

Conebi, the European confederation of bicycle manufacturers, represents 16 industrial associations in the two-wheeler sector. We meet the General Manager, Manuel Marsilio.

Dr. Marsilio let's talk about Conebi. How it was born, how it grew and what prospects the European two-wheeler market has.

CONEBI was born in the 1960s as Colibi-Coliped, to represent national trade associations in the European regulatory process.

Today the Confederation has a strongly industrial cut and is linked to the development of both the manufacturing and retail sectors. Particular attention is paid to the European regulations on the structural characteristics of e-bikes, with support for the dimension of standards to which national experts from the associations that are part of our system continue to work. The primary objective is undoubtedly to put maximum safety products on the market.

The e-bike sector is the important topic of recent years: the European standard for pedal assisted bikes at 25km/h of maximum assistance has been published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The regulation on motor vehicles lays down the homologation requirements for those that have an assistance greater than 25km/h.

The pedal-assisted bike likes it so much that in 2019, in Europe, about 3 and a half million were sold. These bikes allow you to travel longer distances than the traditional bike, becoming in all respects a totally Green way for commuting or for leisure. Let's not forget the Cargo Bikes, used more and more by shipping companies for deliveries within urban perimeters.

I'll tell you one more thing: the 2019 data tell us that around 285 thousand electric cars have been sold in Europe, more than 10 times less than e-bikes. In other words, the e-bike has become - and this makes me very happy - the best-selling electric vehicle.

We are experiencing a situation never seen before. Two months of total closure almost everywhere, a few billion people confined to their homes. Do you believe there is a link between the spread of Covid-19 and the pollution produced by motor vehicles?

Several studies have found that long-term exposure to air pollution can be "a major mortality factor caused by the COVID-19 virus" worldwide.

The "Science of the Total Environment" study examined COVID-19 victims in four of the countries most affected by the virus: Germany, France, Italy and Spain. The result is that 78% of the deaths had occurred in only five regions distributed between northern Italy and Spain. These regions have the highest concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), an extremely harmful pollutant for humans.

Another Harvard University study produced similar results: even a small increase in long-term exposure to air pollution can have a significant effect on the severity of COVID-19 symptoms. It assumes that reducing the average amount of particulate matter in the air by just one microgram over the past 20 years could have led to 248 fewer deaths.

In Europe, road transport is responsible for over 70% of all transport emissions.

Micro mobility could be the future of transportation in urban areas. Increasingly you can see bicycles with pedal assistance or electric scooters. The perception of non-users is not always positive. Sometimes one gets the impression that an anarchist system can be generated.

The pedal assisted bike has nothing to do with the electric scooter: the first has a consolidated European safety standard while the second has not yet produced a standard that is sufficiently safe for the user.

The pedal-assisted bike at 25km/h (if you don't pedal you don't get assistance) is used on cycle lanes - or on the road when there are no cycle lanes. While traveling a lot in Europe for work I noticed, however, that very often the electric scooter was used on the pavement and is left in the less appropriate places.

CONEBI does not represent the manufacturers of electric scooters.

In Europe there is fear of a widespread use of "tricked out" electric bicycles to the point of reaching speeds comparable to those of mopeds. What is your point of view towards these vehicles? Would you categorize them as mopeds?

CONEBI and its associates are absolutely opposed to these illegal practices. We wrote a clear press release in 2019: in the event that a seller, a manufacturer or a consumer does not comply with the rules, the supervisory authorities must intervene and punish any action that is not in line with compliance with these rules. In France, just to give you an example, the fine corresponds to 30,000 Euros. CONEBI, in coordination with national associations, is spreading this message and will do everything possible to identify violators.

Furthermore, in the event that an importer wants to import a moped by passing it as a pedal-assisted bike, it is going against the law. A moped manufacturer who does not officially approve the vehicle, passing it off as an assisted pedal bike, is still going against the law.