

ECF European Cyclists' Federation

Rue Franklin 28 • 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel + 32 2 880 92 74 • fax +32 2 880 92 75

office@ecf.com www.ecf.com

Account N° 210-033 98 07-68 • Fortis Banque
Rond Point Schuman • 10 1040 Brussels, Belgium
BIC: GEBABEBB-36A • IBAN: BE82 2100 3398 0768

Icelandic Cyclists' Federation
'Landssamtök hjólreiðamanna'
Árni Davíðsson

Brussels, 4 March 2011

Re: ECF promotes cycling; opposes helmet law

Dear Sir,

Please find herewith the official position of the European Cyclists' Federation on helmets and helmet laws. Cyclists typically live longer and healthier lives; serious head injuries are rare and the evidence in favour of helmet wearing and helmet laws is weak. The main effect of helmet laws has not been to improve cyclists' safety but to discourage cycling, undermining its health and other benefits.

We therefore call upon the Members of the Alþingi, the Icelandic parliament, to

- 1) focus on well-established measures to promote cycling and cyclists' well-being;
- 2) recognise that the benefits of cycling far outweigh the risks;
- 3) refrain from promoting or enforcing helmet wearing without sound evidence that this would be beneficial and cost-effective compared to other safety initiatives.

Every effort should be made to promote and encourage cycling for many reasons including that it is good for the environment, for personal and public health. Bicycle helmets do little to improve safety. The best way to improve cyclists' safety is to promote cycling.

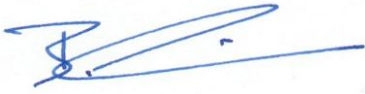
ECF promotes cycling and road safety, therefore ECF opposes mandatory helmet laws because:

- Mandatory helmet laws discourage cycling by portraying it as abnormally dangerous, although evidence shows that you are less likely to be killed in a mile of cycling than in a mile of walking (Wardlaw 2002).
- Injured cyclists are less likely to have head injuries than injured pedestrians or car occupants (ONISR 2005).
- Shock-horror helmet promotions portray bicycle helmets as offering far more protection than they do. Bicycle helmets are only designed to withstand minor knocks and bumps, not being hit by motor vehicles.
- Countries that have penalised people for normal cycling (without helmets), have failed to reduce head injury rates despite increased helmet wearing rates.

- Studies show that countries that promote cycling and have many cycling commuters, experience "safety in numbers" (i.e. the larger the number of cyclists – the safer it is to ride bicycles). Reduced cycling reduces "safety in numbers", thus increasing the risk of injury to remaining cyclists.
- Reduced cycling reduces health and environmental benefits.

The European Cyclist's Federation recommends the Members of the Alþingi, the Icelandic parliament, to cancel the mandatory helmet law, and to promote cycling.

Kind regards,



Dr Bernhard Ensink
Secretary General & Velocity Series Director