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# Implementation status report on the virtual 'House of Bike'

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# **CONTENT**

<b>1. Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. The House of Bike.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. OBJECTIVES AND INNOVATIVE ASPECTS.....	4
2.2. PARTNERS .....	4
2.2.1. Het Fietsendepot/ De Fietswacht/ Het Stallingsteam Stad Gent .....	5
2.2.2. Max Mobiel vzw.....	5
2.2.3. StudentENmobiliteit vzw.....	5
2.3. THE BUILDING PROJECT .....	6
2.3.1. Location .....	6
2.3.2. Functional division into front and back office .....	6
2.3.3. Start of the realisation of the back office and actual implementation status .....	7
2.4. VIRTUAL HOUSE AS FORERUNNER OF REAL HOUSE.....	7
<b>3. Virtual ‘House of Bike’: <a href="http://www.gentfietst.be">www.gentfietst.be</a>.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1. STATUS OF VIRTUAL ‘HOUSE OF BIKE’ .....	7
3.2. AIM OF WEBSITE .....	8
3.3. TARGET GROUP.....	9
3.4. CHALLENGES .....	9
3.5. DESIGN OF THE WEBSITE .....	9
3.6. STRUCTURE .....	10
3.7. INTEGRATION OF ROUTE PLANNER FOR CYCLISTS.....	12
3.8. ONLINE FORMS.....	13
3.9. EDITORIAL PROTOCOL.....	15
3.10. PROMOTION .....	16
3.11. TESTING SOCIAL MEDIA.....	18
<b>4. Future plans .....</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1. OPTIMISE AND MAINTAIN EDITORIAL WORK IN THE FUTURE .....	18
4.2. PERIODIC PROMOTION (RELAUNCH IN SPRING 2012).....	19
4.3. KEEPING UP THE INTERACTIVE MEDIA .....	19
4.4. INTEGRATION OF FORMS IN A LARGER CITY-WIDE HARMONISATION AND DIGITALISATION PROJECT OF ALL MUNICIPAL FORMS .....	20
4.5. INTEGRATION INTO A GENERAL URBAN MOBILITY WEBSITE.....	21
4.6. DATA COLLECTION FOR EVALUATION .....	21

# 1. Summary

Gent is a cycling city. Over the past few years the bicycle has become one of the most popular means of transportation in the city. The size of the city being ideal for cycling, the fact that cycling is very popular amongst the numerous amount of university and high school students residing in Gent and various efforts of the city council and other organisations have proven to be great stimuli for cycling.

At the start of the CIVITAS-ELAN project cycling information and services were spread over many different organisations. In the first place this created an obstacle for the target group. But it also led to an ineffective use of resources, manpower and logistics. In the frame of the CIVITAS-ELAN project, a 'House of Bike' was introduced within measure 4.5-GEN to integrate the main city cycling projects into a rationally organised and accessible structure. The partners engaged in this project are the city bicycle depot with the bicycle guards and the bicycle parking services, StudentENmobiliteit vzw, a non-profit organisation for student bicycle renting, and Max Mobiel vzw, a non-profit organisation promoting sustainable means of transportation for commuters, such as the use of the bicycle in combination with the train.

The final goal of the project is to create a real House with a central desk for all cycling related matters. This 'House of Bike' will be located close to the main railway station. The reasons for this location being a good accessibility to the target group and the opportunity integrate in the totally new development of this neighbourhood. But the building project of the 'House of Bike', being a part of this new city development, also depends on this greater project. Due to inhibitions in the fields of timing, financing and technical possibilities the realisation of the house cannot be expected any sooner than 2020. At this moment, however, a first step in this building project was already taken. A tender was started for the construction of a new city bicycle depot near the railway station. This new depot can be considered as a first step in the realisation of the back-office of the 'House of Bike'.

In order to start up the integration in the present, the partners decided to develop a coordinated website with all cycling information. This virtual 'House of Bike' can be seen as a forerunner of the real House and as an important exercise for the partners in cooperation and integration.

## 2. The House of Bike

### 2.1. Objectives and innovative aspects

Being a cycling city many initiatives are existing concerning cycling. The situation before CIVITAS-ELAN was a dispersion of the cycling services, initiatives and information over many different locations and organisations. In the first place this creates an obstacle for the target group. But it also leads to an ineffective use of resources, manpower and logistics.

In the frame of the CIVITAS-ELAN project, a 'House of Bike' was introduced within measure 4.5-GEN to integrate the main city cycling projects into a rationally organised and accessible structure. In this way cycling and cycling services will not only be more accessible to the user, also manpower, resources and know-how will be allocated more rationally.

### 2.2. Partners

The partners in the integration project 'House of Bike' are:

- 1) Het Fietsendepot/ De Fietswacht/ Het Stallingsteam Gent
- 2) Max Mobiel vzw
- 3) StudentENmobiliteit vzw

### 2.2.1. Het Fietsendepot/ De Fietswacht/ Het Stallingsteam Stad Gent

The 'Bicycle Depot'/ the 'Bicycle Guard'/ the 'Bicycle Parking Team' are three city services under the roof of the Urban Department of Mobility.

The 'Bicycle Guard' consists of 7 employees. Their task is to maintain the order in the public domain by removing bicycle wrecks and abandoned bicycles. Such bikes are periodically labelled and removed after a certain reaction time for the possible owner. They are then held under the keeping of the 'Bicycle Depot' for the statutory term of six months. The 'Bicycle Guard' is also responsible for the clearing of public domain of bicycles and bicycle racks in preparation of certain events, festivities or manifestations.

The 'Bicycle Depot' keeps the bicycles collected from the public domain as a result of the mentioned clearings or found back after theft. With the necessary proof of ownership, citizens can possibly collect their lost bike here. The 'Bicycle Depot' also offers bicycle registration. Bicycle registrations on location are done by the 'Bicycle Guard'.

The 'Bicycle Parking Team' is led by a 'Parking consultant'. It is responsible for the placement and maintenance of bicycle racks on the public domain. Citizens can request for a bicycle rack and suggest a location. The 'Parking consultant' will first examine if this request, before deciding whether or not to allocate.

### 2.2.2. Max Mobiel vzw

Max Mobiel originated as a pilot project in the so called 'pendelplan' ('commuting plan') of the Federal Ministry of Mobility. This non-profit organisation was funded by of the City of Gent (Department of Economy) and cooperates with companies, social partners and the Province of East-Flanders. In the meantime this small scale project has developed into a larger long-term organisation working in the social economy. The services of Max Mobiel mainly focus on professional commuters.

Collective transport for employees in shuttle buses to the harbour of Gent or other remote places of employment which are not well serviced by the public bus transport company.

Exploitation of the Bicycle Points at the train stations Gent Sint-Pieters and Gent Dampoort. The Bicycle Points are an initiative of the Belgian Railway Company (NMBS) to promote inter-modality between train and bicycle. The tasks of the Bicycle Points are supervision and maintenance of the bicycle parkings on the premises of the NMBS and the surrounding area, bicycle rental for commuters, tourists and visitors coming by train, small bicycle repair. The exploitation of the Bicycle Points is done by companies in the sector of social economy.

