The 6th European Transport Safety Lecture
Road Safety in an enlarged Europe: challenges and opportunities for the 25 EU member states

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Content

Executive Summary

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) to include the so-called Eastern Block countries (referred to in this paper as the Central and East European countries - CEE countries, or more commonly the Accession countries - ACs) raises questions as to the impact of the expansion on road traffic safety after 1 May 2004, the date when enlargement is completed. In the recent past the EU made a decision to aim to cut the road deaths in Europe in half in by 2010. However, at the time this decision was in the process of being approved it was not clear if and when the enlargement of the EU would be completed. Two questions therefore pose themselves: are the candidate countries able to meet the same targets or will they struggle to do so due to their own high accident rates, and to what extent have the ACs managed to implement EU road safety so far?

The lecture will present some basic data and information on three points: first, on current EU road safety policy and its impact on the expansion process; second, on the past and current road safety policies of the ACs; third, a case study of the Czech Republic will illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of road safety policy and its development in a single AC.

The lecture is intended to open a discussion on the lessons to be learnt, in terms of road safety, for the future second round of EU expansion with the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

Road Safety in an enlarged Europe: challenges and opportunities for the 25 EU member states

By Josef Mikulik, Transport Research Centre (CDV, Czech Republic)

1. Introduction

In a mere six days time the EU will welcome ten new members into its midst. After over a decade of negotiations, the common European territory will be significantly expanded. Although transport issues constituted only approximately ten percent of the whole negotiation process, they are issues that should be given more consideration in the future. Chapter nine, "Transport Policy", was based on Articles 70 to 80 of the EC Treaty. The transport acquis consists mainly of secondary legislation - i.e. regulations, directives and decisions.

According to the Maastricht Treaty, transport and transport safety represent major and important parts of the common EU issues, as is clearly shown in the official EU documents on transport policy and road safety.

The process of expansion is a welcome impulse to the road safety policies of the ACs. The necessity to implement the EU's road safety directives into their national legislations should be viewed as a step forward.

2. European Union road safety policy and European expansion

2.1 The accession process in terms of road traffic safety

In terms of transport, the accession process for the ACs themselves opened in 1999 and 2000 and can be divided into two basic problems:

A. The application of the acquis by the ACs and their adoption of sec ondary legislation

A. Application of the acquis by the ACs and adoption of secondary legislation

This process can be considered crucial in terms of road safety. However, the acquis covered only a relatively small part of the possible measures to be taken by the ACs - i.e. the technical aspects of vehicles, seat belts and child-restraint devices, the testing of driving licence applicants and tasks related to the ADR and AETP agreements. To be more precise, the Transport Chapter included the following in terms of road safety:

] Road transport of dangerous goods
" Checks on the road transport of dangerous goods
" Safety advisers for the transport of dangerous goods
" Seat belts and child-restraint devices
" Technical aspects of motor vehicles

It should be mentioned that most of the candidate countries implemented the road safety acquis in a very short period of time and, save for a few exemptions regarding technical issues, without requesting a transitional period.

B. Some reflections of the European Union's strategic documents

In the meantime, in addition to the acquis, the EU has published a number of documents that are central to transport policy as a whole and road safety policy in particular. In terms of road safety policy the most important of these are "European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide" (henceforth referred to as the White Paper) and the European Safety Programme (henceforth the Safety Action Programme). These documents were not part of the negotiation process, and the Commission did not monitor the readiness of the ACs to implement them.

However, application of the acquis was monitored by both the Commission and the European Parliament and, in addition, monitoring reports were regularly published. This screening process provided a background for the implementation of other important road safety measures, but on the whole the EC legis-

Unfortunately the EU road safety policy as a whole did not constitute part of the accession process. None of the EC institutions officially inquired about the road safety situation in the ACs, or for that matter about their road accident trends. This would seem to constitute a weakness in the accession process and one that should perhaps be given more consideration during the next future stage of EU enlargement.

