

SEC Belt Monitor



Editorial

This is the fourth newsletter published under the SEC Belt, a project started by ETSC in 2004 to focus on those European countries which have a higher road risk than the EU-15 average. These countries include all the new EU Member States, but also Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Greece. Together, they form a belt stretching from the Southern to Central and Eastern parts of Europe. ETSC has named them the SEC Belt countries, with SEC standing for Southern, Eastern and Central European countries.

This issue of SEC Belt Monitor presents the latest developments in road safety in five countries from the most Eastern parts of the European Union: Poland, Hungary and the three Baltic states. Reports show that, among these five countries, only Estonia has been able to continue improving road safety in a sustainable manner. In the other countries, small steps of improvement have been taken. However, these countries must invest much more effort in order to fulfil their commitment to reaching their own nationally set targets, as well as the EU target.

Following an introduction of the road safety policies of the Eastern SEC Belt countries (Trends and Figures, p.1), Ilona Buttler from the Polish Motor Institute (ITS) gives her view of the situation in Poland (Opinion, p.3). ETSC interviewed Zsolt Csaba Horváth, the Hungarian Deputy State Secretary of Transport, on the recent developments in Hungary. Peter Holló from the Hungarian Institute of Transport Sciences (KTI) also gives his account of Hungary's road safety performance (Country focus, p.6). Lastly, you will find in this SEC Belt Monitor a summary of ETSC's recent activities under the SEC Belt project (SEC Belt brief, p.8).

Trends and figures

The road safety levels of Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia still remain low compared to most of the older EU-15 states. When comparing with Europe's top performers (the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands) where about 60 people die yearly in road accidents per one million inhabitants, at least twice as many are killed per year in these countries (Fig. 1).

A large share of those who die in road accidents are killed when moving about on foot. In Latvia, Lithuania and Poland more than one third of all road deaths are pedestrians, whereas in the EU-15, this share is no more than 15% (Fig. 2).

Despite rapidly growing motorisation levels, all five countries have made impressive progress over

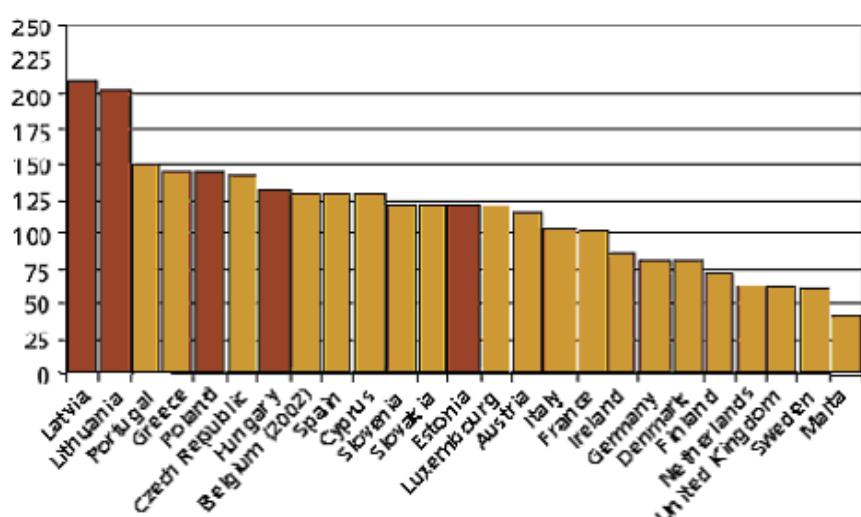


Fig. 1 Road accident deaths per million population for 2003. Source: ETSC

the last years in reducing casualties from road transport. Estonia and Hungary even witnessed a more than 50% reduction in road deaths from 1990 to 2000 (Poland only reached a 14% reduction in the same period.).

Latest data shows however that this progress has lost impetus. The number of road deaths has risen again in most countries at the beginning of the years 2000, and from 2003 to 2004 there has been an increase in road deaths in all countries except Hungary (Table 1). In Poland and Latvia, the share of pedestrian deaths has also increased from 2003 to 2004 (Poland +6% to 35%, Latvia +9% to 38%).