Organising innovative actions and activities for a better and more sustainable urban mobility, for example a bicycle courier service, which also uses electrical vehicles for more distant deliveries, a mobile bike repair shop on Compressed Natural Gas, the promotion of electrical bicycles, cargobikes, and cycling in general. This was the reason for Max Mobiel to engage as a partner in the CIVITAS-ELAN project, with the task to test and develop new and innovative types of bicycle parking or to examine the feasibility of a public bike sharing scheme for the city of Gent.

### 2.2.3. StudentENmobiliteit vzw

This non-profit organisation emerged from a cooperation between the City of Gent, the University and several other educational institutes in the city. It organises the rental of bicycles particularly to students and personal of the universities and other joined schools. At this moment it yearly rents up to 5,000 student bicycles and provides supporting services, such as maintenance and repair of the bicycles, a bike wash, theft prevention and the sale cycling accessories.

## 2.3. The building project

### 2.3.1. Location

As a location for the 'House of Bike' the neighbourhood around the central railway station Gent Sint-Pieters was chosen. This has several reasons:

- **Good accessibility for the target group**
  - Train commuters cycling the preliminary or last few miles
  - Residential students weekly entering and leaving the city by train
  - Visitors or tourists arriving in the city by train
  - Inhabitants of the city can reach the station easily by public transport. After completion of the innovation works on the train station and the surrounding block, this area will also be well accessible for cyclists and car drivers.
- **The project can be well integrated in a developing neighbourhood**

At the back of the train station a whole area is being redesigned. A new square (Mathildeplein) will arise, corresponding to the existing square at the front (Maria-Hendrikaplein). It is to be an attractive and cycling-friendly area. It is the idea to integrate the 'House of Bike' in this project.
- **Connection to an existing cycling project**

Max Mobiel vzw is already located right at the back of the train station. This non-profit organisation is an important partner in several municipal and railway related cycling projects and services, such as bike rental, maintenance and exploitation of the bicycle parking around the station, quick bicycle repair, etc.

### 2.3.2. Functional division into front and back office

Because of the character of the location the 'House of Bike' will have to be divided into a front office and a back office.

The front office will be situated immediately at the rear exit of the train station or in the future building on the new Mathilde square. This will consist of a first contact point designed as an information desk, annexing the services which need to be immediately and easily available to the public, such as short term rental and small repair.

The back office contains a larger number of bikes, the one's stored for long term rental or cleared from the public domain and held under keeping for a certain time. It also houses a larger repair shop for maintenance and larger repair. Preferably, it should be within walking distance of the front office.

This is a possible scheme:

FRONT OFFICE	BACK OFFICE
rental (student, commuter, tourisme, etc)	storage of abandoned bicycles
promotion/information	rental bikes for larger groups or long term
repair (small and immediate)	larger repair and maintenance
bicycle registration	bicycle registration
do-it-yourself repair	assemblage
administration	rental student bicycles
courier	do-it-yourself repair
	bike wash
	storage of student bicycles during the summer
	administratie
	public bikes (storage, repair and registration)
	administration and storage for the 'Stallingsteam' (bicycle racks, bicycle boxes and sheds)
	car fleet

### **2.3.3. Start of the realisation of the back office and actual implementation status**

There have been many discussions on the division of functions between the front and back office. Also the question whether or not certain partners could be integrated caused much concern and delay.

In spring 2011 a first step was taken in the actual realisation of the building project. The availability of a first part of the budget was approved on the political level. This will be invested in the building of a new housing for the municipal cycling services (Fietsendepot - Fietswacht - Stallingsteam), which is to be considered as an important part of the back office of 'The House of Bike'. The 'Bicycle Depot' has to be relocated by the end of 2013 because of a new project plan for the actual building.

A tender to select a promoter for the building of the first phase of the 'House of Bike' was published in May 2011. The project was limited to a storage hall for depot bicycles and a desk for the public coming to collect their bicycle. The budget for this phase was 3,100,000€. In August the only participant in the tender was officially selected: Upgrade nv/ Upkot nv.

During the summer the scale of the project was again questioned and after many discussions the decision was taken to go for an immediate integration with Max Mobiel. The reason is that it is more cost-efficient to realise the premises for this partner within the on-going building project than having to start a new project at a later point in time. Max Mobiel will have to relocate eventually because of the renovation of the train station area. Integration with the 'Fietsendepot' creates important scale advantages and means an intrinsic upgrade of the project. This however causes an increase in the budget. Another factor which increased the budget was the high level of the energy efficiency standards. This wasn't taken into account during the first discussions with the promoter. So, eventually it became clear that, in order to meet these standards, the price for the project would go up.

The political approval of the new budget of around 4,500.000€ for a larger and higher energy level project took until the end of 2011. Currently, the technical specifications for the project are being determined. Publication is foreseen for February 2012. The building promoter should be able to start the works after the summer and if all goes according to plan it should be delivered by the end of 2013.

### **2.4. Virtual House as forerunner of real House**

The renovations in and around the main train station are now proceeding as planned. The end of these works is foreseen for 2020. The 'House of Bike' will not be finished within the near future. With regard to a long-term perspective, the idea rose to create a virtual 'House of Bike' already. So the development of a virtual 'House of Bike' in the form of a coordinated cycling website was picked up as a measure within measure 4.5-GEN of the CIVITAS-ELAN project. As in a real house, the aim is to gather all cycling information at one virtual spot.

## **3. Virtual 'House of Bike': [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be)**

### **3.1. Status of virtual 'House of Bike'**

The renovations in and around the main train station are now proceeding as planned. The end of these works is foreseen in 2020 which means that it will be quite a while before the 'House of Bike', back office and front office, can be completed.

For this reason the CIVITAS-ELAN project was taken as an opportunity to start the integration of several bicycle services by means of a coordinated cycling website. Analogously to the idea of integration in a real 'House of the Bicycle', the information of several urban cycling projects, organisations and services is brought together at a virtual place on the internet. This website will be informative and promotional. It will also function as a virtual office window for the several bicycle organisations.