Having said this, a further distinction should be made in terms of road traffic safety, namely that during the screening and negotiation process four basic and distinct groups became apparent within the ACs:

- The most developed countries, as represented by Slovenia
- Countries with similar historical and administrative backgrounds (CZ, SK, H, PL)
- The Baltic countries (LT, EST, LV)
- The Mediterranean countries (CY, M)

Based on their varying political, sociological and historical developments, the countries in these groups exhibited differences in their road accident rates and the level to which the transport acquis had been implemented. For example, while in general Slovenia had few problems, the Central European countries had very specific ones and the Baltic countries worse problems. The countries varied particularly in terms of the level of their institutional and legal frameworks governing road safety, the implementation of vehicle standards and their conformity to EU standards for professional drivers.

When considering the similarities and dissimilarities between the ACs the question arises of whether or not they should have co-operated with each other by forming a "subgroup of countries with poor accident records", and what the advantages and disadvantages of such a step might have been? In my opinion, most of the best policies in road safety are not overly linked to the political and/or economic situation of a country. In other words these measures can be implemented with equal success in countries with both higher and lower GDPs. Such countries should co-operate and learn from each other, but without forming "close and separate clubs".

2.2 The implementation of the EU's road safety policy in the Accession Countries

As already mentioned, the White Paper and the Safety Action Programme were both published as basic EU documents during the accession process.

These documents mapped out a clear streamlining of sustainable transport development within the EU over the coming decade and constitute an important challenge, particularly in their implementation in the ACs. These papers will undoubtedly be a significant contribution to speeding up the rate of improvement in transport operations in the ACs.

Most of the ACs commenced the introduction of an official transport policy after the political changes of 1989 and 1990, and some of them have still to complete the process. Moreover there are some countries that, due to political circumstances, do not have an official transport policy at all - e.g. Poland, which prepared a Polish Transport Policy that was subsequently rejected due to a change of government.

In turn, road safety has been integrated into the national transport papers to varying degrees. Only some of the ACs have tabled road safety as a policy priority. These differences become clear when one considers the elaboration and approval of national road safety plans in the individual ACs:

- Slovenia approved a road safety plan in 2002 with a set target of reducing road accident fatalities by 210 by 2005 (i.e. a reduction of 50% compared to 1995).
- Poland has adopted the road safety programme GAMBIT 2000 for the period 2001 to 2010 with the target of reducing road accident fatalities to 4,000 a year by 2010 (a reduction of 36% compared to 2000).
- Hungary had already approved a national road safety programme in 1993, intended to reduce the number of road accident fatalities and serious injuries by 25-30% by 2000 compared to the accident rates for 1992. Hungary surpassed its own target and achieved a reduction of 50%. No subsequent concrete targets have been set.
- The Czech Republic approved a safety pro-

significant improvements in accident rates were achieved the safety strategy plan has been elaborated and is in the final stage of approval. The set target is to reduce the number of road accident fatalities by 50% by the year 2010 (compared with 2002 and in accordance with the EU target).

- Slovakia has no specific road safety programme to date.
- Estonia adopted its national road safety programme in 2003, aimed at reducing the number of road accident fatalities to fewer than 100 by 2015 (a reduction of approximately 55% compared to 2003).
- Malta considers road safety a government policy priority and integrated the issue into the Transport White Paper, approved in 2004. One of the specific objectives set by the paper under the rubric "Safer Travel" is to reduce road injuries by 50% by 2014.

This brief breakdown illustrates the continuing efforts of the ACs to undertake serious steps towards improving their poor road safety conditions and to frame such efforts in the relevant policy documents and action plans.

Some of the ACs have had direct help from experts from the core EU countries in developing their national road safety plans. The Polish GAMBIT Programme is an excellent example, the elaboration of which involved experts from Germany, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.

As far as the core road safety problems are concerned, the CDV questionnaire has established that they are the same as in the core EU countries, namely:

- Speeding
- Safety instructions
- Safety of vulnerable road users
- Traffic awareness education for children

2.3 Can European Union road safety targets be achieved by the Accession Countries?

The White Paper sets an ambitious target of halving the number of road deaths in the EU by 2010. This target was subsequently worked out in the Safety Action Programme.

