



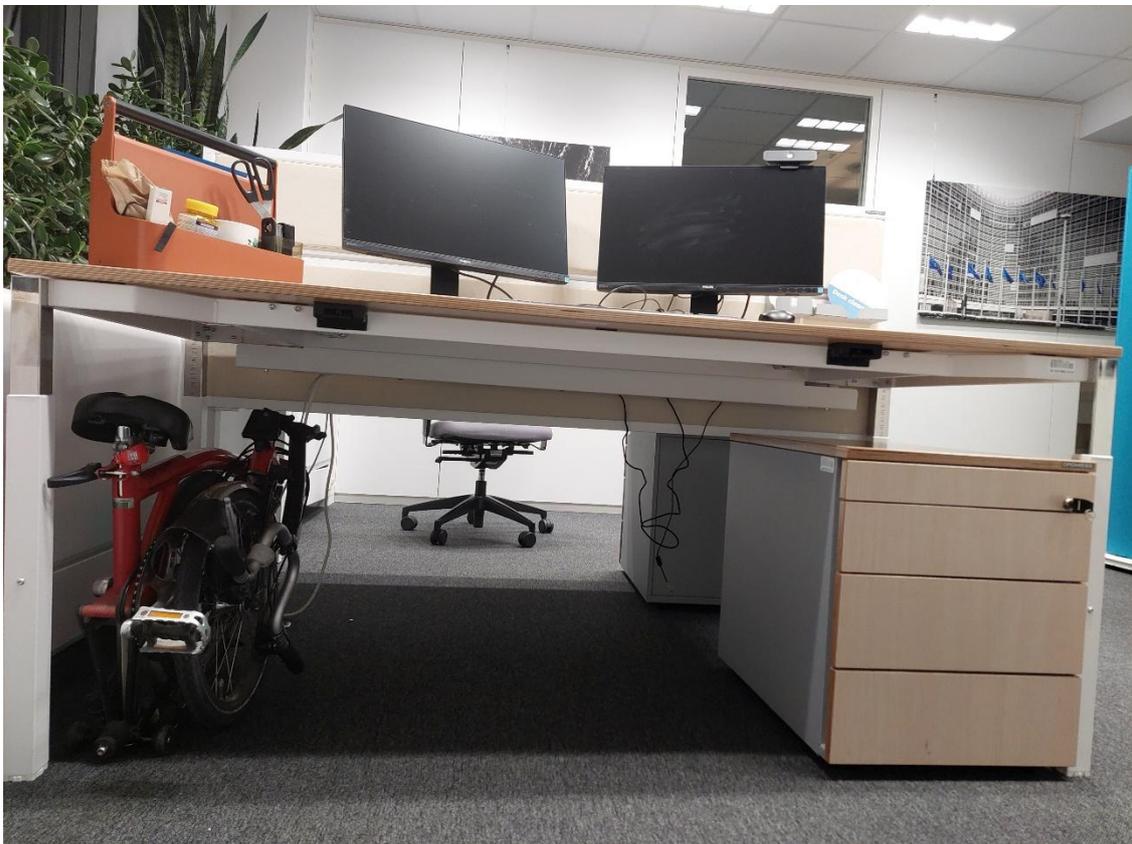
EU Cycling Group

[www.eucg.eu](http://www.eucg.eu)

## Folding bikes in the office spaces of EU buildings

*Position paper by EUCG*

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Picture: EUCG

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## I. Context and purpose

The 1990s introduced folding bicycles that convert in under 15 seconds into compact packages fitting under desks or train seats. This innovation enabled multimodal commuting, extending the range and comfort of green transport while offering safer bike storage alternatives to garages or streets.

Folding bikes were standard in European Commission offices for decades until 2017, when security was instructed to ban them. After EUCG objections, the ban was revoked. In April 2025, guards resumed enforcement without prior staff notice, forcing unprepared staff to leave their bikes unsecured in garages or telework. Such restrictions don't exist in the European Parliament or Council.

The benefits of folding bikes for green commuting are significant, while the risks in the office space related to hygiene and office movement can be easily mitigated.

This paper argues for allowing folding bikes to be brought into the office space through addressing each related issue rather than outright banning it from bringing inside the building.

## II. Benefits of allowing folding bikes into office spaces

Folding bikes replace car commuting in practice, typically longer-distance car trips than fixed-framed bikes.