<b>February 2010:</b>	The decision was made to create a website as a virtual forerunner for the 'House of Bike'.
<b>March 2010:</b>	To start the project, a working group consisting of several members of the urban Department of Mobility and the Measure Leader for 'The House of Bike and bicycle activities', was established. It had several tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benchmarking</li> <li>- Determining the concept and the mission of the website</li> <li>- Determining the content, gathering and structuring of this content</li> <li>- Coordinating the design and the layout of the website</li> <li>- Establishing a cooperation with DIGIPOLIS, the IT partner of the city</li> </ul>
<b>April 2010:</b>	Decision to add DIGIPOLIS to the measure as a CIVITAS-ELAN partner. Together with DIGIPOLIS the following steps were taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determining the budget for the project</li> <li>- Analysis of the specific technical needs of the project</li> <li>- Determining a time plan</li> <li>- Preparation of the tender and the tendering procedure</li> </ul>
<b>May 2010:</b>	Launch of the tender
<b>14 June 2010:</b>	The domain name ' <a href="http://www.gentfietst.be">www.gentfietst.be</a> ' was registered.
<b>July 2010:</b>	Adjudication of the order to Inbrand (development and design of the website)
<b>September 2010:</b>	Kick-off meeting between Inbrand, DIGIPOLIS and the working group
<b>Sept '10 / Dec '10:</b>	Work and discussion on the structure and the design of the website with Inbrand. Regular feedback to and input from the partners. Completion and definite structuring of content.
<b>January 2011:</b>	Establishment of an editorial team. Training of the editors on the input of content and on writing texts for the web.
<b>February 2011:</b>	Kick-off meeting between partners for development of the web forms by DIGIPOLIS.
<b>Feb / March 2011:</b>	Input of content on the website
<b>April 2011:</b>	Testing of the website
<b>May 2011:</b>	Launch and promotion of the website
<b>June / July 2011:</b>	Cycle Chique Photo shoot and election
<b>Sept 2011:</b>	Start of a Facebook page Communication on the final results of the Cycle Chique Campaign
<b>Nov 2011:</b>	Promotion of the website with a winter gloves action

### **3.2. Aim of website**

The aim of the website is to provide a complete overview of cycling in Gent. It coordinates all cycling information from local bicycle organisations and services. It functions as a virtual information and service desk on all local bicycle matters. The information of the partners (the Bicycle Depot (Department of mobility), studentENmobiliteit and Max Mobiel) is completed with information from other organisations and initiatives, such as contact information, events, activities, tips and links to other cycling sites. Also promoting functional cycling and sensitization on sustainable transport is an important task of the

site. Where possible it engages citizens in cycling activities and/ or in the discussion on the importance of cycling in urban surroundings.

### **3.3. Target group**

The main target group are functional cyclists, rather than the recreational cyclist. A functional cyclist uses the bike as a daily means of transport in the city, for work, shopping and social activities. It also focuses on students using a bike to be mobile in the city. It will however also contain basic information for recreational cyclists, tourist or visitors who wish to discover Gent and its surroundings by bicycle.

### **3.4. Challenges**

Considering the degree of fragmentation in the local bicycle organisations and initiatives, moving towards integration in the form of a 'House of the bicycle' certainly is generally considered as advisable. A coordinated cycling website can then be seen as a meaningful first step in this process.

The actual realisation of this integrative process, however, isn't that obvious at all, whether it considers the real building project with the structural integration implied, or a virtual forerunner of this process,. The budgetary limitations, urban planning restrictions and technical conditions can very well be invoked as the reasons for delay in the planning of the building project. They can't however be the cause of hesitation to integrate on a functional, organisational and structural level.

An integration of organisations, even if the first step is merely on the virtual level, implies the will to reorganise and change structures, scopes and means. Many hurdles were already taken, but many more are to come to form a really integrated cycling landscape in Gent.

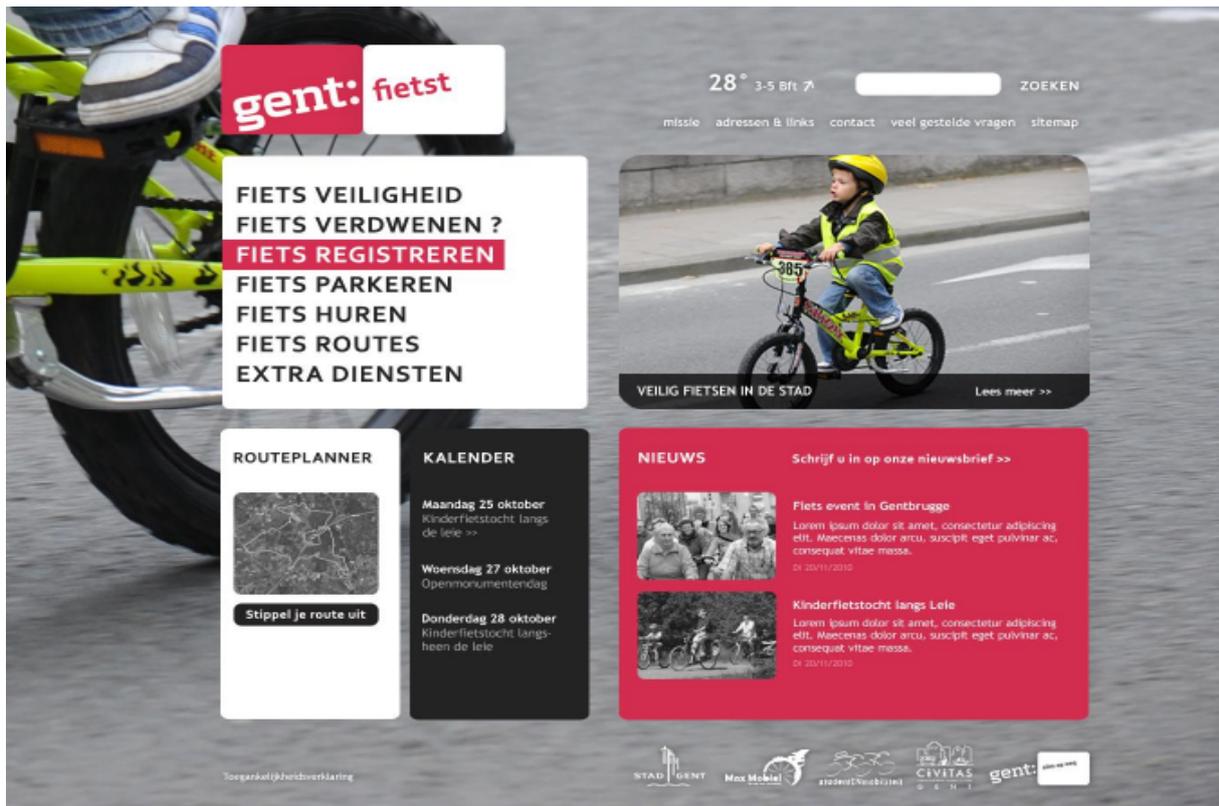
The development of the virtual 'House of Bike' was an eye-opening experience on how far the integration can be expected to go on this moment. In the course of the realisation of the website it became clear that the goal of integration of the three cycling partners had to be readjusted. Concerning the building project this was done by eliminating studentENmobility as a partner, at least for the time being, and phasing the project in firstly the building of a new Bicycle Depot and secondly the integration of the partner Max Mobiel.

### **3.5. Design of the website**

DIGIPOLIS, the regular IT partner of the city, was chosen to coordinate the production of the website. DIGIPOLIS was admitted to the CIVITAS-ELAN project as an official partner. DIGIPOLIS provides the city with professional support and counselling in the process of the development of new IT applications. DIGIPOLIS has experience in the tendering of such projects. DIGIPOLIS wrote and published the specifications. At the beginning of July 2010 the contract was awarded to Inbrand, a small website development and design company.