Before considering the question of whether the ACs can meet this target, we should be aware of the large discrepancies in road safety between the current EU countries (EU 15). These discrepancies are also marked between the accession countries (AC 10), although it must be said that in general their safety levels are considerably worse, as is shown in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Basic comparison of the average indicators between the EU 15 and the EU 10

	fatalities/mil.inhabitants	fatalities/mil.vehicles	vehicles/1000 inhabitants
EU 15	101.8	167.7	607.1
AC 10	149.9	389.6	384.6

Source: IRTAD (2002)

Both accident indicators show a higher risk in the AC 10 countries than in the EU 15 - 1.5 times higher in terms of inhabitants and 2.3 times higher in terms of the number of vehicles - even though the motorisation levels are on average 1.6 times higher in the EU 15 than in the AC 10.

This contrast becomes starker when examining the individual countries as illustrated in Figure 1, which shows level of motorisation risk (number of fatalities per million vehicles) compared to the average of the EU 15 (a similar contrast is clear if one compares the number of inhabitants or driven kilometres).

Fig. 1: Motorisation risk in the European countries related to the EU 15 average

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It is interesting to note how the ACs compare to the core EU member states. Thus Malta can be counted amongst the EU's safety record-holders, with safety indicator levels below the EU average. Cyprus and the Czech Republic have the same safety indicators as

exceeding the EU average by two or three times. Latvia and Lithuania enjoy the worst averages.

These variations offer ample food for thought and can be traced back to factors as diverse as the level of motorisation, the standard of living, weather and geographical conditions, transport conditions or even political and social conditions.

The "SEC-SAFETY BELT" provides an excellent opportunity by which to examine these differences in detail, to identify the potentials for improvement and to formulate tailor-made individual recommendations to achieve these improvements. This is a three-year project started in 2004, and is supported by the European Commission. The aim of this ETSC-Project is to improve road safety in the countries of Southern, Eastern and Central Europe by identifying, evaluating and promoting measures for the reduction of accident risk amongst road users. The main areas are intended to cover:

- User behaviour
- Vehicle technology
- Road infrastructure
- Road technology
- Information and databases
- Evaluation of national road safety policies

Another lesson is offered by the SUNFLOWER project (supported by the DG TREN) which compared the safety strategies in the most advanced EU countries in terms of road safety, namely Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The follow-up project, SUNFLOWER PLUS 6, was recently started and focuses on three Central European countries (Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic) and three Southern European countries (Greece, Italy and Spain). When complete, these two major projects will offer numerous solutions to the ACs in their efforts to achieve the EU's road safety targets.

This having been said, because road safety remained "a neglected topic" in the ACs in the recent past, there are also measures available to them which could effectively improve road safety in the short term. For example:

- Improvements in infrastructure using low-cost engineering measures
- Introduction of a 50 km/h-speed limit and 30
- Increase in the usage of safety belts to European standards
- More efficient speeding enforcements

Despite the poor safety rates, the EU standards can be met provided there is a political will to assure the implementation of the appropriate measures. Following the Verona Declaration, the European Charter on Road Safety was signed in Dublin in April 2004. These documents, which contain the EU road safety target and are the remit of the highest officials concerned with road safety in the EU and ACs, are an incisive instrument for speedily improving road safety.

3. Road safety in the Accession Countries

3.1 Recent developments

Due to historical, social and transport developments over the last decades of the 20th Century, the eight accession countries from Central and Eastern Europe have what can be described as an old or starved vehicle fleet, with an average vehicle age of fifteen years. Over 90% of the cars in operational use were manufactured in the CEE countries with their corresponding historically low safety standards. The volume of traffic in these countries exhibits not only a low level of motorisation (100 to 250 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants), but also a lower transport performance, particularly in passenger transport (with an average mileage of approx. 6,000 km per year).

