

CAA Position on Pedelects and E-bikes



The demand for and supply of pedelecs and e-bikes have been growing constantly for years. This trend is playing out independently of the positions held by the Alpine associations, but it demands their engagement. Most of the Alpine associations in the CAA have adopted positions regarding mountain biking as a mountain sport, and have developed guidelines, brochures and training courses on sportive facets as well as nature-conservational and socio-cultural affairs. They are yet also sometimes involved in regional and inter-regional mountain biking schemes. However, e-bikes and pedelecs still play either a minor role in this or no role whatsoever. Therefore the following principles of the CAA associations are to understand as a general and super-ordinated position.

Definition and delimitation

Bicycles with electric motors are generally divided into pedelecs and e-bikes.

- On a **classic pedelec**, the motor only assists the riders while they are pedalling. Regarding legal matters, pedelecs are equivalent to bicycles, and may be used without an insurance label or a driving licence as long as the electric motor does not provide more than 250 W of continuous output and automatically switches off at speeds in excess of 25 km/h.¹
- **More powerful pedelecs** provide greater assistance, while e-bikes can be ridden without the rider having to pedal at all. Both of these require an insurance label, are put on a level with motorized traffic and have by law no permission on hiking and cycling trails!

However, it must be noted that the terms "pedelec" and "e-bike" are often used interchangeably in practice, with no clear distinction being drawn. The following statements apply merely to classic pedelecs which colloquially are often referred to as e-bikes or e-mountain bikes (E-MTB), too.

The basic position of the CAA associations

The CAA associations advocate movement powered by one's own body and don't support cycling in the mountains with e-bikes and tuned pedelecs (> 250 W continuous output, assistance in speeds > 25 km/h).

In the view of the CAA, the use of a classical pedelec in contrast doesn't contradict the principle of movement by physical power. Therefore, the CAA can also support cycling in the mountains using classical pedelecs. It opens up new perspectives for the pursuit of mountain sports. Whether pedelecs are used purely for mountain biking, as an alternative means of accessing other mountain activities, as bike in heterogeneous groups or as a mode of transport for everyday purposes – the use of pedelecs can make the experience of mountain biking more accessible. Nonetheless, the CAA associations have adopted a quite critical view of the increasing use of pedelecs in the alpine terrain.

In particular, the rise in the number of users and their expanded range means that environmental and socio-cultural conflicts can arise or be intensified. When it comes to the use of pedelecs in the mountains, there is thus an essential need for training on aspects relating to nature and the environment, handling, range and dangers, as well as an introduction to basic riding techniques for beginners.

The **CAA's "Mountain biking – safe and fair"** recommendations adopted in 2012 also apply in principle to pedelecs.

Mountain sports and pedelecs

On the one hand, the ability to receive assistance from an electric motor while cycling or mountain biking opens up opportunities to groups of people with less affinity or ability for mountain sports; however, this option is also increasingly being used by skilled and experienced mountain bikers to allow them to reach more distant and/or challenging destinations with less physical effort. This means that on a combined activity trip, for example, the participants' energy can be saved for a following alpine tour or ski tour, allowing this stage of the trip to be organised more safely. Additionally, pedelecs offer common MTB experiences to persons with very divergent physical conditions, because differences can be balanced. On the other hand, the increased range and ability to access higher, more mountainous destinations using mountain bikes assisted by electric motors also demands an additional understanding of riding techniques and possible risks. The Alpine associations therefore recommend suitable preventive work.

¹ This definition refers to the [EU-directive 2002/24/EC](#).

Alpine infrastructure and pedelecs

The legal provisions relating to the use of **trails** by bikes and mountain bikes in general and pedelecs in particular differ considerably in each of the Alpine countries. When it comes to the permitted use of trails in each country or region, in principle, the CAA associations advocate the respectful and considerate shared use of exclusively suitable trails by both hikers and mountain bikers, including pedelec riders. Pedestrians have always priority. Especially where the use of trails by bikers is prohibited by law or there's no consent of the landowner and the trail keeper, this is to be respected in any case. The increasing use of pedelecs may in certain cases lead to a rise in potential conflicts due to larger numbers of users and the higher speeds of cyclists, especially uphill. In response to this, the CAA associations' tactics generally comprise pleas for consideration for others, respect, self-responsibility and individual case resolution as well as differentiated intervention measures instead of bans or prohibitions. The intervention measures should be developed jointly. This requires a clear marking in maps, literature and signage.

The **huts** belonging to the Alpine associations are often popular destinations for mountain bikers. For some huts the increase in pedelecs provides new opportunities. Pedelec riders can expect charging stations only on huts where sufficient regenerative energy capacities are yet available.

Conservation, environmental protection and pedelecs

In terms of conservation and environmental protection, the CAA associations invariably apply the same recommendations to classical pedelecs as to mountain biking in general:

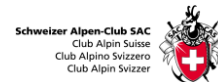
- Avoid in particular erosion damage by only using suitable and authorised paths and trails with appropriate riding techniques and speeds. The acceptance of the use of trails for mountain biking in general by land owners and trail keepers depends especially on this aspect.
- Respect plant and animal habitats
- Show respect to game, especially during dusk and dawn
- No cross-country riding
- Pay heed to existing restrictions relating to conservation and environmental protection
- Leave no traces or rubbish behind
- Behave in an environmentally responsible manner while travelling to your destination

The growth in pedelec users, some of whom have yet to receive much experience, and the simultaneous expansion of their range into more Alpine regions is resulting in an increase on the pressure put on the landscape and natural environment in some areas. The Alpine associations can counter this with comprehensive training measures and awareness-raising campaigns, but they expect also a sensitization of the users by other involved organisations.

Tourism and pedelecs

Tourist organisations in many places are working to expand their services for mountain bikers and are targeting also pedelec riders. Cable cars are receiving more use, for example, and bike parks are being built. Biketourism – with or without electric tailwind – can be a financial mainstay for alpine communities regarding an all-the-year-long season. The Alpine associations due to their experience can confirm that active and attractive intervention is an effective tool for countering conflicts and problems that may arise due to the multiple use of trails. At the same time, the CAA associations demand the involvement of all stakeholder bodies, such as tourist organisations, local authorities, cable car operators, landowners, trail keepers and conservation associations as well as sports associations, in cooperation with the local biking scene, in order to develop suitable and workable services and solutions for the specific situation in each location.

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