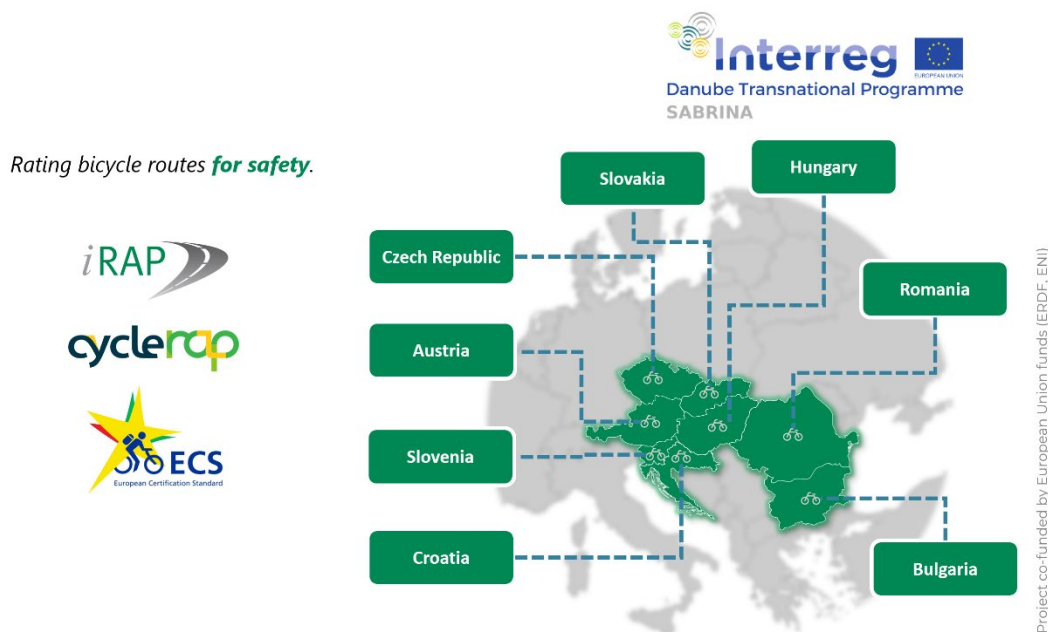


What is the level of cyclist safety in the Danube Region?

Marko Ševrović & Anđelo Marunica, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Transport and Traffic Sciences, 24 May 2023

As cycling is becoming an increasingly popular mode of transport, it is crucial to ensure safe environments for cyclists. In the Danube region, in particular, this topic has recently received attention from road authorities and road safety experts thanks to the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme's SABRINA¹ project. Within SABRINA a comprehensive survey of over 2700 km of EuroVelo² cycling routes located within multiple countries of the region was conducted. The project has uncovered potentially alarming data about the infrastructure safety standards for the region's cyclists.



Data described in SABRINA's Danube Bicycle Routes Star Rating Results Report³, conducted using the CycleRAP⁴ methodology on approximately 650 km of selected routes, revealed that only 17.8% of the surveyed routes were categorised as low risk. A somewhat larger portion, 37.8%, were associated with a medium level of risk. However, most concerning is that almost **45%** of the routes were rated as having a high or extreme risk. This means that **nearly half of assessed routes present unsafe conditions for cyclists.**

Diving deeper into this data, it becomes evident that **location plays a crucial role in these risk assessments.** The majority of routes deemed most dangerous were located in **inner urban areas**, as opposed to outer urban, industrial, and rural areas. This finding underlines the **pressing need for focused interventions** in these high-risk areas to ensure safety for the growing number of both tourist and commuter cyclists.

¹ <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/SABRINA/news>

² <https://en.eurovelo.com/>

³ Deliverable D.T1.3.2 - Danube Bicycle Routes Star Rating Results Report

⁴ <https://irap.org/cyclerap/>

Based on a Danube wide national survey in the eight SABRINA partner countries⁵, it can be concluded that all countries are currently in one of several transition phases in relation to cycling. While in some jurisdictions in the Danube Area, cycling has not yet become a relevant player in (road) transport, many others face a transition of cycling towards a popular leisure activity. Some even witness the first steps of cycling becoming a full – and fully accepted – mode of transport. Consequently, the problems and solutions for cycling infrastructure are varied.

The findings from the SABRINA project **should serve as a wake-up call** for the relevant authorities and stakeholders in the Danube region. A comprehensive and collaborative approach is needed, involving different levels of government, local communities, advocacy groups, and urban planners, to design safer cycling routes and incorporate cyclist safety into urban planning.

Identifying the **specific risk factors contributing to the high-risk ratings** in inner urban areas is an essential first step. These factors could include high peak hour traffic volumes, lack of designated cycling lanes, poor lighting, dangerous intersections, as well as behavioural issues such as a general lack of awareness and respect for cyclists among other road users.

Once these risks are identified, **targeted interventions can be designed and implemented**. These could involve creating more designated cycling lanes, improving lighting on existing routes, introducing traffic calming measures, and other infrastructural measures.

In addition to infrastructure interventions, the promotion of a culture of cycling safety is equally important. Encouraging helmet use, visibility gear, adherence to traffic rules, and respectful behaviour towards other road users are all essential components of a comprehensive cyclist safety strategy.

The SABRINA project's data provides a crucial starting point for these efforts. However, it is important to remember that improving cyclist safety needs to be an ongoing process, requiring continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of strategies based on new data and evolving circumstances.

The state of the 45% high-risk routes in the Danube region is not just a random data within a report, it represents cyclists at risk on those routes every day. The **need for action is clear and urgent**. With a concerted effort, it is possible to transform major cycling routes from the riskiest to the safest, ensuring that the pleasure and benefits of cycling in safe conditions are accessible to all.

This column is written in a personal capacity and reflects only the views of the authors.

The SABRINA outputs and deliverables discussed here are not yet publicly available, but will soon be published on <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/SABRINA>. Until this time, any interested party can contact the authors directly regarding the information contained in the documents.

⁵ Interreg SABRINA Output T2.3 - National consultations