These countries were internationally isolated for a considerable period and as a result their drivers can be considered internationally inexperienced. Driving behaviour was conditioned by traffic regimes that paid little attention to the demands of road safety. Despite this, police enforcement did also significantly influence road behaviour in a "positive way" because it did not merely supervise traffic rules, but simultaneously dealt directly or indirectly with civil prosecution traffic infraction.

The fall of the so-called Iron Curtain in 1989 brought with it a new situation on European roads. The free movement of citizens formerly behind this division has meant that they have broadened their activities within the framework of the European market. Motorisation has increased significantly (250 to 450

As described above, the ACs exhibit considerable divergences in both their levels of economic development and road safety. The significant differences in these countries when compared to the average of the EU 15 are demonstrated in the fatality rates laid out in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Tab. 2: Number of fatalities in the accession countries

	1985	1990	1990/1985	1995	1995/1990	2002	2002/1995
CZ	987	1 291	1,31	1 588	1,23	1 431	0,9
H	1 756	2 432	1,38	1 589	0,65	1 429	0,9
PL	4 688	7 333	1,56	6 900	0,94	5 827	0,84
SK	527	692	1,31	698	1,01	626	0,9
SLO	464	517	1,11	415	0,8	269	0,65
LT	649	933	1,44	671	0,72	697	1,04
LV	539	877	1,63	611	0,7	518	0,85
EST	191	436	2,28	332	0,76	224	0,67
MLT	13	4	0,31	14	3,5	16	1,14
CY	116	101	0,87	118	1,17	113	0,96
EU 15	52 395	56 055	1,07	45 777	0,82	38 441	0,84
AC 10	9 930	14 616	1,47	12 936	0,89	11 150	0,86

Source: ECMT

Fig. 2: Typical development of the number of road accident fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants in selected ACs

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With the exceptions of Malta and Cyprus with relatively stable figures, the developments in the other countries can in general be divided into three periods since 1985.

In the first period from 1985 to 1990, the number of the greatest in Estonia). Even amongst the then EU member states, the number of fatalities rose in the same period by 7%. The second period shows a clear decrease of 12% in the AC 10 and of 18% in the EU 10. The only exceptions to the rule are the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Hungary and the Baltic States enjoyed the greatest decreases. The third period is likewise marked by a general decrease (with the exception of Latvia) - a 14% decline in the AC 10 and a 16% decline in the EU. Thus the AC 10 and the EU 15 exhibit similar trends.

However, when considering the entire period from 1985 to 2002 it becomes clear that while the total number of fatalities in the EU 15 declined by 36%, those in the AC 10 rose by 11%. In 2002 some ACs experienced figures worse than those of 1985. With 45%, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia and the Czech Republic exhibited the most alarming increases. At the same time Slovenia achieved the greatest success by reducing road fatalities by 45%.

Both experts and politicians link the poor development of accident rates in the ACs to the rapid growth of motorisation. Table 3 compares the development of motorisation over selected time periods.

Tab. 3: Motorisation in the ACs

	1985	1990	1990/1985	1995	1995/1990	2002	2002/1995	2002/1985
CZ	278	311	1,12	369	1,19	431	1,17	1,55
H	183	208	1,14	259	1,24	279	1,08	1,52
PL	190	237	1,25	290	1,22	406	1,4	2,14
SK	229	251	1,09	274	1,09	341	1,24	1,49
SLO	306	375	1,22	415	1,11	533	1,28	1,74
LT	189	212	1,12	231	1,09	327	1,41	1,73
LV	180	204	1,13	182	0,89	281	1,54	1,56
EST	113	189	1,68	309	1,63	358	1,16	3,18
MLT	289	393	1,36	645	1,64	626	0,97	2,17

EU 15	398	470	1,18	519	1,1	607	1,17	1,52
AC 10	207	247	1,19	296	1,2	385	1,3	1,86

[in 1990 for AC 10 without SK, SLO, LT: 1990 - 15491, 1990/1985 - 1,20]; Source: ECMT

One of most frequently discussed negative safety aspects concerns accidents caused by drinking and driving. In general, both the percentage of the road accidents that are alcohol related and their severity are very high in the core EU member countries. Finland is the least satisfactory example, where 24% of accidents are caused by drunken drivers. The Central European countries have a far better record with around 10%. Nevertheless, when considering alcohol-related accidents it should be borne in mind that most ACs still have a zero-alcohol limit for drivers, compared to the core EU countries where BAC levels range from 0.2 to 0.8 per ml.