After the summer vacation the kick-off meeting took place. During the following months, intense dialogue, meetings and tests were needed to reach an agreement on the layout of the homepage. Reasons for this time-consuming process were the local rules on communication or promotional matters, the fact that approval was needed from the entire Department of Mobility, the political body and the three partners (Bicycle Depot, studentENmobilititeit and Max Mobiel).

This is the design that was approved on 17 December 2010:



### 3.6. Structure

The working group developed a logical structure for the content of the website. The site is constructed around a limited number of 'main items' which can be selected on the homepage. The structure now consists of eight such items but could be adapted if needed. The 'main items' are:

- Gent, a cool cycling city
- Safe cycling
- Bicycle lost
- Bicycle registration
- Bicycle parking
- Bicycle rental
- Extra services
- Cycling routes

Main item	Sub item	Explanation
HOMEPAGE	Logo	
	Calendar	Overview of bicycle-related events
	Pictures	Loop of pictures on urban cycling
	Search function	
	Mission statement	Short explanation of the aim of the website
	Overview of the main items	Navigation tool
	Bicycle route planner	An online tool to plan functional and recreational bicycle trips through Gent (developed within measure 8.10-GEN of the CIVITAS-ELAN project)
	News	What happened or is happening on cycling in Gent? News archive

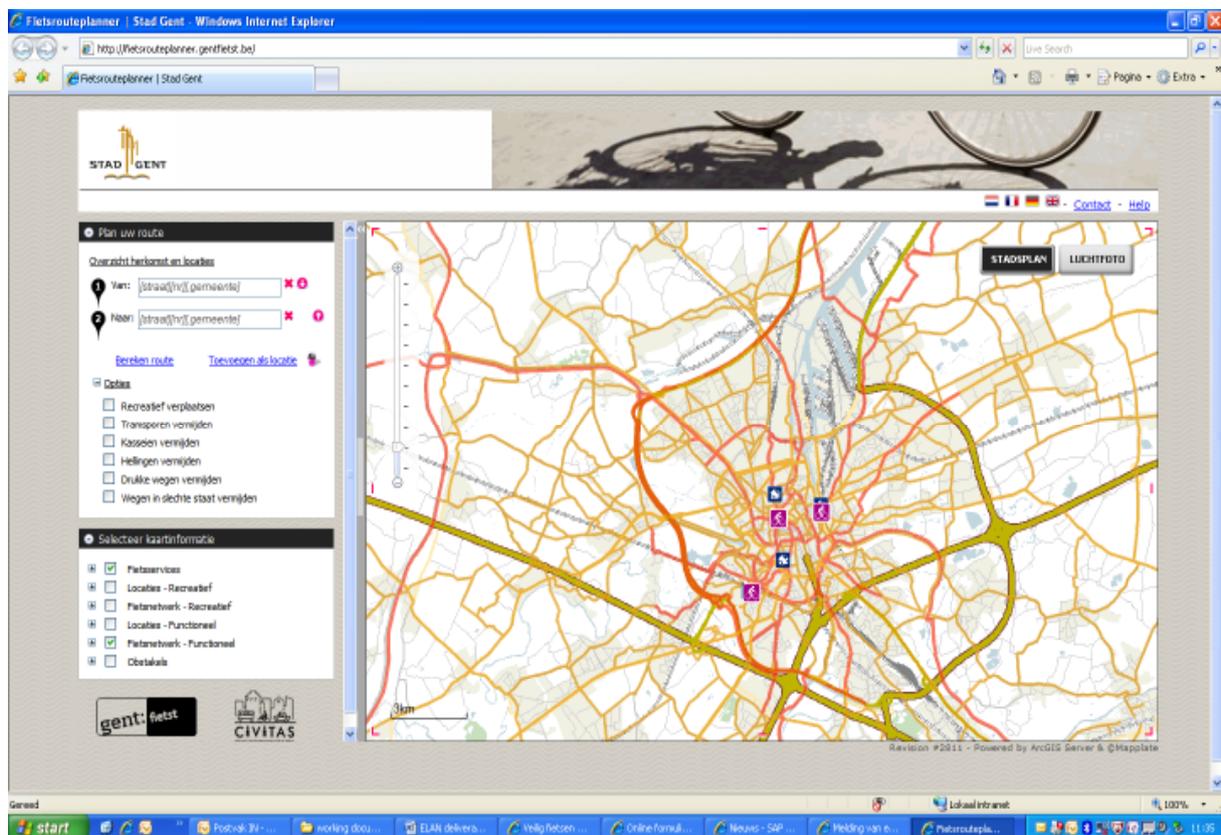
	Weather station	
	Contact	Contact information on partners Online forms
	Frequently asked questions	
	Subscribe for newsletter	
	Banner with logos of the partners and CIVITAS	Logo's link to external homepages
	Disclaimer	
	anysurferlogo	
<b>Addresses and links</b>	Bicycle retailers, second hand markets, portals of cycling organisations, cycling projects, etc.	Other interesting links and addresses for cyclists
<b>8 MAIN ITEMS</b>	<b>SUB-ITEMS</b>	<b>PAGES</b>
<b>Gent, a cool cycling city</b>	Cycling Policy Cycling Infrastructure Cycling in numbers Cycling campaigns	Structural measures New cycling paths Prevention and safety Evolution in cycling experience in Gent
<b>Safe cycling</b>	Your bicycle: what is obligatory Traffic regimentations for cyclists Tips for maintenance	
<b>Bicycle lost</b>	Bicycle stolen or cleared? Report a stolen bicycle Theft prevention tips	Explanation on the clearing regimentation and the procedure to collect a cleared bike Online reporting of bicycle theft Tips on locks
<b>Bicycle registration</b>	What, where and when? Request for a registration	General information on this service Online form to request a registration
<b>Bicycle Parking</b>	Public bicycle racks Guarded bicycle parkings Neighbourhood bicycle bins Bicycle boxes on P+R Temporary bicycle racks Bicycle parking in new buildings Bicycle parking for students Advice for safe bicycle parking	Information on types and procedures to request several types of bicycle parking facilities
<b>Bicycle Rental</b>	I am a student I am a tourist I live/ work in Gent Rental for companies Rental of special bikes	Contact information Prices Online reservation
<b>Other services</b>	Buy a bicycle Cycling information for companies Public bicycle pumps Bike wash Bicycle repair shops Bicycle points at railway stations Bicycle repair lessons Cycling courses Sports and leisure Cycling information for schools Educational material Bicycle courier	Short information Contact
<b>Cycling routes</b>	Functional routes Recreational routes	Information on cycling routes Cycling route planner Other available routes

