants, also aligning with the repeated weight placed on collaboration, knowledge sharing, and partnership in furthering the 2030 Agenda.

Additionally, since 2023 the DCE has endeavoured to provide a sponsored position for the annual Velo-city conference for individuals from a country classified as an economy in transition and/or a developing economy.²⁹ Velo-city plays a vital role in promoting cycling as a sustainable and healthy mode, and while known as the world cycling summit, rising travel and entrance costs have made it increasingly less accessible for marginalised groups to attend. With the aim to counter these barriers and increase representativeness within Velo-city, the position is particularly intended to support young individuals that belong to marginalised groups according to race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, and indigeneity (among other characteristics).



DCE at Velo-city 2024 in Ghent



Study visit with students and staff from Queen's University, Belfast



Guest Lecture at Windesheim



DCE Young (2025)

5.3 UN Decade of Sustainable Transport

In 2023, the UN General Assembly declared that the first ever UN Decade of Sustainable Transport is set to begin in 2026.³⁰ Now approaching the official launch in December of this year, it will be an opportunity to further raise awareness of the crucial role of transport in advancing the SDGs at the UN level. While there is no single SDG dedicated to the advancement of sustainable transport and mobility practices, it is reflected in multiple goals and targets as a linking pin (also as described in section one). An Implementation Plan will provide a roadmap for accelerating steps towards sustainable transport during the Decade, also explicitly providing a linkage to the unknown "and beyond" that follows the 2030 Agenda. It is expected to be a global and non-binding Implementation Plan, allowing for more detailed local strategies and collaborations to occur – something of interest to the DCE going forward.

This provides an opportunity for the DCE to forge stronger ties through common terminology with international partners. Also connected through the SDG Agenda, the Decade will likely be endorsed by almost all countries that endorse the SDGs, with the added bonus that it extends beyond the 2030 timeline – explicitly laying groundwork for a continued commitment to sustainable transport beyond Agenda 2030. Therefore, the Decade (with its distinct goals that have yet to be laid out) is a potential 'hook' for forming mutual objectives between DCE, its network, and the diverse partners that partner with globally.



06. Final Thoughts

In line with the takeaways of the workshop, the DCE is actively supporting synergies between different sectors and levels of society, both domestically and internationally bridging differences and working towards more sustainable environments for future generations to come.

Additionally, key action points and takeaways provided much food for thought, calling for the analysis of what the DCE does to align itself with the SDGs, and what more it can do to support them as we near their deadline of 2030. First, a translation of the SDGs provided a clear outline of how ongoing activities and narratives of the DCE support action. Second, spotlighting recent partnerships with diverse actors outlines an ongoing commitment for expanding global engagement and wider geographical impact. Finally, by employing a forward-looking perspective, the analysis looks at the

future of DCE; what is contained within the future strategy, how youth will be further engaged, as well as future developments at the UN level and how they relate to the DCE and cycling promotion more broadly.

Many thanks to the RUG Rudolf Agricola School for Sustainable Development, IREES, Utrecht University, and the Stakeholder Forum for organising such an enriching workshop and fostering necessary discussion at this critical time. Now also having examined how its operations fit into and affirm the wider global framing of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, the DCE continues with its ultimate goal as ***cycling for everyone, everywhere***, supporting safe, inclusive, and sustainable mobility for all.



Connect with the Dutch Cycling Embassy:

The DCE is a trusted source of knowledge, serving as a translator of Dutch cycling culture and conduit for Dutch cycling expertise. Depending on the context, the DCE is able to provide resources and perspectives that can form the basis of positive diplomatic relations. By organizing study visits, cycling missions, co-sponsoring events, or connecting Dutch companies with international opportunities, the DCE can help missions and local partners to open doors, create shared experiences, and build momentum around shared goals. Through its efforts, DCE ensures that cycling remains an effective mode of international connection and cooperation.

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13. Notes

29

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31

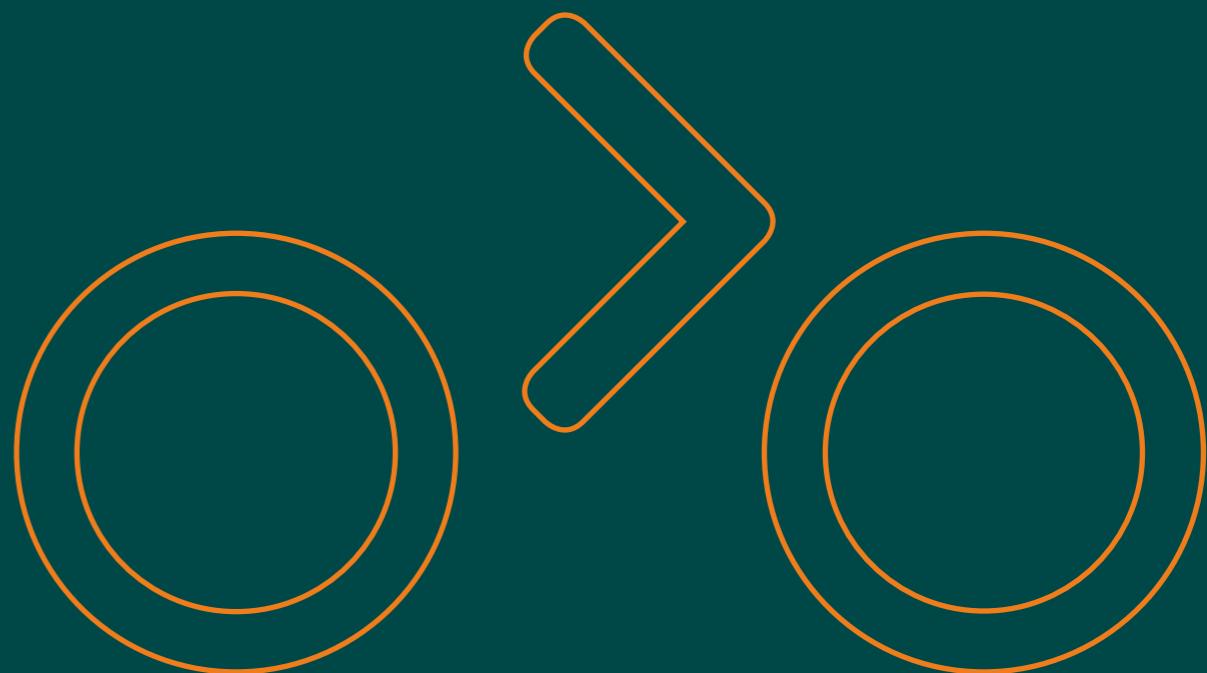
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