The use of safety belts highlights a further weakness in road safety in the ACs. Figure 4 shows the results of the IRTAD survey in selected European countries.

Fig. 4: Percentage of safety belt use

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The figures show that usage is significantly lower in Hungary and the Czech Republic than in other European countries, particularly on urban roads.

Historically, in most of the ACs the road safety system was a centralised affair, the backbone of which was formed by the police forces and their constituent structures. Road safety remained very much part of security policy, and until the political changes of 1989 to 1990 was not integrated into the transport policies of the above-mentioned countries. In general, one can say that the police force had wide-ranging competences - from the drafting of laws and regulations to the testing of driving licence applicants and from the issuing of driving licences to local enforcement.

The process of democratisation in the ACs increasingly brought these responsibilities into the orbit of the "civilian sectors", as is common in most core EU countries - i.e. the Ministry of Transport and the local and regional authorities. This process most commonly of the demands the European Commission placed without exception on the candidate countries was that these administrative structures be reinforced and strengthened so as to ensure an adequate administrative capacity.

3.3 What are the greatest road safety problems facing the Accession Countries?

The answer to this question is by no means simple, but put briefly the problems can be listed as follows:

- Social and economic changes subsequent to the collapse of centralist regimes
- Institutional changes in the road safety systems of the ACs
- Very low respect for the Highway Code and the low level of enforcement, as for example can be seen in the results of the SARTRE project
- Lack of political will in most countries to accord road safety a high priority
- Lack of available financial resources for road safety measures at all levels

3.4 What have the Accession Countries learned from the EU and what can the EU learn from them?

The accession process in itself injected new life into the road safety policies of most of the ACs, despite the fact that the process dealt with only a part of the wider field of road safety. The politicians concerned were obliged to take road safety into account as part of this process, and moreover were obliged to implement various negotiated legislative measures as a stipulation before joining. For example:

- Mandatory use of child-restraint devices
- New systems for testing drivers
- Implementation of measures regarding professional drivers, e.g. a system of safety advisors

Simultaneously the accession process brought with it new opportunities for road safety experts to exchange knowledge with their counterparts in the core EU countries. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary became members of the OECD, and their representatives joined international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the PRI and CIECA

bers and the ACs have likewise been established. EU road safety experts not only visited the CEE countries in 1989, but have done so frequently since.

All of these contacts have played a valuable role in the implementation of the new road safety measures. These have included: low-cost engineering measures in urban areas, better protection of vulnerable road users (pedestrian priority on zebra crossings, compulsory use of cycle helmets, retro-reflexive devices to better protect pedestrians), 50 km/h-speed limits in urban areas (Czech Republic and Hungary), and last but not least the formulation of new national road safety plans - although some countries such as Czechoslovakia had possessed such plans even prior to 1989.

In addition, the access to Europe afforded to the ACs has resulted in the slow but continuous establishment of road safety NGOs in these countries, which have brought with them new insights and complimentary thinking to road safety as a system. One such example is the GAMBIT foundation in Poland and the Slovene National Safety Council, both of which are active and respected bodies - not only within their respective countries, but also at an international level. Unfortunately, still few of the ACs have such specialised NGOs. Road safety issues are very often the purview of purely governmental agencies such as the Czech Ministry of Transport's BESIP or the OBB of the Hungarian police force (National Road Safety Committee), or indeed the automobile clubs.