### 3.7. Integration of route planner for cyclists

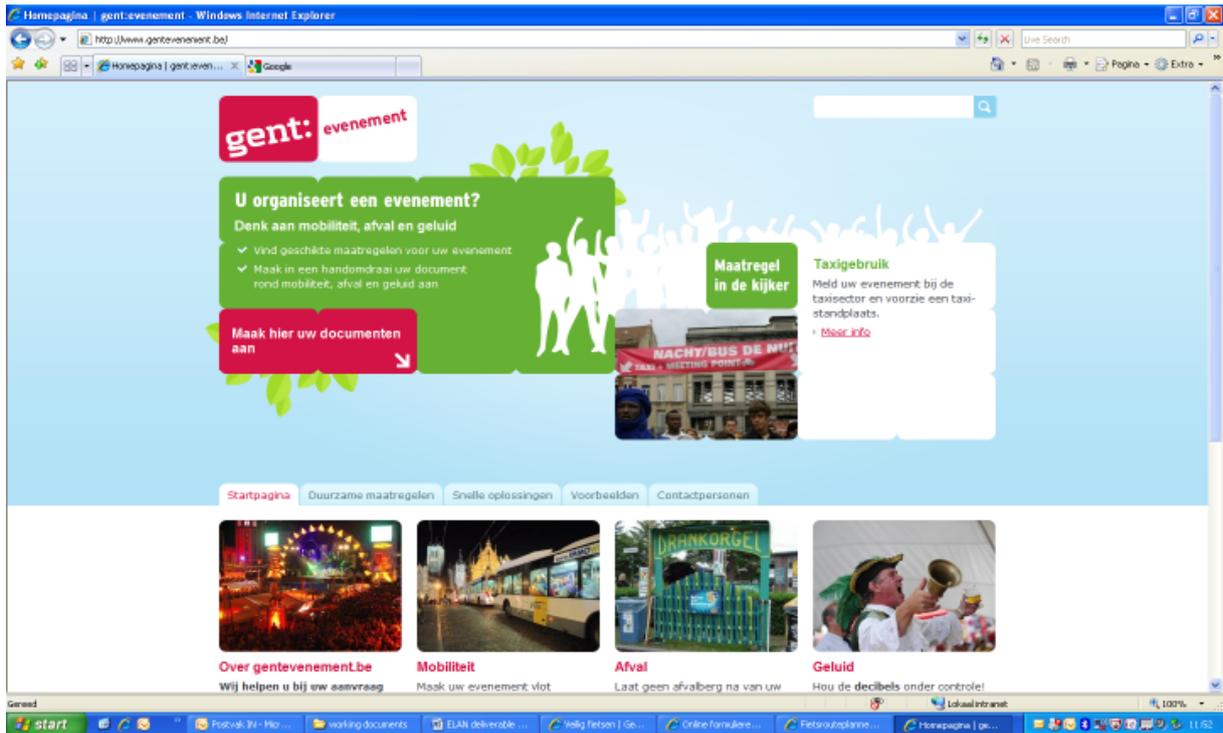
Within measure 8.10\_GEN of the CIVITAS-ELAN project an online route planner for bicycles was developed. This bicycle route planning tool was finalised before the start of the cycling website. Although it was meant to be an integrated part of [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be), it was put online under the same URL as the future website and promoted already on 3 September 2010. Because of this media attention and the popularity of this bicycle route planning tool, the website which was only launched in May the next year got a promotional head start.

The route planner and later also the cycling site [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be) were spontaneously picked up in a popular television programme on tourism in Flanders 'Vlaanderen Vakantieland'. The online bicycle route planner gets an average of 2,570 hits per months, resulting in approximately 2,500 selected cycling routes.

The routeplanner for bicycles is now integrated into the website [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be). A button on the homepage leads directly to this application.



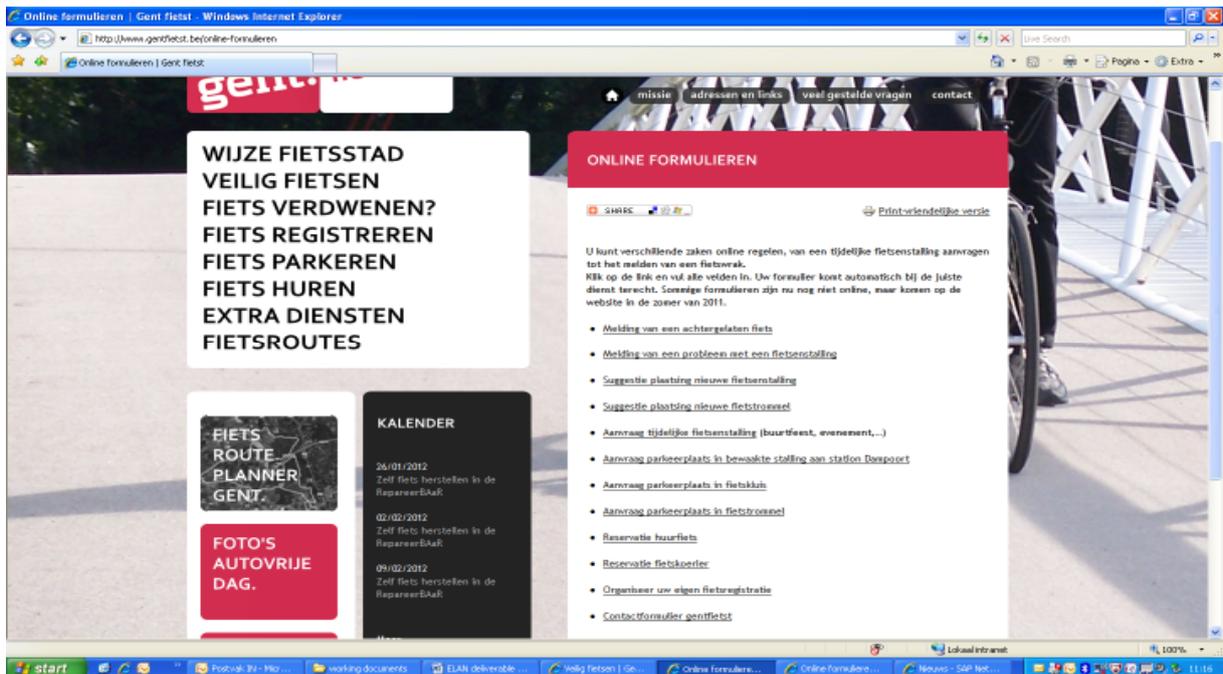
The route planner for cyclists has become an important tool for the mobility planning of events in the city centre. Within CIVITAS-ELAN measure 6.3-GEN (Holistic event management) a website was created with information on and several tools for an integrated and sustainable management of cultural, sports or touristic events ([www.gentevenement.be](http://www.gentevenement.be)). The route planner for bicycles and other relevant cycling information on [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be) are linked to in this site.



The bicycle route planner is to be updated every year with the latest information on cycling routes. The last update took place on 5 January 2012. Amongst others, the 'Gaardeniersbrug', a new cycling link between Wondelgem (a suburb) and the city centre was added. Some fine-tuning is also done in answer to the reactions of its users.

### 3.8. Online forms

In order to function as a virtual information and service desk a set of forms was developed. With these forms several bicycle services or products of the three partners can be applied for online.



