

The living end roads project

A project of the International Federation of Pedestrians

The concept:

A road that offers no exit for through motorized traffic is often referred to and signed as a dead-end road. However, when such a road continues as a road or path usable by pedestrians or cyclists, we would propose to call these “living end roads”, and to sign accordingly.

The classical signs indicating a dead-end road are frequently used in an inappropriate, car-only mode. For living end roads, it is simply incorrect to state that the road is dead-ended. It neglects the existence and the rights of road users other than motorized ones. Often, these routes are the most appropriate for cyclists and pedestrians, while the sign just discourages them to use these itineraries. This is especially the case for people not familiar with the area, but even the local people might totally be misled by this bluntly wrong information.

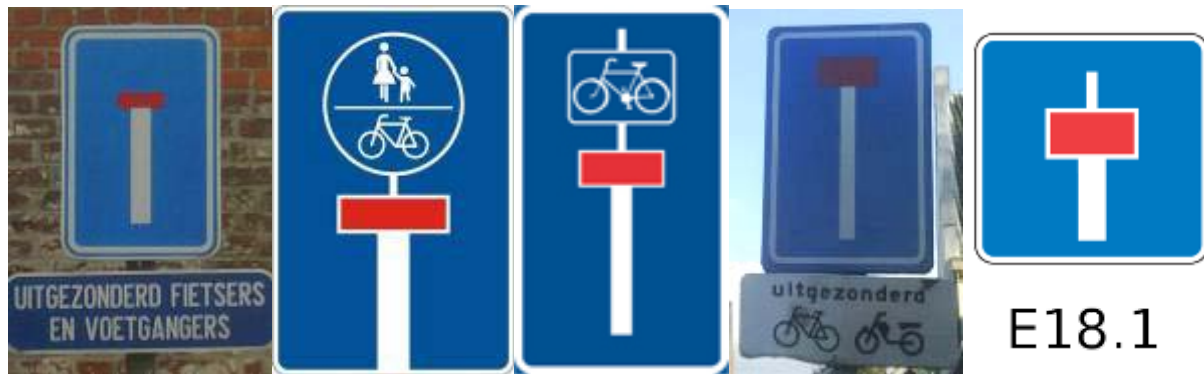


The dead end sign as used in most countries that adhere to the Vienna convention



The dead end sign and the alternative “no outlet” sign as used in most countries that do not adhere to the Vienna convention. In the US, they are referred to as W14-1 and W14-2, respectively.

For the information signs, the Vienna convention allows a large flexibility with respect to content. Contrary to prohibitory or mandatory signs, where modifications are rarely allowed, the information signs can be modified by the road authority to reflect the local situation. Additional information in undersigns (such as “except for bicycles and pedestrians”) are discouraged. For the yellow diamond signs, regulations vary by country.



Even though some countries occasionally provide some information on the living end nature of a road, they are used rather rarely. (The above signs are gathered in Belgium, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, respectively),

The improvement of the signage

The International Federation of Pedestrians (IFP) prefers not to change the basic lay-out, but only to provide additional information in a non-cluttering way. The approach would be that the perception of the sign from a distance (important for motorists) would be very similar to the basic dead-end street sign, while closer observers (cyclists and pedestrians) would be informed about their possibilities. Fussverkehr Schweiz, the Swiss Pedestrian Organization, studied¹ alternative signage, evaluating both undersigns and pictograms on the original sign. Road user preferences and readability of different alternatives were tested for the Vienna conference type of signs. The below signage was clearly preferred, and 84% of the respondents rated the additional information as “important” or “meaningful”.



Living-end road (pedestrians)



Living-end road (pedestrians and



Dead end for all

¹ In cooperation with ATSTRA, the Swiss Road Authority, and within the frame of an EU Interreg project “SPATIAL METRO” A Network for Discovery on Foot

cyclists).

For the non-Vienna-convention signs, a similar signage could be developed. Although those signs tend to be more text-based than icon-based, initial usability testing revealed positive acceptance and understanding of the proposed combinations of text and icons.



Living-end road (pedestrians)

Living-end road (pedestrians and
cyclists).

Dead end for all

Possibilities for the local road authority

The living end road project is ideally suited for the local road authorities, often the municipalities, since knowledge of the field resides with them, including the right of ways, footpaths and cycle tracks. With a relatively small effort, results that are valuable and visible can be generated. The living end road project wants to stimulate the local road authorities to look at their inventory of “dead end road” signs and assess which of those in fact are living end roads.

Implementation of the project simply entails to make an inventory of the existing dead-end signs in the area, to determine which of those require adaptation to living end signs, followed by making the change, and documenting it. Depending on local circumstances, adapting the signs could be done by applying heavy-duty stickers or might need placing new signs. Where feasible, stickers with the additional pictogram that could be placed on the existing signs could be made available to the local road authority by the IFP through the local member organization.

Value of the project

The goal of the project is more than to have the relevant information available to the cyclist or pedestrian passing by. The “collateral” effects might be as important. Municipalities and people in the administration will be stimulated to spent some time thinking about the road network from a sustainable road user point of view. Through this low-threshold project, they might become more sensitized and motivated to take pedestrians (and cyclists) rights and issues more into account in their daily work. The effect on the road user would be that he/she discovers new routes, and maybe even decides to explore them leaving his/her car behind.