## 1. CO2 emissions car vs. cycling

Going by car generates 780% more CO2 emissions, vs. riding an e-bike. Going by car generates approx. 220g per km, while riding an e-bike ~ 25g of CO2 per km (we look at combustion car and e-bike, as the typical use cases).<sup>1 2</sup>

The difference between these effects over a typical 10 km commuting journey, over the whole year is enormous, ~572 kg vs only 65kg CO2 (260 working days). A switch from car to e-biking saves 507 kg CO<sub>2</sub> annually per trip, accumulating to substantial emissions reductions at scale. The saving is even bigger when compared to non-electric bicycles (still the majority of carryable folding bikes), which have no direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

In practice, on average, one staff member coming by car consumes the equivalent of environmental resources as 10 other staff members commuting by bicycle.

This way, even if only a few people commute by bicycle from a DGs staff, the reduction of CO2 is huge, vs. if they would commute by car.

## 2. Primary Environmental Policy Advantage

The most significant sustainability benefit of folding bikes over traditional fixed-frame bikes is their unique ability to **enable multimodal commuting**.

This is the critical distinction between the fixed-frame and folding bicycles for environmental purposes.

Folding bikes can be seamlessly integrated with public transportation, staff can cycle from home to a station, fold the bike, board a train or bus, and then unfold and continue cycling upon towards the EU building.

The policy advantage can be seen in three areas, in long-distance trips, in last-mile connectivity, and in behavioural changes.

### 2.1 Long distance trips

Long-distance commuting (30-50km) generates disproportionate emissions.

A study conducted in the UK shows revealed that long-distance commute accounts for only 2.7% of annual trips per capita yet is responsible for a staggering 61.3% of all passenger distance travelled and 69.3% of green-house gas emissions from personal travel.<sup>3</sup> (We didn't find figures for Belgium, but we estimate similar or worse trends).

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<sup>1</sup> Küster F, Haubold H, Larastiti S, Cycling's Potential to Reduce GHG Emissions - A Literature Review. European Cycling Federation, Dec 2024 p1-15

<sup>2</sup> [Can e-bikes decarbonise our transport systems? | Bicycle Network](#) – May 2022

<sup>3</sup> Wadud, Z., Adeel, M. & Anable, J. Understanding the large role of long-distance travel in carbon emissions from passenger travel. Nature Energy 9, 1129–1138 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-024-01561-3> (www.nature.com)

Belgian workers average 57 minutes commuting daily, the longest in the EU, making commute distance a significant environmental factor. <sup>4</sup>

Folding bikes facilitate modal shift from solo car use to bike-plus-public-transit combinations for longer commutes.

By helping staff commuters replace car-dependent journeys with multimodal transport, **folding bikes reduce emissions where they matter most, in long-distance commuting patterns.**

## 2.2 Last-mile connectivity

**Folding bikes address** what transportation researchers call the "last-mile problem", **the distance between a public transit stop and a final destination.**

Without easy solutions, commuting staff often resort to cars for the complete journey, undermining public transit's potential environmental benefits.

Fixed-frame bikes struggle with this integration because of parking and handling constraints.

## 2.3 Behavioural changes due to practicality

Folding bikes enable multimodal commuting, i.e. bike plus public transit, in a way fixed-frame bikes cannot, even for short trips. Their environmental advantage comes from **making car substitution more practical**, not from the folding mechanism itself. A folding bike **enables multimodal commuting for many staff in a way that a fixed-frame bike cannot.**

## 3. Further practical advantages for staff

According to our interviews with folding bike users, the following practical benefits of folding bikes further prompted them to ride to work, instead of going by car.

**Time-saving** of 6-14 minutes for parking: Storing the fixed-frame bike in the garage: staff must detour to the remote parking entrance, badge twice with security, navigate the garage, find bike parking, lock the bike, traverse the parking area to stairs/elevators, badge again at the ground-level gates, then proceed to their destination. The return journey repeats this process. This takes between 3-7 minutes each way.

Folding bicycle can be folded in 15 seconds at the main pedestrian entrance, allowing direct access to elevators after badging in once.

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<sup>4</sup> Belgen ook in 2025 Europees kampioen woon-werkverkeer, SD Worx, Aug 2025.  
<https://www.sdworx.be/nl-be/over-sd-worx/pers/2025-08-29-belgen-ook-2025-europees-kampioen-woon-werkverkeer>

**Security** (theft): bikes and parts face repeated theft in EU office garages. Storing a folding bike in the office eliminates this risk, as the office floors have a much higher security, and lack the anonymity of a garage.