Since December 2011 the following forms are online:

- General contact form
- Reporting an abandoned bicycles
- Reporting a problem with a bicycle parking
- Suggestion for a new public bicycle rack
- Suggestion for a new neighbourhood bicycle bin
- Request for a temporary public bicycle rack (neighbourhood festivals, event, etc.)
- Request for a bicycle parking in the guarded parking at station Gent Dampoort
- Request for a bicycle parking in a bicycle box (Park and Bike)
- Request for an bicycle parking in a neighbourhood bicycle bin
- Reservation of a rental bicycle
- Reservation of a bicycle courier
- Organise your own bicycle registration

The screenshot displays a web browser window with the title 'Melding van een achtergelaten fiets'. The address bar shows the URL 'https://eforins.gent.be/Productie/TripEforins.aspx'. The page content includes the 'STAD GENT' logo and the title 'Melding van een achtergelaten fiets'. Below the title are buttons for 'opslaan', 'openen', and 'printen'. The main form area is titled 'Inleiding' and 'Persoonsgegevens'. It contains a list of fields to be filled: 'voornaam', 'naam', 'straat', 'huisnummer', 'postcode', 'gemeente', 'telefoonnummer', and 'e-mail adres'. A 'volgende stap' button is located at the bottom right of the form. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various open applications and the system clock at 11:17.

These forms are planned for the near future:

- Bicycle gone! Was it cleared of stolen?
- Reporting a problem with a public bicycle pump

DIGIPOLIS is the partner for the technical development of these forms. Information for the forms was collected and put into a logical and user-friendly structure. The development of this set of forms for the cycling website can be considered as a pilot to the municipal project on unification of all city forms. Therefore, intense consultation was needed with the project leader concerned.

The kick-off meeting took place in February 2011. In the following months several forms were created tested, adapted and checked again. With the launch of the website in May it was possible to put some

of them online. Because of difficulties in the cooperation with DIGIPOLIS the finalisation of the whole set of forms was only achieved at end of December 2011. The only forms still under development are the ones listed above as planned for the near future.

During the process of creating the forms an intense cooperation with the urban information service called gentinfo was set up. The aim was to enable this city information service to use the website as a tool for providing information to citizens who approach them with bicycle-related questions. Some technical adaptations were needed, as well as a stream lining of the content, in order to allow a switch to the website instead of their existing information system. Some of these adaptations are still on-going. The goal is to delete the existing file system used by gentinfo and to retain the cycling website as only source of cycling information.

In this regard the forms also play an important role. Because of the delay with the forms, the cooperation with Gentinfo is not yet optimised. But work is on-going it and it will be enhanced by the participation of the forms on cycling issues in a form unification and digitalisation project for all the urban services and websites (see below 'Future plans').

### **3.9. Editorial Protocol**

As a result of the launch of the website a controversy rose on the type of information that should be allowed on the website and which shouldn't. Especially the question if commercial and policy critical information could find a place on the coordinated cycling website for citywide initiatives and services was discussed.

Concerning critical articles especially politicians were very hesitant. On the other hand an open attitude is needed to keep the website lively and interesting, to learn as a local government and to stimulate citizen engagement.

Eventually, an editorial protocol was agreed upon in which the aim of the website was described. It also determined which information is suitable for the website and which isn't. A special procedure for the approval of sensitive information by the political cabinet was installed, as was a test project on new social media (see below chapter 'testing social media').

The aim of the website is:

- to collect all cycling information for inhabitants of Gent, tourists and visitors at a central location, as well as for the occasional cyclist as for the daily user of the bike
- promote the urban cycling culture by communicating good practices
- communicate bicycle-related activities of events, especially of other city departments
- offer a platform to anyone who wishes to promote and cultivate the bicycle culture in Gent

As the aim is to provide a complete overview on urban cycling, it is allowed to publish information of third parties (not partners of the website), in so far as this information is related to cycling, not commercial, open for the general public and enhancing a positive urban cycling culture. Negative articles are not published. Pressure groups on cycling are mentioned in the 'addresses and links' section but communication of these groups is not published. Also commercial retailers are listed here.

The news section will be updated at least once a week. If no news from partners are available, external cycling news may be published (positive cycling news from other cities, good practices in companies, national cycling promotion, etc.).

In the agenda section a brief explanation on the event is given with a link to the website on this event.

Information officially communicated by the city can be published on the website without an approval by the political cabinet. External information should be submitted to the political cabinet before publication if there is any doubt on the admissibility of the content. The cabinet can refuse publication within 24 hours after submission. The newsletter which is to be published monthly, containing cycling facts, news and events, shall always be presented to the cabinet before publishing. A list of controversial

items is determined. Especially activities and the communications of certain cycling pressure groups is to be approved before being published.

As a result of several questions of citizens or other cities or organisations, the project team decided to link some new social media to the website.

### 3.10. Promotion

The launch of the website was accompanied by a large promotional action. Thousands of postcards were distributed and billboards were posted in the city centre. Approximately 3,000 saddle covers were handed out.



Several partners were asked to put a gentfietst button on their websites and this is still asked in interactions with possible related partners.

[www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be)

Gentfietst found a partner in the Bond Beter Leefmilieu for a Cycle Chique promotional campaign on hip urban cycling style. The photo-shooting took place in June 2011. The communication of the pictures and the competition on the best photograph followed in the summer. In September the campaign officially ended with extra media attention for the winning photo.

On Car Free Day in September 2011 a second shooting was organised. On that day a lot of other promotion was done for the website.

Beneath are some selected photos from the Cycle Chique campaign which were on [www.gentfietst.be](http://www.gentfietst.be). These photographs were also enlarged and hung up as panels on a construction site in a busy pedestrian area during the summer months.



