VOICE Country Sheet

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Vulnerable road users in Italy

VOICE : Vulnerable Road User Organisations in cooperation across Europe

VOICE is a network to ensure that usually neglected VOICEs are heard in the transport debate – those of vulnerable road users.

The VOICE coalition currently consists of:
AGE - the European Older People's Platform; ANEC - the European consumer voice in standardisation; Health and Environment Alliance; European Child Safety Alliance; European Disability Forum; European Public Health Alliance; European Federation for Transport and Environment; Voetgangersbeweging - Pedestrian Movement, BEUC; European Transport Safety Council

More information: www.etsc.be/Voice.php

Part I - Italy

Despite recent improvements, Italy still finds itself above the EU average (of 95 road deaths per million inhabitants) with 97 deaths per million inhabitants.[1] There are a number of factors that contribute to this still delicate road safety situation, some of which are discussed below.

Even though the government adopted a national road safety Plan in 2002, with a clear target and a set of priorities, including specific measures for the protection of vulnerable road users (VRUs) [2], there has been no systematic implementation at the local level. Awareness campaigns are another aspect of road safety policy that needs to be improved as they tend to focus mostly on drivers to the detriment of other road users. Data collection is also very weak and sometimes unreliable with many cases of underreporting.

There is a general lack of political will and this clearly affects the already limited budget reserved for road safety. This has serious implications for all road users.

National road safety plan and measures for VRUs

The Government adopted a National road safety plan in 2002 and set the target of a 40% reduction in deaths by 2010 (baseline year taken from an average of 1999, 2000, and 2001). Included in this plan were measures addressing the particular needs of VRUs such as pedestrian zones, 30 km/h areas, cycle networks and other facilities.[3]

Until now, there has been no comprehensive policy to implement the national plan at the local level. There should be a clearer commitment from local authorities to work within the framework of road safety institutions and promote cooperation among all stakeholders. For this, good coordination among the different levels of competence would be required. Local authorities often lack the experience necessary to apply for bids to finance road safety projects. A further weakness is the reluctance of the administration to use concrete figures, to look for evidence, and to monitor the effects of the implementation of specific road safety measures. Technical guidelines are a recent practice and not satisfactory yet.

Campaigns

In Italy, most road safety campaigns are still aimed at reducing risk for car users rather than pointing out the risks vehicles can cause for non-motorised users. For instance, a big campaign was organised to introduce the new driving licence penalty point system in 2003. The campaign featured seat-belt wearing, helmet use, alcohol consumption and speeding, careless driving and so on.[4] Whilst many of the issues mentioned have a direct impact on the safety of VRUs, a national campaign focusing directly on their needs would obviously bring greater benefits.



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Some local authorities carry out road safety campaigns but their frequency, focus, and intensity depend once again on the priorities set by the local government.

Data collection

Data collection in Italy is still relatively poor. Reporting rates vary according to the severity of accidents. It is estimated that the reporting of deaths is more accurate (5-10% of underreporting) than, say, the reporting of seriously injured pedestrians (underreporting estimated to be up to 50%). For seriously injured cyclists, the percentage is thought to be even higher. Light injuries tend to be underreported in 65% of cases for pedestrians and 80% of cases for cyclists.[5] Other sources suggest that the underreporting of deaths is even higher, rising up to 26%.[6]

It is difficult to ascertain how much underreporting is going on but the fact remains that this problem needs to be addressed as soon as possible. More accurate figures will

help road safety authorities to evaluate the extent of the problem and recommend appropriate measures to tackle them. One possibility is the introduction of a centralised data collection system for deaths and injuries data collected from all police forces and current statistical bodies in the country.[7]

Speed

According to a number of sources, speed remains a serious problem in Italy, with serious implications for VRUs especially in urban areas. The recent driving licence penalty point system has been a crucial measure to counteract speeding. It is estimated that the number of deaths was reduced by 20% in the first year following the introduction of the system (July 2003 - July 2004).[8] However, recent data show a decrease in the good results obtained immediately after the introduction of the new system. This is a reminder of how important it is to continue the effort and increase the level of police enforcement.[9] In 2004, 700 mobile camera systems, 150 on-board patrol cars and 170 lasers were used in police road-side patrolling.[10] Furthermore, fixed camera devices have been installed by local authorities but there is no record of how many are currently in use throughout the different municipalities in Italy.[11]



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According to the penalty points system, a driver can lose up to five points, out of a total of twenty, for not giving priority to a pedestrian at a zebra crossing. Unfortunately, in reality, this rule is hardly ever strictly enforced. Moreover, Italy has relatively few 30 km/h zones, especially in school and playground areas, thus leaving VRUs at a clear disadvantage.

Part II - What works best? Examples from Europe

The examples below illustrate what other European countries have done to address similar issues.

National Road Safety Plan

Full comprehensive policies are implemented through specific initiatives. At the same time, it is clear that only integrated approaches can result in better achievement of road safety goals and targets.[12]

The SUNflower project is one of the most recent efforts to assess the background of successful strategies in road safety work and consists of a comparative study of the development of road safety in **Sweden**, the **UK**, and the **Netherlands**. These three countries currently feature the best road safety levels in the EU.

The methodology of the study has been designed in such a way that it can be used as a basis for comparative studies among other countries. The risk indicators can be used as benchmarks for the performance in different areas of road safety, taking into account the different national problems. The results[13] suggest that EU and all Member States should foster large scale implementation of infrastructural measures as well as intensified enforcement on actions such as speeding and drink driving.

