



Project

**L'ESO va que vola**  
**Come to high school by bicycle**

Initial dossier  
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**L'ESO va que vola. Come to high school by bicycle**

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## Introduction

The organizations *Amics de la Bici* and *AproB* have been fighting for more than 20 years to promote bicycle as a respectable mean of transport. We have been working for a healthier and more human city. A city without pollution. We want to regain streets for the inhabitants, where children can play and people live together. We can only achieve this with the restriction of the use of cars, with an improvement of the public transport net and encouraging people to go by bicycle or on foot from one place to another.

Nowadays, nobody doubts the bicycle is an ecological friendly way of transport. This is why it should be promoted. The benefits of using bicycle are becoming day after day more and more popular. Even the medical authorities insist on the fact **we should use alternative ways of transport to achieve a better and less polluting mobility** since the health of the people is directly connected to the health of their environment. Taking this into account we should consider the following facts:

First, if polluting ways of transport were not so used in our cities, the quality of the air we breathe would considerably be better. This would reduce the stress we suffer and other disorders associated to traffic noise. Nowadays, many streets exceed the levels of acoustic pollution considered as tolerable by the WHO (World Health Organization).

Second, if we substituted an important part of the motor-driven private ways of transport in our cities by other means of transport, such as the bicycle, the number of traffic accidents would automatically decrease as well as its seriousness. Promoting going on foot or using the bicycle would also reduce the budget invested in medical attention to people who suffered a traffic accident.



**And third, it is really important to practise some kind of sport to achieve a comfort and to prevent several pathologies associated to an excessively sedentary life. Thirty minutes of cycling every day would be enough to ensure the necessary amount of exercise we need.**

The use of the bicycle is consolidating every where. The infrastructures that governments are dedicating to use them are also increasing and they are conforming a Basic Net (*Xarxa Bàsica*). However, the potential number of users is still far away from being achieved.

This lack of users is especially annoying among young people. They are often conditioned by a lifestyle that causes them anxiety, depression, overweight, backache, self isolation, breathing problems, etc. Streets are now hostile to them and they have no appropriated places to let off steam and meet themselves. They have been immersed since they were children in the car culture. This is why they want to have a motorbike or a car. This makes them to take part in this vicious circle which is more and more difficult to break as time goes by.

**Getting used to bicycles is much easier when the person is young and is able to learn and assimilate new situations** and they have not got any harming habits yet, both for their health and for the environment (going by car to everywhere). In fact, most high school students would go to school by bicycle if they found more favourable conditions such as security or parking facilities. This was shown by a recent survey.

Town halls promote the use of the bicycle in high schools through some sport and recreational activities, like the bicycle party or the school bicycle meetings. However, the experience shows that these measures are not enough to make the use of the bicycle as a way of transport increase, as a way to achieve a sustainable mobility and as a tool to achieve a better health and comfort and as to prevent risk situations in medium and long term.

To make the first step it is necessary an incentive, a kind of help. This is why the previous information is fundamental to be successful in any project. Everyone has to know what will be



done and why and with enough time in case they want to contribute with new ideas. Support materials are obviously needed: dossiers, technical data, cards, leaflets...

Our project "*L'ESO va que vola. Come to high school by bicycle*" adopts many ideas from a document presented in May 2000 to the *Promoting Group of the Civilian Commission of the Bicycle* of the Town hall of Barcelona. It also adopts the philosophy of the School Roads (or "Safe Routes to School", as other countries name it and whose experiences were a valuable example to us). It promotes safe and comfortable trips by bicycle among high school students.

**The project "*L'ESO va que vola. Come by bicycle to high school*" essentially consists on an intense work with all the school community of the participant high schools (teachers, head masters, parents and pupils) to identify and establish the conditions needed so as young people can go to their high school or to any other place by bicycle. But it is also necessary to count on with the Town hall cooperation** to ensure these conditions. Thus, around every school safe routes which can be done by bicycle will be drawn in a map. Families will also receive information about the benefits of using bicycle and about road security. At the end of the activity pupils are invited to take part in this initiative using these routes to get to school with their own bicycles.

In the trips of the pupils from their homes to their high school they have to avoid streets with too much traffic and dangerous crossroads. And when there is no other possible way, they can also use the pavement respecting pedestrians. These security problems will be detected and be treated during the project.

Our project arose from a testing that took place in October 2002, named "*Ring-ring operation. Autumn 2002*". Four high schools from Barcelona took part in it and one more placed in Sant Boi de Llobregat (about 15 km far away from Barcelona). It was organized to see if the methods to promote daily trips by bicycle that our organization was carrying out every year since 1999 were applicable. The success in the number of participants and the good reception between all actors

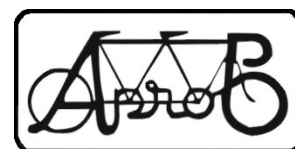


and also the specific needs detected encouraged us to keep on working like this to achieve education to sustainability and health.

**The addressees are very important: it is the young generation that nowadays goes to high school but that will decide through its behaviour how traffic and quality life will be in our cities tomorrow, and they will also suffer (or maybe not) the consequences.**

For this reason we will encourage them, we will ask them to go to their high schools by bicycle to study or to work (in case they are teachers). This way they will be able to discover the advantages and the pleasant sensations the bicycle can provide them both individually and collective and they will maybe keep on using it in the future. We want to contribute with our project to progress to a sustainable system of urban transport to live in a more habitable city and achieve a healthier lifestyle.