Positive is however that the number of alcohol-related accidents is generally decreasing, except in Hungary. Estonia has been especially successful in reducing this type of accident, and accident deaths caused by drink driving dropped by a stunning 55% from 2002 to 2003.

Also seat belt use, whilst still low compared with other EU countries, is going up slowly. In Estonia and Poland, nearly three in four front seat occupants buckled up in 2004. In Hungary this was just under 60%. For Lithuania and Latvia no rates are available, so the success of national policies in this field cannot be monitored.

In the background of these developments, the five countries included in this review all revised their road safety targets between 2002 and 2005, and most of them have also set up new strategies to achieve these targets. In Hungary, where a successful seven-year programme for road safety

ended in 2000, a new target was set in 2004. The country now aims to reduce the 2001 number of road accident deaths by 30% up to 2010, and by 50% up to 2015. A new government action plan is still in progress.

Estonia adopted a "Plan 100" in 2003, which forecast a 55% reduction to no more than 100 road deaths in 2015. Lithuania approved a new strategy in December 2004 that runs from 2005 to 2010, which also includes a 50% reduction target.

Poland approved a new strategy termed GAMBIT 2005 in April this year. The country did not reach the 2003 intermediate target set out in the previous GAMBIT 2000 strategy, and progress towards the 2010 target (no more than 4,000 deaths) was slowing down. The new and even more ambitious target for 2013 is now less than 2,800 deaths, with intermediate targets for 2007 and 2010.

Similarly, Latvia aimed to reduce by 50% the 1999 number of road deaths to no more than 324 in 2006. In 2004, no more than 400 deaths were expected. In actual fact, 516 people died in 2004, which represents a 21% drop from 1999. Preparation is now underway for a follow-up plan 2007-2010.

So there is hope that Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Estonia will use the fresh impetus that has come with the new programmes to implement a maximum of measures in a coherent way. Their citizens, just as everyone else, have the right to move in traffic without being killed or hurt.

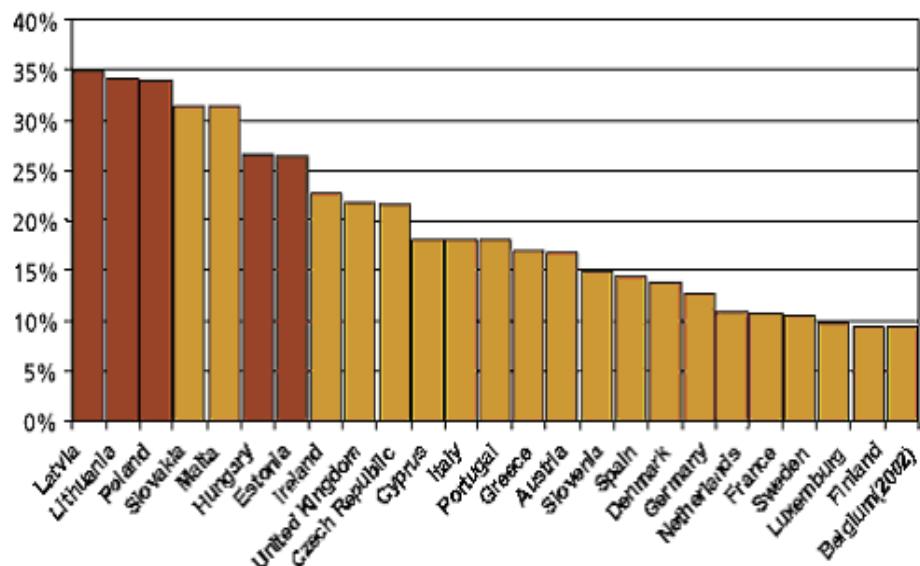


Fig. 2 Pedestrians deaths as a proportion of all deaths, 2002. Source: ETSC

Country	Alcohol-related accidents	Period
Estonia	-36%	2003-2004
Latvia	-16%	2002-2003
Poland	-11.4%	2002-2003
Lithuania	-8%	2003-2004
Hungary	+19%	2003-2004