Italian campaigns and organisations

The **Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport** (www.infrastrutturetrasporti.it) organised a few campaigns in 2006 focusing on drink driving, speeding, seat-belt wearing around the theme of a guardian angel protecting different road users; the **ANIA Foundation for Road Safety** (www.fondazioneania.it) aims at the prevention of traffic accidents through the promotion of education and awareness activities; **ACI – Automobile Club d'Italia** (www.aci.it) actively disseminates and promotes road safety issues such as the risks of drink driving, active and passive safety devices, and road safety education; **FIAB – Federazione Italiana Amici della Bicicletta** (www.fiab-onlus.it) is an active environmental organisation with members in different Italian cities, which promotes the use of the bicycle as a sustainable form of transport; the **Italian Road Victims Association** (www.vittimestrada.org) offers legal and psychological assistance to road victims and their relatives There have been very few national campaigns targeting VRUs. Most of them consist of ad hoc campaigns organised mainly at local level. The Bergamo Municipality, for instance, sponsors the **Associazione Disabili Bergamaschi** to promote the interests of disabled road users and also has an informative road safety website hosted by the Local Police (www.educazione-stradale.org).

Switzerland is a country with a federal system, different levels of government, various language communities and many different road safety actors. Despite its complex political system, it has an excellent road safety record.[14] Key to the effective implementation of its road safety plan is the commitment from the federal government, the cantons (regions), the municipalities and other road safety actors to coordinate their activities and set priorities in order to achieve fixed and common goals. Quality checks and periodical reports are also foreseen.[15]

Campaigns

In **Belgium**, the Belgian Road Safety Institute (IBSR/BIVV) organises one awareness campaign per year targeted to the needs of vulnerable road users.[16] In **Spain**, the General Directorate for Traffic has a long tradition of campaigns on

vulnerable road users.

Apart from the governmental organisations, user and safety organisations have a role to play in campaigning for a better protection of VRUs. They can assist, for example, with the dissemination of knowledge about traffic rules and regulations. Pedestrians (especially children and elderly people) and cyclists who have not taken a driving test may not be aware of important traffic rules, and all road users encounter unfamiliar rules when they travel to different Member States.[17]

Data collection

France is an excellent example of a country that has invested in providing reliable and up-to-date figures to highlight serious problems and later on improvements incurred as a result of its national road safety campaign. In 2002, President Jacques Chirac declared road safety as one of his top priorities. There was ample evidence at the time that drivers were not sufficiently respectful of the law. In the meantime, many measures have been implemented and have received much support from civil society organisations and media coverage. A major advantage in this regard is that indicators on speed and traffic accidents have been available in France for some time. Figures proving the success of the new measures could then be presented to the public without major delay.[18]



P.Rio Branco - ETSC

The **UK** has one of the best overall road safety records in the EU. Every year, the Department for Transport publishes a comprehensive "transport statistics bulletin" focusing on road casualties and accounting for a wide variety of road users, types of road, and types of severity.[19] These annual reports keep road safety actors as well as the public informed. The results are widely disseminated, which provides a boost to road safety campaigning and enforcement.

Speed

In **France**, improved speed management, based on the new camera system, contributed about 75% to the massive overall reduction in fatal accidents between 2002 and 2005. From 2003 to 2005, the proportion of vehicles travelling at 10 km/h and more above the legal limit decreased from 35% to 20%. The number of vehicles exceeding the limit by more than 30 km/h went down by 80%. Average speeds decreased by 5 km/h.[20]

In **Sweden**, speed surveillance has been enhanced with the use of cameras. But overall, road user behaviour has not been addressed extensively. The issue has, however, received fresh emphasis lately and changes in driver training and road safety education in schools are under consideration. Moreover, speed enforcement has become a priority with the introduction of a new digital speed camera system and an increase in fines.[21]

Part III - All actors contributing

The examples of what has worked in various locations illustrate mainly what national and local authorities can do to improve the protection of vulnerable road users. But national and European decision makers also have a role to play.

At a national level the government must ensure the frameworks they establish for more local action support and stimulate the spread of initiatives that have been successful. In Italy, the areas that specifically need to be strengthened are systematic implementation of specific measures for the protection of VRUs at the local level, more effective awareness campaigns focusing on the needs of VRUs, and collection of reliable and up-to-date accident data.

Measures to protect vulnerable road users at EU level

In 2001, the Commission proposed an ambitious target to halve the number of road fatalities by 2010 (**White Paper on the European Policy for Transports**, **2001**). In order to pave the way towards achieving this target, the Commission subsequently published a **European Road Safety Action Programme** (**COM (2003) 311 final**). It stressed the need for better protection of vulnerable road users. In particular, it highlighted the relevance of education and awareness campaigns aimed at vulnerable road users and the importance of the tests conducted by EuroNCAP (European New Car Assessment Programme) regarding passive safety, which concerns protection against injury in the event of a crash.

Safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists are a priority to EU action. Mindful of the fact that every year some 8,000 pedestrians and cyclists are killed and a further 300,000 injured on European roads, the Parliament and Council adopted a **Directive** (**2003/102/EC**) which aims to reduce the severity of injuries to pedestrians by laying down tests and to introduce changes to the front of vehicles, concentrating essentially on the bonnet and bumper. These could help prevent up to 2,000 pedestrian fatalities a year. European, Japanese and Korean car manufacturers had already agreed to produce vehicles complying with the provisions of the first step of this Directive as well as a range of other safety measures, which will reduce the risk of serious or fatal injuries to pedestrians. The second stage of this Directive has been reviewed and the Commission will propose a revised standard, this time a Regulation, which will adapt the standard to ensure its feasibility. The final standard eventually adopted by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament must give the protection of vulnerable road users the highest priority.

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European Transport Safety Council
Rue du Cornet 22 - B-1040 Brussels
Tel. + 32 (0) 2 230 4106 - Fax. + 32 (0) 2 230 4215
E-mail: information@etsc.be - Internet: www.etsc.be