The second question is in how far the exchange of knowledge can be mutually beneficial, i.e. what the core EU countries have learned or can learn from the ACs in terms of road safety? Close working relations with safety experts from several ACs have been firmly established over time, and these contacts demonstrate the benefits of sharing and reinforcing existing knowledge. The road safety missions by experts from the core EU countries to the ACs demonstrated the necessity of a detailed understanding of local conditions and circumstances, such as:

- A sensitive approach to the transfer of advanced knowledge
- Close co-operation with local experts and their involvement in projects
- A particular knowledge of driver training - the system of obligatory practical and theoretical lessons under strict government supervision is being discussed, in a modified form, by some core EU countries)
- Experience with 0.00 or low BAC
- Roadside checks on alcohol impairment currently implemented in the core EU countries - these and previous measures lead to a marked improvement in road accident statistics concerning drunken drivers.

Recent practices in the ACs have also identified potential for road safety research:

- Systems of road accident statistics
- Programmes for modelling traffic accidents
- Computer programmes for child traffic education
- Obligatory systems of invitation in driving schools

It could also be added that mutual co-operation has also emphasised the importance of a unified terminology.

4. Road safety in the Czech Republic - a case study

4.1 Road accident trends in the Czech Republic in the last twenty years

The road safety situation in the Czech Republic can be taken as representative of developments in road safety in most of the CEE countries. As can be seen from Figure 5, every important political change in the republic has brought with it changes in the road accident statistics. Thus the impacts of the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Velvet Revolution of 1989 are both clearly visible. This would imply that specific social climates play an important role in the general safety awareness and behaviour of the populace as a whole. The discrepancy between the fatality rates and the level of motorisation shows that the two factors are not correlated. The distribution of the increase in fatalities amongst the road user groups is shown in Figure 6.

Fig. 5: Road fatalities and motorisation development

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Fig. 6: Distribution of fatalities according to road user groups

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The overall picture shows the enormous increase in both driver and passenger fatalities since 1990.

4.2 Organisational, institutional and planning developments

Road traffic accidents still constitute the main cause of death and injury amongst the population of working age in the Czech Republic. This is particularly true for children and young people. By comparing the data for the Czech Republic to that of both the EU and non-EU countries it becomes clear that the Czech Republic has to be included amongst those European countries with the poorest records. This holds equally true for both the overall number of accidents and for the number of those killed and injured.

The overall loss suffered by the country in road traffic accidents has been calculated as 2.2% of the GDP and the direct costs of these accidents for the same period as 4.1% of the national budget. Because these estimates do not include the costs of the damages done to such areas as the environment, smart money etc., the real costs to the nation of such accidents and the losses inflicted can in reality said to be much higher.

We are therefore obliged to ask ourselves what the reasons for these trends are, and where the structural weaknesses might lie. As with the previous cases, it is hard to draw any simple or clear conclusions. The paper will instead start with a brief description of the previous and current road traffic-safety systems and then examine recent developments.

As can be said for most CEE countries, up until the end of 2000 the responsibilities for road traffic safety were divided between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, with proved to be weakness, especially in terms of communications between the various bodies active in road transport safety. The situation acted as an effective brake that hindered improvements and resulted in complications.

In an effort to resolve these problems and to improve road traffic safety, the Czech government has been in the process of implementing the following measures:

- Transferral of the Governmental Co-ordinating Body for Road Traffic Safety from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, effective since 1 January 1999
- System restructuring, meaning that overall responsibility for road traffic safety (with the sole exception of traffic law enforcement) was invested in the Ministry of Transport and Communications, effective since 1 January 2001
- Adoption of a raft of acts and regulations encompassing human factors, vehicles and roads, and which can be broken down in turn as follows:
  - Act No. 247/2000 on Obtaining and Improving Professional Competence in Driving a Vehicle and on Changes of Some Acts (in force since 1 January 2001)
  - Act No. 361/2000 on Road Traffic and on Changes of Some Acts, as amended (the so-called Highway Code, in force since 1 January 2001)
  - Act No. 56/2001 on Conditions of Road Vehicles and on Change of Act No. 168/1999 on Third Party Insurance and on some Changes of Some Other Related Acts, as amended (in force since 1 July 2001).

