

All India Cycle Manufacturers Association (AICMA) joins World Bicycle Industry Association (WBIA)

Indian Industry Delegation Visits CONEBI and Po

BRUSSELS, Belgium - Delegations of the All India Cycle Manufacturers Association (AICMA) and the United Cycle and Parts Manufacturers Association (UCPMA) recently visited Europe as part of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) project. During their visit in Brussels they attended meetings with CONEBI, WBIA and ECF as well as the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism.

JAN-WILLEM VAN SCHAIK

The first stop of the European tour of the Indian delegation representing the country's bicycle and components manufacturers was CONEBI (Confederation of the European Bicycle Industry) in Brussels. Manuel Marsilio who represented CONEBI as well as WBIA (World Bicycle Industry Association) welcomed All India Cycle Manufacturers Association (AICMA) delegation leader Dr Thakur. Later that week the six delegates travelled to Portugal to visit the bicycle companies in the Bike Valley, like Miranda, Triangles, Rodi. The tour was con-

cluded in Fulda, Germany meeting Erhard Büchel, CONEBI president and CEO of Büchel GmbH & Co. The European tour has been organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization who is currently implementing an extensive inclusive and sustainable program for India's bicycle industry. This first edition of the so called 'exposure tours' was to Japan, followed by China and now Europe. To get the most out of these tours, the delegates vary per trip, to give as many people as possible the opportunity to learn from bicycle industries in other countries.

India's bicycle industry organisation recently joined the World Bicycle Industry Association (WBIA) after attending the WBIA General Assembly which was held last July. WBIA was founded in December 2017 and represents the Bicycle, Pedal-Assist E-Bike and Parts & Accessories Industry on global levels. They participate in the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. WBIA also takes part in several Working Parties on General Safety Provisions, Passive Safety, Lighting and Light-Signaling, Autonomous and Connected Vehicles.

"Bridging the technology gap"

"Sustainable urban mobility in European countries is the benchmark for the Indian bicycle in-



CONEBI GM Manuel Marsilio (r.) welcomed AICMA delegation leader Dr Thakur.

Photo: Bike Europe

dustry," said Secretary General and Convener of AICMA Technical Committee Dr Kartar Babulal Thakur. He was clear about the objective of the European tour: "The Indian industry needs to be sufficiently connected with stakeholders nationally and internationally. We have to learn what the benchmark means for our market po-

sition. For example, our mobility system is very unsustainable. Cycling is still an important part of mobility but nobody is interested, as it represents the poorest part of the population who is not represented in politics. Still the cycling industry has an economic relevance. Some 1.6% of our GDP is generated by the bicycle industry.

CONEBI President Erhard Büchel and CONEBI Vice President Paulo Monteiro Rodrigues:

'We Expect More Industry Organisations to Join WBIA'

AICMA's stop-over in Brussels during their European tour, gave Bike Europe the opportunity to ask CONEBI president Erhard Büchel of Büchel & Co. Fahrzeugteilefabrik KG and CONEBI vice president Paulo Monteiro Rodrigues of Orbita and Miralago what the industry can expect from the World Bicycle Industry Alliance (WBIA) and CONEBI.

Indian AIMCA and Mexican ANAFABI recently joined the WBIA. Are you already

discussing with other organisation to join as well?

"We are very glad that AICMA and ANAFABI joined the WBIA," said Erhard Büchel. "The work in Geneva is very important for the industry and the geographical scope of the organisation is increasing since its foundation, which took place exactly one year ago. In this context, WBIA is also in contact with other industry associations: we are confident that 2019 will bring new members to WBIA.

How important is it for WBIA that organisations like AIMCA and ANAFABI join?

"We have to acknowledge the worldwide impact of the regulatory work of the United Nations, the global rationale of its legally binding instruments and the need to make the worldwide regulatory framework governing transport in line with the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore we must gather as many associations as possible and work together for a strong international industry representation, which is now possible, at the United Nations."

Looking back on the first year of WBIA. Did it bring what you expected and did WBIA realise its goals for the first year?

