Most trips begin and end in cities. Increasing demand for travel has led to severe congestion, poor air quality, undesirable levels of noise pollution and high levels of CO2 emissions, in many European cities. The European Commission has pledged its support to cities to promote sustainable modes of transport, such as cycling, walking and public transport, as well as clean and energy-efficient vehicles (European Commission, 2013). In recent years, bicycle use has increased in many European cities. For short distances, bicycles tend to be the fastest mode of transport. Cycling can help relieve traffic congestion, car parking problems and air pollution, while providing social benefits such as health and liveability. Moreover, it is an inexpensive solution; bicycles are relatively inexpensive to buy and large parts of the infrastructure are already in place. Considering the fact that about half of all private car journeys and over half of all lorry trips in European cities are under five kilometres, there is significant room to improve the share of cycling (European Union, 2015c).

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Cycling the city

Changes over time differ between cities

The share of bicycle use has increased from 24% to 32% in Amsterdam.

The use of public transport has increased in Vienna.

In 2003, London introduced a congestion charge to reduce car traffic in the city.

The share of car use has increased from 36% to 38% in Sofia.

The share of cycling has increased from 24% to 32% in Vilnius.

Source: EPOMM and DIVV, adaptation by PBL