These pieces of legislation clearly delineated the competences of the state authorities and the police. In comparison to the earlier system this has meant a reinforcement of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Some of the key measures that have been in force as of 1 January 2001 are as follows:

- Right of way for pedestrians on zebra crossings
- Use of vehicle headlights in daytime during winter
- Rights of way for vehicles on roundabouts
- Obligatory use of child-restraint devices
- Obligatory use of cycle helmets for children aged up to 15 years

By adopting this legislation the Czech Republic's position is now far closer to that of the core EU countries; both in terms of administrative structures and in terms of the formulated measures, which in some cases (daylight use of vehicle headlights and cycle helmets) are in fact stricter.

It is undoubtedly a contributing factor that Czech Minister of Transport has shown considerable personal engagement. The minister has repeatedly and publicly stated that road safety is one of his highest priorities and has personally supported all of the effective measures that have been taken to improve national road safety. A second factor is that a shift in parliamentary thinking has taken place. For the first time in Czech history politicians voted to create a Subcommittee on Road Traffic Safety in the Upper Chamber of Parliament (Senate), consisting of nine parliamentarians.

Faced with the enormous increase in road accidents and the severity of their consequences in recent years, the Czech Ministry of Transport decided to create a brand-new Road Safety Strategy to tackle the problem. Following the lead set by the EU Road Safety Action Plan, the Czech Republic would like to half its road deaths by 50% by the year 2010 - which would mean cutting fatalities to 650 per year. In co-operation with the Transport Research Centre (CDV) the Ministry of Transport and Communication started to draw up a draft of the strategy in 2003. The new document is based on detailed road accident analyses and the SWOT analysis. The strategy is structured like a pyramid, with the main goal at its vertex built upon numerous partial goals that are in turn deduced using set measures and concrete instruments.

The partial goals, by means of which the main strate-

- Cutting the number of road accidents caused by speeding
- Cutting the number of accidents caused by impaired drivers
- Cutting the number of accidents caused by failure to give way
- Increasing the rate of seat-belt use
- Protecting more vulnerable road users
- Improving post-accident care
- Creating safe road infrastructure
- Increasing traffic law abidance

These measures can be divided between the long term (e.g. fostering a new safety culture amongst road users) and the short term. They can be expressed in two key levels:

- More efficient law enforcement, including higher penalties for infringements of the Highway Code and the introduction of a penalty point system
- Improved co-operation at all levels and between all actors, including NGOs
- Increased support for road and traffic engineering-measures
- More effective road safety campaigns and education for road users, with special emphasis on child road-safety education

The draft strategy was prepared in close co-operation with other ministries and widely discussed between all the relevant parties, including regional, municipal and public representatives. The resulting comments and recommendations have been incorporated into the strategy, and it is expected that it will come into force in 2004. The amendments to the Czech traffic acts drafted in parallel by the ministry should likewise come into force in 2004. These amendments are lesser background ones, mostly drafted in preparation to joining the EU. A "second wave" of more importance is set for later in 2004. The measures discussed are:

- Introduction of daylight use of vehicle head lights all year round
- Introduction of a compulsory road safety audit
- Stricter penalties for traffic offenders
- Increased safety regulations in areas such as road tunnels

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the Czech road safety system

Like many of the ACs, the Czech Republic has to deal with the financial constraints placed upon realising road safety measures. Unfortunately the state budget contains no special fund or grant system to finance road safety projects. All measures at the governmental level are financed from the respective ministerial budgets. For example national campaigns and educational activities aimed at children are funded from the Ministry of Transport's budget or traffic enforcement from the budget of the Ministry of the Interior or that of the police force. Private funding or investment is at a very low level, both at regional and local levels. For instance, only a few insurance companies have given money to a selection of road safety projects.