"The bicycle industry has never seen a

world association. I am proud that CONEBI has been one of its founding members and honoured that the industry associations of Japan, US, Taiwan, India and Mexico have seen the added value as well. Thanks to WBIA, the industry participates in the highest-level discussions with the UN representatives, Ministers from all over the world and key transport international organisations like the International Transport Forum (ITF), Federation Internationale de l'Auto (FIA) and the International Road Federation (IRF), only to mention a few. We are, in other words, in a new phase of regulatory and policy advocacy that goes alongside the current developments in terms of mobility patterns, innovation, digitalisation and safety requirements. Bicycles and e-bikes are a valuable response to the increased pollution, urbanisation and population of cities. As a consequence, during this first year WBIA has started to attend all the relevant meetings of both the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations and the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety."

What steps have been taken in the past 12 month regarding C-ITS and what does it mean directly to the bicycle industry?

"Such a topic has been put high on the agenda of the UN and a new working party

was created some months ago: the so-called Working Party on Autonomous/Automated Driving and Connectivity," said Paulo Monteiro Rodrigues. "The world association of the car industry is leading the process and the bicycle industry is in the position to support in Geneva, if needed, the Bicycle to Vehicle advisory board that was set up in the US this year.

What can you say about other topics being discussed in Geneva via the WBIA?

"WBIA is currently following several discussions: from a technical point of view, the revision of UNECE Regulation 22 about helmets, the simplification process of the lighting requirements, the proposal by several countries to work on a global technical regulation regarding the procedure for determining the powertrain performance of electrified vehicles, battery performance and durability. Hard work and commitment always pay off, that is why I am also proud to say that WBIA has been invited by the UN to attend the 2019 edition of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC): such a meeting will focus on automation in transport, the masterplan for cycling promotion, Intelligent Transport Systems, the Sustainable Mobility for All initiative and the new developments of the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety."



CONEBI president Erhard Büchel.

Legal Bike Value

About 4,000 SME's in our industry employ over 1 million people. Many of these companies are very small as the eight biggest companies in the industry have a market share of 90%. Looking at the e-bike market, the number of companies involved in this category is limited to 15, maybe 20. Everything is locally made, except for the batteries, which are imported from China.

'United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supported us to take our national test institute to a European level.'

While the automobile industry gets Governmental support from two ministries, the bicycle industry had nothing until recently. The bicycle isn't even mentioned in the Traffic Regulations Act. This together with the technology gap on the export market, made it very difficult for our industry to develop and expand.

To bridge that gap the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supported us to take our national test institute to a European level. In six months' time it was upgraded and we can now test according to European standards and companies can obtain the certification of their products required for the European market. On the technology fronts concurrent initiatives are on to upgrade Common Bicycle R&D Centre with the support of UNIDO, setting up of HI -Tech Cycle valley for premium component making, company level multiple endeavors to reduce imports through indigenization. In India we set up for example three units to make reflectors as per ISO -6742-2 in the last two years as well as diversification in PBS, e-bike, cargo bikes and folding bicycles."

Import tax

City governments also start seeing the benefits of cycling as a mobility. In line with the latest National Transport Policy Strategy, 100 cities have started to build cycling lanes and introduce bike sharing systems. It is good start, but the number of cities is limited. Another issue we are working on is the difference in import tax for bicycles and components made between India and our neighbouring countries. The European Union levies 14.5% tax on bicycles and components from India, while from most countries around us the import duty is 0%.

Making the bicycle industry in Europe more sustainable is an important topic. What are CONEBI's views on making the bicycle industry more sustainable?

"Cycling is part of the solution for the current sustainable challenges the world is facing," replied Erhard Büchel. "Like mentioned at the beginning of this interview, we as an industry contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations. Examples are the goals of

good health and well-being and the ones related to creating sustainable cities and communities. Safe cycling also means high level of safety standards for all kinds of bicycles (including pedal-assist): the bicycle industry indeed plays a proactive role in creating state-of-the-art safety standards.

Nevertheless, being part of the solution does not mean we don't have to focus internally in making our products and production more sustainable. End-of-Life of our products in today's circular economy, batteries and take-back systems which are currently organised to secure responsible recycling of materials, energy reduction together with sustainable energy sources in production processes are important focus points. I would also like to highlight sustainable packaging and reduction of waste.

The bicycle industry has a moral obligation to produce in line with the green image of bicycles: this means we have to secure that our complete supply chain produces in a sustainable manner and this is why, as you know, within the WFS-GI an audit system for suppliers on both social and environmental issues was set-up and is called RSI (Responsible Sports Initiative). We welcome these very valuable initiatives."



CONEBI vice president Paulo Monteiro Rodrigues.