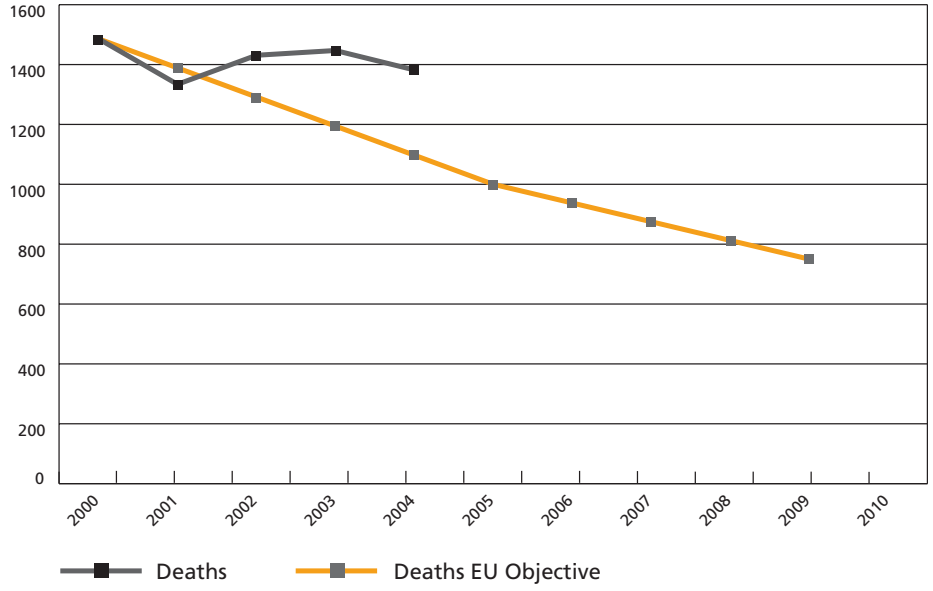
6.4 CZECH REPUBLIC



General Road Safety: The Czech Republic has an above EU average fatality rate of 135 per million in 2004: the rate has been dropping since 2003 but the Czech Republic will have to make great efforts to reach its 2010 target. A new National Road Safety Strategy was approved in 2004. It was prepared by an expert group made up by the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Interior, Transport Research Centre (CDV) and the police force.

Traffic law enforcement is undertaken by the police at a regional, district and municipal level. A national enforcement plan is drawn up by the police and has general actions and specific outlines for the following year. The police enforcement plan takes the priorities of the National Road Safety Strategy into account. These priorities are then assessed and implemented by a total of 80 District Commanders.

Speed: Speed enforcement will also change with the new legislation in 2006. This includes the greater use of safety cameras. Currently municipalities may place fixed safety cameras. The municipal police will also be able to stop and fine for speeding offences. Police focus their speed enforcement activities on high risk accident sites, stretches of roads where speeding occurs as well as at times when speeding occurs. At present speeding fines are given on-the-spot and if they are disputed the case goes directly to court.

Alcohol: New legislation will see a steep increase in fines and introduction of penalty points for drink driving. It will also introduce a new criminal offence for drink driving with a limit of over 1.0 mg/ml BAC. Alcohol checks are undertaken at random and on suspicion by the traffic police. These checks are taken at high risk accident sites close to bars and restaurants at all times including prime times such as at night and at the weekend but also in the week and in the mornings.

Seat belts: Seat belt enforcement is one of the enforcement priorities in the Czech Republic. The new legislation will come into force in 2006 and will also include provisions for enforcing the use of child restraints. At present they are only compulsory on the highway and on national roads.

Enforcement of seat belt wearing is undertaken in combination with other checks. If a non seat belt wearing offence is identified alongside another traffic offence, the driver is charged with the offence carrying the highest sanction.

Follow-up of offences: In the case of automated speed enforcement, the driver is primarily responsible. Follow up of unpaid fines levied for drink driving, non-seat belt use and speeding is very poor.

In the Czech Republic, a new penalty point system will be introduced on July 1st 2006. The proposal to introduce a 12 point demerit system was approved in September 2005 by the Senate. The new penalty point system comes a shake up in sanctions. The penalty for drink driving which results in a collision would result in an instant loss of 7 points. High penalties also target speeding, not wearing a seat belt and mobile phone use. Much higher fines will also be introduced with the lowest fine being set at 1,500 crowns (approximately 50 €). Police will also be able to confiscate the driving license on the spot for serious offences.

Information: Nationwide campaigns on drink driving, speeding and non-seat belt use are conducted annually by the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Interior and the police. These campaigns are run in conjunction with increased police enforcement.

In conclusion, no separate seat belt checks occur with low average seat belt wearing rates. Around 20% of those killed were not belted. Numbers of speeding controls have increased slightly but speed limits especially in urban areas are still not respected. Although the drink driving offences stayed the same, drink driving deaths nearly doubled between 2003 and 2004. Moreover there are problems posed as there is no owner responsibility and rigorous follow up of unpaid fines is urgently needed.

Recommendations:

- Implement a new co-ordinated fixed camera network between national and municipal level.
- Conduct separate blitz campaigns to enforce seat belt and child restraint use.
- Ensure that all fines, including unpaid ones are followed up through the judicial system.
- Introduce full owner responsibility for the follow up of speed enforcement offences.
- Conduct enforcement in combination with the launch of the new penalty point system in 2006.