Table 1 Alcohol-related accidents

Opinion

Poland - the long way from strategy to action

In spring this year, Poland revised its national road safety strategy, replacing GAMBIT 2000 by GAMBIT 2005. The country has not reached the intermediate target set out in GAMBIT 2000 for 2003, and progress towards the 2010 target has been slowing down. In GAMBIT 2005, the previous 2010 target has been replaced by a new and even more ambitious target for 2013, with intermediate targets for 2007 and 2010. Subtargets include a 75% drop in accident deaths on national roads (where currently 36% of deaths occur) and a reduction in Vulnerable Road Users' deaths from 46% to no more than 30% of the total by 2013.

ETSC has asked **Ilona Buttler** from the Polish Motor Transport Institute (ITS) in Warsaw to explain the background to these recent developments.

Lesser impact but growing risk

Since 1997, Poland has seen a gradual drop in the number of deaths and injuries from traffic accidents. As passenger cars are being gradually replaced with more modern and safer vehicles, and protective devices are more widely being used, the severity of accidents is also decreasing.

Yet the sources of risk remain the same. Specialists believe that economic factors also play a role

here and predict that in the years to come, as the economy improves, the level of risk on Polish roads could continue to grow. Data from 2004 seems to confirm this prognosis. It shows that the progress Poland was making in reducing casualties has lost impetus. Last year 5,712 people died in road accidents in Poland (+1.3% from 2003) and 64,661 people were injured (+1.2% from 2003).

Poland: fatalities and motorization

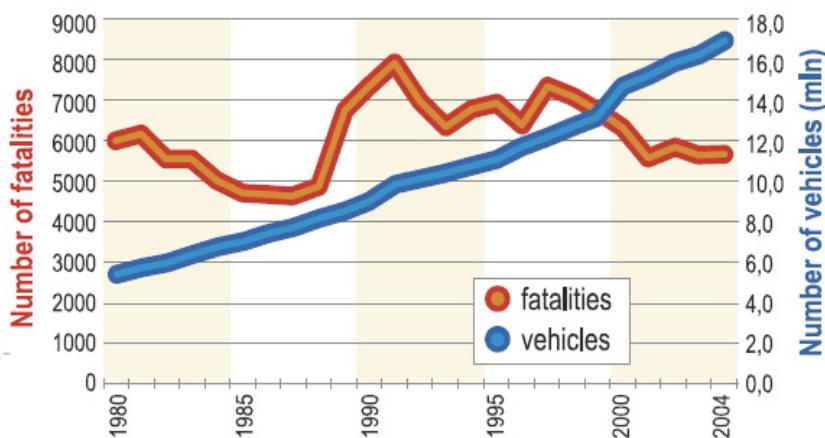


Fig. 3 Road deaths and motorisation. Source: GAMBIT 2005

Obtaining policy makers' commitment

In the early nineties, Poland established a National Road Safety Council as well as Regional Road Safety Councils (RRSC) in all sixteen regions to coordinate road safety efforts of national and regional authorities. The goal was to obtain a stronger involvement from the government and local authorities in road safety work. Poland's changeable political situation has however meant that road safety never became a priority issue for the top state authorities. The interest of regional authorities in road safety varies largely from region to region. Only 5 of 16 regions have successfully developed regional road safety programmes.

A coherent strategy...

Poland's road safety effort has a long history, dating back as far as the 1960s, i.e. before motorisation really took off in this country. In the seventies and eighties, a number of more or less detailed road safety programmes were developed. Each and every one plan neglected however the need to set up the necessary conditions (e.g. organisational structures, funding, legal conditions, technical arrangements) to ensure the programme's implementation.

First attempts to change the situation began in the nineties. In 1996, Poland's first integrated road safety programme GAMBIT was developed.