An overview of the strengths and weakness of the current Czech road safety system can be drawn from the following SWOT analysis. Although the analysis was formulated as an input into the preparation of the Czech Road Safety Strategy, it also gives an overall idea of the state of road safety in other ACs as well.

The strengths are:

- Declared government interest in solving the road accident problem as laid out in the Transport Policy of the Czech Republic
- Good level of co-operation with countries with good road accident records such as the UK, NL and S
- Increasing willingness of politicians to become involved in road safety issues
- Excellent road accident-data system
- Increasing activities by NGOs in the field of road safety
- Existing methodology on the road safety audit

The weaknesses are:

- Road safety awareness does not figure high in the mind of the population, meaning an underestimation of the necessity of cutting road accidents
- Lack of co-ordination of the various measures taken by both governmental and non-governmental organisations
- Non-existence of a regional road safety plan often implemented formalistically and best practices fail to get implemented as they should or could be
- Tight state monopoly on the means of road safety information
- Lack of analytical information on the causes and consequences of road accidents
- Careless behaviour by some road users
- Low public acceptance of the Highway Code, unfortunately shared by the professional classes and the police
- Low levels of enforcement
- Lack of a database on best practices
- Poor level of road safety education

The opportunities that present themselves are:

- Decrease in the rate of road accidents and their consequences
- Decrease in the economic and human costs of road accidents
- Higher living standards
- Rise in the attractiveness of the Czech Republic in terms of investments and tourism
- Co-operation of the relevant bodies and citi zens
- Increase in responsibility
- Increased enforceability of legislation

The dangers that present themselves are:

- Lack of financial means to implement the nec - essary measures
- Short-termism of politicians
- Lack of willingness amongst the various road safety actors to co-operate
- Fact that were goals not to be met, support would inevitably decline

These opportunities and dangers suggest a number of concrete measures, for example:

- Retaining the 0.00 BAC
- Involvement parliamentarians in road safety work
- A well-functioning road accident database

Improving road safety as a whole is a long-term process where we can and indeed must learn equally from the positive and negative experiences of others. For this reason, I myself consider the EU enlargement of 1 May 2004 a welcome challenge to the Czech

active player in the field of EU road safety issues. The country considers the EU road safety legislation to be one of the most important tools available to improve road safety throughout Europe and to help countries like the Czech Republic to implement important and necessary road safety measures with greater ease.

5. Conclusions

In taking over and implementing a substantial body of transport law, some of it related to road safety, the candidate countries undertook an enormous amount of work in the course of the association process. The candidate countries had to overhaul their own administrative structures to ensure that they became more efficient and that they complied with those of the core EU countries. Important changes had to be made in the rewriting of transport and road safety policies - undoubtedly a boon to the candidate countries in terms of road safety.

However, this said we should not loose sight of the question of how to increase the role of road safety in the next accession negotiation process. Doing so can help the road safety experts in the future candidate countries to make road safety a higher political priority and so contribute to improved road safety records in these countries.

The enlargement of the EU brings with it higher demands on roads and road users. Undoubtedly it will also bring with it new transport policy tasks for the authorities of both the "old" and the "new" EU member states. Simultaneously, this expansion will also open up opportunities for a common transport policy, and in turn should offer better and more effective solutions to the remaining safety risk factors and obstacles in the CEE countries.

There are a number of concrete actions which could be recommended for the EU 25:

- Greater harmonisation of traffic rules and regulations
- Greater harmonisation of the traffic environment, particularly on motorways and along international corridors
- Creation of a common European system of signposting
- speeding and drinking and driving
- Dissemination of information on the best practices from all possible fields of road safety (human factors, vehicles, road environment)
- Dissemination of road environment information and the European irregularities
- Harmonisation and intensification of European police enforcement, with particular attention to be paid to the AETR-regulation of professional drivers
- Launch of Europe-wide safety campaigns and a greater involvement in this field of safety work by the bodies and institutions of the CEE countries.

A joint effort by all the EU members and a close co-operation between them is the basis for fulfilling the ambitious EU safety target.

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