

Bulgaria Turning into Newest EU Bike Valley

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SOFIA, Bulgaria – Supplying close to one million units to European countries, Bulgaria is already an important manufacturer of bicycles and e-bikes for the EU market. Ongoing investments in the modernization of production and increasing the capacity should improve this strong position.



In early 2018, Bulgarian Cross will open new assembly area, fully dedicated to e-bike production. – Photo Cross Cycle

The Bulgarian bicycle manufacturers are looking back at another successful year. They managed to keep their high volume of exports, almost exclusively to EU markets and Switzerland, at the same level as last year. At the same time the production share of e-bikes increased rapidly, resulting in bigger turnover for those companies. While the Eurostat figures still showed a decrease in the export volumes of 7.7% from 873,799 in 2015 to 806,096 in 2016, the local

production is still growing.

Bike production increase

The Association of the Bicycle Producers of Bulgaria (ABPB) reported a 0.8% production increase from 940,345 units in 2015 to 947,990 units in 2016. Only a slightly higher volume, however the number of e-bikes produced between 2015 and 2016 nearly doubled – to 20,000 units at an average value of €750. The total production value is estimated at over €136 million of which €15 million was generated by the production of e-bikes. The average value of all bicycles produced in Bulgaria in 2016 was €143.

According to the January-August 2017 Eurostat data Bulgaria exported 491,966 units at a total value of €81.5 million, which is on par with past years' statistics as far as the quantity is concerned. At €165, the average value was 15.4% higher in 2017 thanks to the growing demand for e-bikes. At 44% of the total production, Germany is by far the biggest market for Bulgarian bicycles. France is second with 15% while the export to all other EU countries is much less. However, it is important that Bulgaria exports to almost each European country.

Growing capacity

Currently, at least two Bulgarian manufacturers are building new production facilities, while all the others are investing in the development of existing ones. These investments are all aimed at the reduction of lead times for bicycles as well as components, in combination with improved planning. ABPB's Secretary General Borislav Georgiev also stresses, "the importance of EU trade defense measures for keeping level playing field for EU and non-EU producers." All of this makes Bulgaria more competitive on the tough and quickly changing market.

Domestic market

Bulgarians not only produce more bicycles, they also ride them more and more. The Bulgarian Association of Bicycle Producers has recorded an increase of sales from 53,000 units in 2015 to almost 79,000 units in 2016 at a total market value of €10 million. The domestic sales are dominated by Bulgarian and Chinese-made bicycles. Unlike other countries in Europe, the market for e-bikes is still very small in Bulgaria.

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