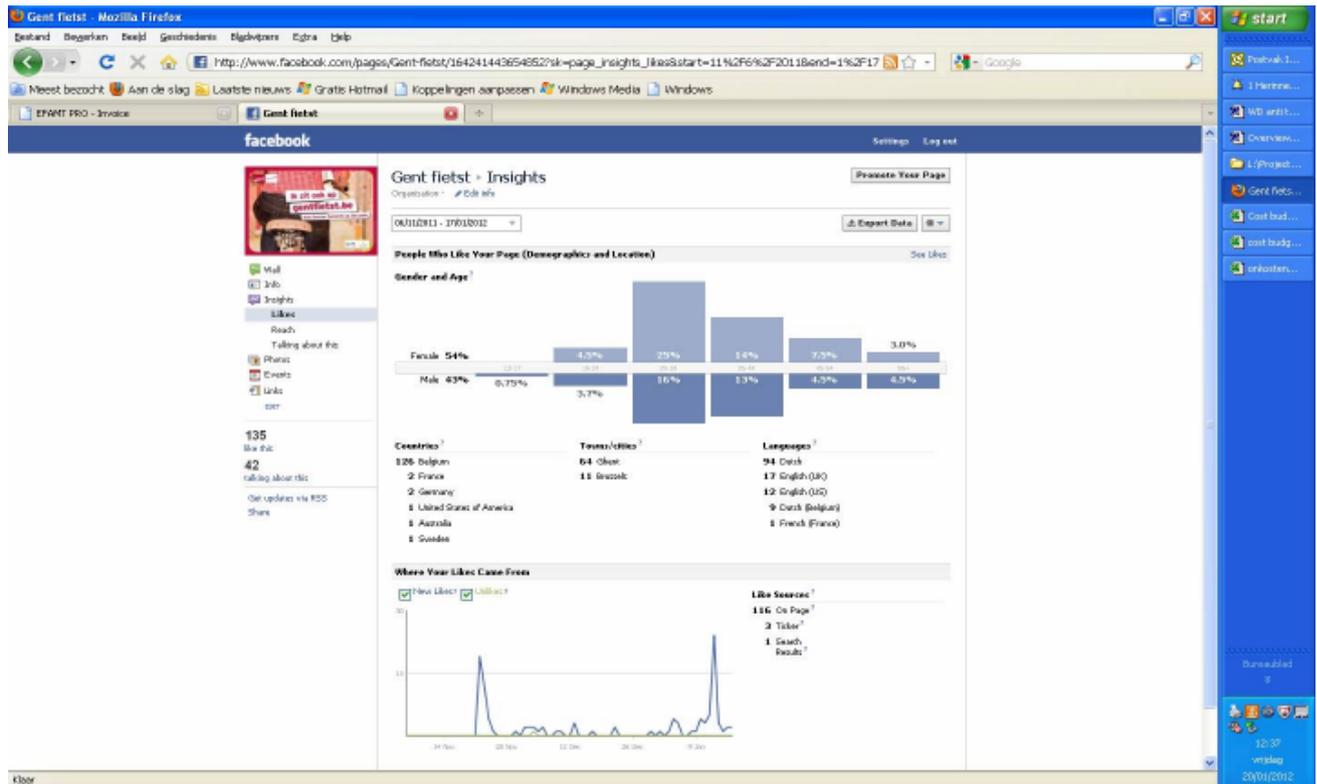
In winter 2011 the website itself and cycling as such were promoted by handing out winter gloves to cyclists. This occasion was taken as an opportunity to ask citizens a few questions on their cycling habits and collect their addresses for the gentfietst newsletter.



### 3.11. Testing social media

One of the reasons for introducing social media is to stimulate citizen engagement through more interactive communication. This always contains the risk of the negative voices shouting the loudest, especially on a rather controversial topic such as urban mobility and cycling. Because the effects of this kind of media were not well-known and to minimise the risk of too much controversy and negative communication, it was decided to start the social media adventure as a project related to one event. If this will be evaluated positively, social media canals may continue to be used after this specific event.

A Facebook page was created in September 2011 in order to promote the car free day on 18 September 2011. Reactions were positive and so the page was maintained afterwards. In the first weeks the number of 'likes' was very modest. But today 135 people like it and 42 people talk about it.



## 4. Future plans

### 4.1. Optimise and maintain editorial work in the future

In order to make the website a popular tool it has to offer complete and up-to-date information in an attractive way. This means a continual input and actualisation of information and news. A small editorial team was formed to take up this constant challenge. Its task is to collect and publish all cycling news. This supposes an active search for information, not only from the partners themselves (several city departments, Max Mobiel, studentENmobiliteit), but also from external sources. The editorial team comes together at regular intervals to discuss actual topics, to allot editorial tasks such as publishing a newsletter, updating the agenda, corrections of data, responding to reactions of citizens, etc.

At the start of the website, as many canals as possible were detected which could deliver cycling-related information. The people behind these canals were briefed about the website, its aim and the importance of their information input.

The editorial works should be continued and become even more embedded in the daily task of the editors. More and more people, internal and external, should achieve a reflex to transfer cycling related information for publication.

#### **4.2. Periodic promotion (Relaunch in spring 2012)**

In order to keep the number of visitors of the website on a good level or preferably even increase the number of hits, the website does not only need to be updated and attractive, it also needs an overall promotion once in a while. A big relaunch campaign is planned for the spring of 2012. Over 5,000 saddle covers have been ordered. With the start of the cycling high season, they will be distributed on the streets again to promote cycling and to the use of the website.



#### **4.3. Keeping up the interactive media**

In the first weeks and months the popularity of the Facebook page was very limited and grew slowly. During a training workshop on interactive new social media that was organised by CIVITAS-ELAN in September 2011 in Mechelen some good practices were shared with other CIVITAS-ELAN cities. There were certainly some ideas which can be worked out in the future.

Through several actions and posts the number of likes has grown until 136 today. Promotional campaigns are well communicated on Facebook and result in an increase of 'likes' every time. In spring a new boost will be given with the relaunch.

Another idea, which could be worked out in the future, is a 'pimp your bike' contest. This would be an ideal Facebook feature. Possibly it can be realised next fall in the run-up to Car Free Day.



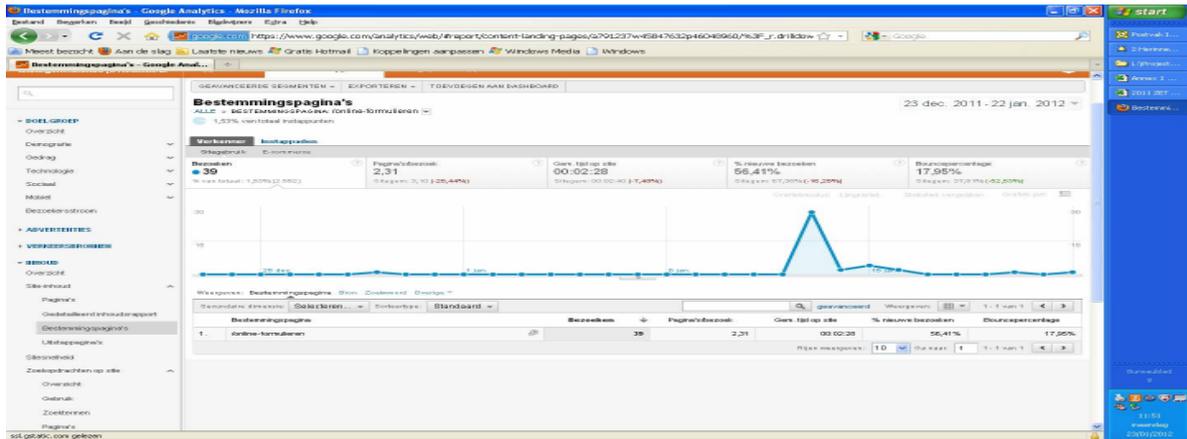
#### 4.4. Integration of forms in a larger city-wide harmonisation and digitalisation project of all municipal forms

There is an actual city-wide project for the unification and digitalisation of all public forms. This project is called 'E-loket' and is under the supervision of the 'Dienst Organisatieontwikkeling - Departement Personeel en Organisatie'.

Input from this department was given from the start for the development of the forms. Now that the forms for gentfietst.be are finally delivered by the partner DIGIPOLIS and put online, the start can be taken to integrate them in the larger E-loket of the city.