**Safety:** Further advantages that increase willingness to cycle to work include safety, as many staff reported accidents in the EU office's underground parking spaces, due to the steep, slippery ramps shared with cars.

Finally, **comfort** regarding locks is better, as to prevent theft, secure locks are heavy and bulky, adding weight and space to cycling commutes. A folding bike stored in the office allows use of a lighter, thinner lock, which is much easier to carry.

### III. Addressing concerns

The main concerns for allowing folding bikes in the office buildings are hygiene, lack of space, and charging batteries. These concerns can be either mitigated in practice, or don't materialise in practice.

1. **Hygiene:** A folded bike has the same hygienic impact as street shoes or wheeled suitcases, except when wet, which can be managed with protective covers. Staff should keep folding bikes clean in general. Visibly dirty, uncovered bikes can be requested to be stored in the garage.
2. **Lack of space in the offices:** Standard folding bikes (65×60×30 cm) fit under office desks in their lowest position without obstruction. Individual offices can store folding bikes without impeding other colleagues. Dynamic Collaborative Spaces also offer plenty of opportunities to store a folding bike without impeding movement, whether stored under the desk or in the corner.
3. **Charging bike batteries:** Staff should be informed that charging bicycle batteries in offices is forbidden for fire safety reasons. This applies regardless of folding bike policies, since detachable batteries from any bike can still be brought to offices.
4. **If bikes are allowed, people will also want to take scooters inside:** If the scooters are foldable, they occupy even less space than folded bikes, so why not allow them? If they cannot be folded, they should not be allowed.

### IV. Proposed rules for folding bikes in EC buildings

The following rules allow foldable bicycles and scooters in EU institutions' offices in a safe and hygienic way, while preventing all disadvantages:

1. The folding bicycle or folding scooter can only be taken into the office space in its folded state, either lifted or towed by hand.
2. Folding bicycles and scooters must be stored where they don't obstruct movement. Acceptable locations include under the desk, in corners against

walls, in cupboards, or similar out-of-the-way spaces. Emergency exit routes must be respected the same way as for other office equipment.

3. Folding bicycles and scooters must be dry and clean when brought into the office or wrapped in a protective cover. If wet or dirty *and* uncovered, they must be wiped dry and clean before entering or stored in the garage until dry.
4. E-bike batteries of folding bikes and scooters must be charged at the charging points of the building's garage, not in the office spaces.

## V. Conclusion

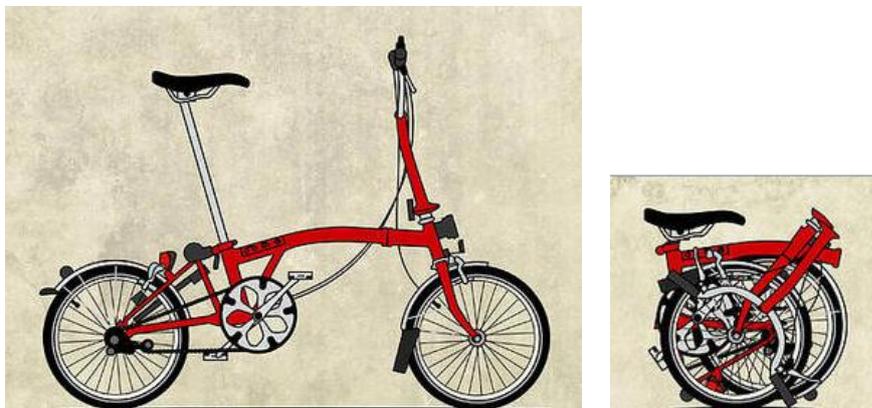
Allowing folding bikes in offices enhances cycling's attractiveness, safety, and security when simple rules are followed.

EUCG urges responsible services to instruct security to permit folding bikes to offices and inform staff of applicable rules.

This supports green commuting, aligning with the Greening the Commission Communication, greening objectives of many EU institutions.<sup>5</sup>

## Annex

Size comparison of folding bike in riding mode and in folded mode



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<sup>5</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/about/service-standards-and-principles/modernising-european-commission/greening-european-commission\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about/service-standards-and-principles/modernising-european-commission/greening-european-commission_en), page 12