## About the project

### Organization

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### Justification and guideline

Physical activity contributes to the prevention and control of many illnesses such as arterial hypertension, osteoporosis and diabetes mellitus. It is also known the positive effect that regular exercise produces on some articulations, overweight or even psychological aspects. Epidemiology evidences that **physical inactivity and lack of exercise are related to many disorders and cause death and incapacity in our environment**. This fact is increasing every day.

It has been shown that the patterns of physical activity are established in our childhood. Children who establish activity patterns like going to school on foot or by bicycle have more predispositions to keep on practising sports and other types of exercise when they are adults. Moreover, physical activity makes mineral osseous density increase. This density is at its highest level when we are 15-25 years old and then decreases progressively. Taking this fact into account we should understand that long physical inactivity in our early ages is probably the main cause of the more frequent osseous traumatism in advanced ages: the pelvic fracture.



In order to change habits among children many projects like the British "*Safe Routes to School*" are being carried out in several European cities. These experiences provide us valuable data:

- It seems that children who better react to the activity are those between 10 and 11 years, since they have enough control of the bicycle and they are already able to reason with abstract and complex ideas.
- **It is not enough to make children learn traffic rules:** although they prove their knowledge passing a test, they will hardly apply them if they do not recognize the concepts they learnt when they are in the streets. And they will be useless if they are not able to understand and intuit the movements of other drivers.
- The schools or people assigned should identify the potential dangers that every child may find in his her way to school or back home and teaching them what to do in every single situation they may find. Moreover, **everything should be reported to the local administration so as better and safer roads be constructed.**
- **It is very important that parents accept the proposals and that they involve themselves** to put into practise the projects.

People who use bicycle in their habitual trips are most of the times young people. And they are the age segment where the number of bicycle users can increase more. This is why **it is necessary to offer the necessary conditions so as these potential users try and experience the advantages of cycling to their high schools. This way they will improve their health and comfort. The project we propose tries to promote the use of bicycles among the high school students.** Likewise the project also continues and widens a testing that was put into practise the academic year 2002-2003 and which was a success.





In our cities high schools often have a field of influence that allows moving around comfortably both on foot and by bicycle. Thus, our project has to be also understood as an incentive to get used to having into account the bicycle in daily trips, which will probably become further when some years later these students need to go to university or to work.

### Goals

- Making the educational community (head masters, teachers, parents and students) aware about the benefits that daily bicycle trips offer.
- Elaborating the basis that offers a safe and comfortable trip in the habitual routes students use to reach their high schools.
- **Defining and spreading the best routes** pupils can use in the surroundings of the high school.
- Achieving that more than 15% of the pupils of the high schools who take part in the project come to high school by bicycle the day of the last activity of the promoting campaign.
- Obtaining statistical data about the use of bicycle among the educational community, especially the students.
- **Creating a suitable atmosphere to keep on working in the promotion of the use of bicycle** in the centres taking part in the project: safe parking places for bicycles in the high school, meetings with the Town hall to eliminate dangerous points detected in the routes of the pupils, incorporation of the bicycle and health in the subjects taught at school , etc.
- **Spreading little by little this experience to all the high schools** of Catalonia.



### Addressee

Our project intends to make popular the proposal of using the bicycle in daily trips among the high school students, their families and high schools. The addressees are, consequently, all the educational community of the high schools of the project (around 2500 families the first year)

In theory the field action of the project could be extended to all the high schools of Catalonia. However only five high schools are actually taking part in the project due to logistical reasons. Nevertheless, we are conscious that it is convenient to spread it more widely so as other high schools and villages can improve the health and comfort of their pupils thanks to this initiative.

The location will be then focused on the areas where the five high schools are placed and the daily routes pupils use. It is desirable that the high schools be placed in different cities or villages.

### Activity agenda

This project is divided in different phases that are conditioned by the school calendar and by the adaptation of the activities of the centres taking part. The previous information and the work with the teachers of these high schools are fundamental to be successful. It is also essential the implication of the whole educational community as well as the local authorities in this activity.

The foreseen phases of the activity are as follows:

**Autumn**(1<sup>st</sup> term of the academic year 2003/04):

- Elaborating the informative and supporting materials: leaflets, dossiers, cards and cartographical and technical data.
- Starting working groups in the high schools: informative sessions for teachers, meetings,



preparing discussion forums and working groups.

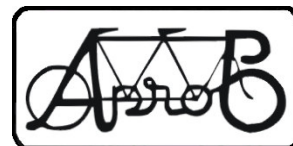
- Informing pupils and their families
- Keeping in touch with the Town Hall

#### **Winter(2<sup>nd</sup> term):**

- Carrying out the field work, talks and workshops
- Defining the safe routes: from high school to home and vice versa and other important ones according to the needs of every high school.
- Meetings with the Town hall in order to solve the points of the routes which may be more conflictive.

#### **Spring(3<sup>rd</sup> term):**

- Promoting campaign of the use of the bicycle among pupils and teachers with different activities organised in the high school: concurs de cartels, surveys, bicycle meetings, etc.
- Organizing a day with the motto "Ring-Ring. Come to high school by bicycle" with special incentives for the trip to high school by bicycle. This includes the provision of having suitable room to store several bicycles that day, as well as the operative to get in and have bicycles back.
- Informing the media about the results.
- Reporting and evaluating the project.
- Closing ceremony.
- Publishing the most important and relevant results.



**Notes**