First contacts have been made. An introduction form for each form will be filled at the beginning of 2012 and a meeting with the Department 'Organisatieontwikkeling' is scheduled for 24 January. Steps have been taken to integrate an 'E-loket' button on gentfietst.be with a direct link to the main city server for digital forms. When this is realised, this will enhance the technical possibilities of the forms. For instance, it will be possible to upload pictures and documents. Forms will be able to be given file numbers, which can will ameliorate the administrative flow and follow up of the forms.

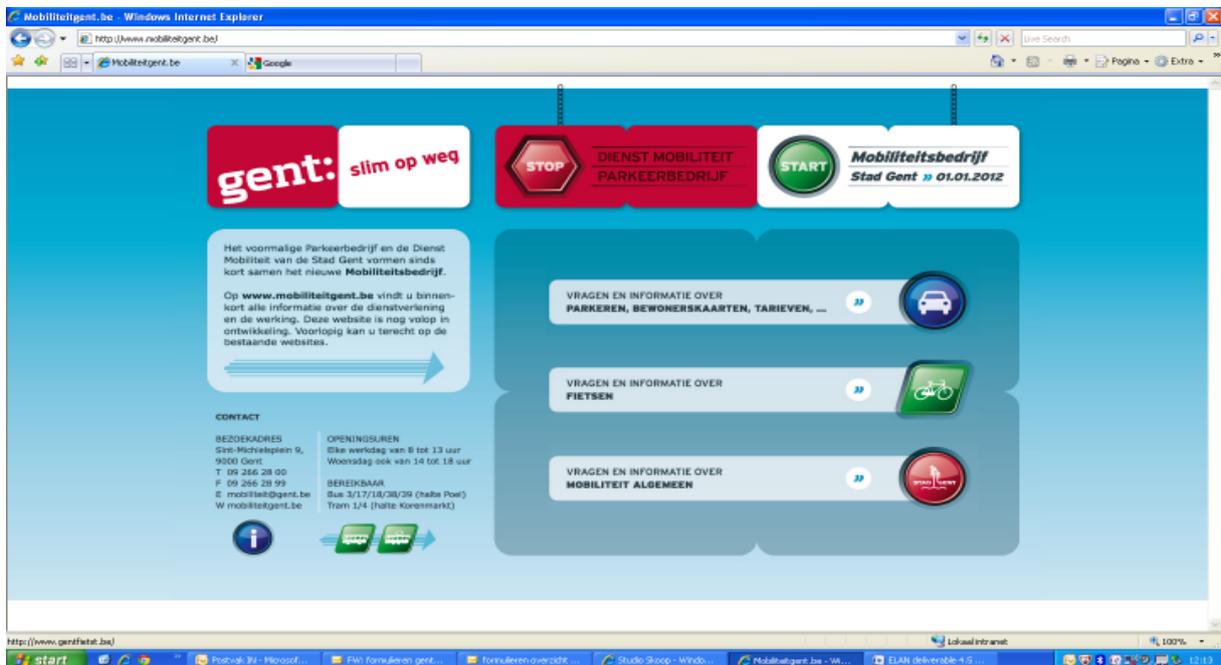
Interaction between the newsletter, promotional events, communication on the website and the use of the forms is made clear on the screenshot below. The peak in the middle of January was caused by the announcement in the newsletter that the city is going to invest in new neighbourhood bicycle sheds and that suggestions of locations could be done by filling in a form on gentfietst.be. In the future more ways to create such cross-pollination will be searched for.



#### 4.5. Integration into a general urban mobility website

Since 1 January 2012 the Department of Mobility has merged with the Parking Company and now is called the 'Mobility Company City of Gent'. This integration of two totally separate organisations has a large structural impact. Also, communication and public relations of this new company have to be re-designed. The aim is to integrate all aspects of mobility into one website. The website on cycling will therefore be fully integrated into this new website.

Currently, only the start page of the website for the new company has been designed. Here visitors are linked directly to the 'old' existing websites of the former separate organisations or suborganisations. This is also the case for [gentfiets.be](http://gentfiets.be) which is linked to under the 'bicycle' button. In the near future these sites will be fully restyled and integrated. The aim and challenge, however, is to preserve the own identity and popularity of the Gent cycling website as much as possible during this process.

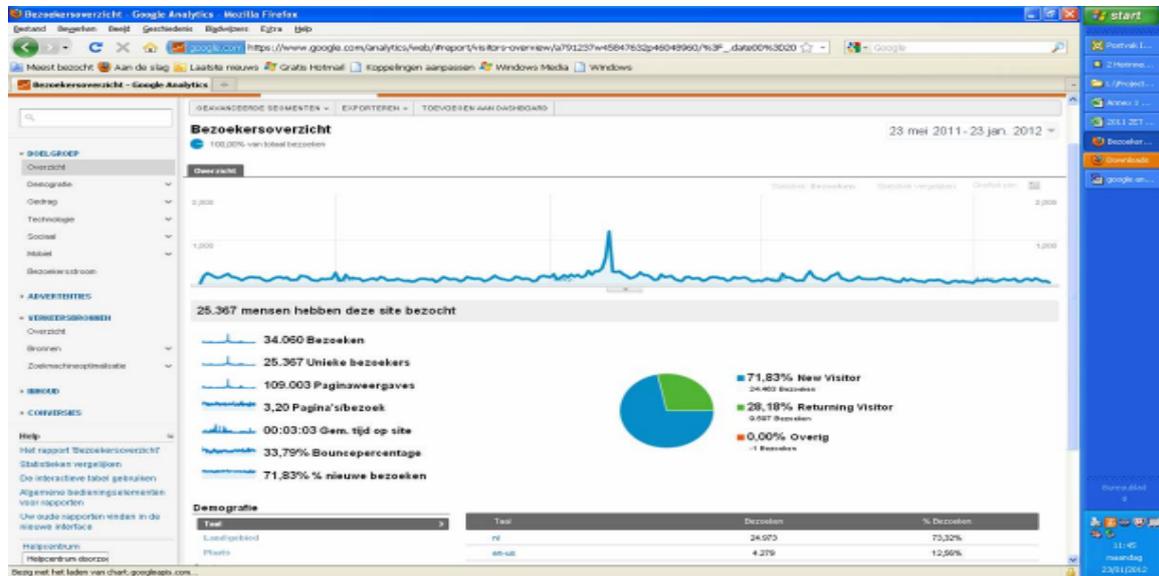


#### 4.6. Data collection for evaluation

Data on visitor numbers is gathered via Google analytics. This tool allows separate data on hits on specific pages, unique visitors, duration of the site visit, direct visits or linked by other website, demo-

graphical information, etc. A very detailed analysis of the success of the website can be made. This will be done by the Site Evaluation Manager in the last phase of the CIVITAS-ELAN project in 2012.

The information on Google analytics shows some very nice results already now. Since the release of the website there were more than 25,000 visitors. Almost 30% of the visitors are coming for a returning visit.



Currently, the monthly average of visitors is above 3,000. The aim for the future is to increase the visits to the site even more and to develop it into a useful and well-known tool for all who are interested in cycling, working on it, communicating about it, learning about it, and promoting it.