Looking back, the biggest advantage of the proposed programme was its revolutionary road safety philosophy, a novelty in Poland at the time. The new approach included a clear quantitative target, and it concentrated on seven problem areas including speed, young road users, drunk road users, vulnerable road users and the severity of accidents. A set of preventative measures was developed for each problem area, taking into account education, legal regulations, enforcement and engineering solutions.

"There has been a significant improvement from 2000 to 2003, but this was happening outside the GAMBIT 2000 framework."

This integrated road safety programme was approved by the National Road Safety Council in 1996, but it was never adopted by the Polish government. Despite that, the programme was later quoted in many official documents, and a number of road safety schemes were regarded as part of delivering GAMBIT 1996. In May 2001, an updated programme, GAMBIT 2000, finally gained the approval by the Council of Ministers. GAMBIT 2000 put forward two targets for preventative measures, a short-term target to reduce deaths to 5,500 in 2003, and a long-term target to reduce deaths to 4,000 in 2010.

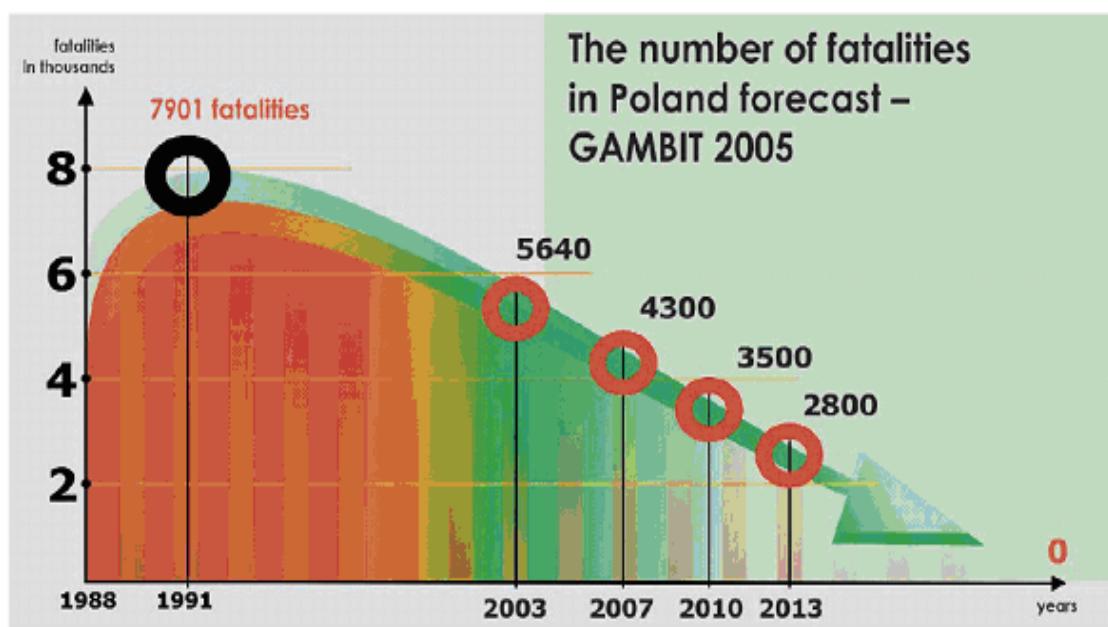


Fig. 4 Polish road safety target 2013 and intermediate targets. Source: GAMBIT 2005

Although the intermediate target has not been met (in 2003, 5,640 people died on Polish roads), the first three years of this millennium saw a significant reduction in the number of fatalities (-10.4%) and injured (-10.8%), compared to 2000. It is however questionable whether this reduction has been the result of the GAMBIT programmes, or whether we should look for the reasons elsewhere. Careful analysis shows that most of the measures included in GAMBIT 2000 have not been implemented. So even if the government had a road safety programme with clear targets, real prevention was happening outside the programme framework.

... but no coherent funding

Moreover, there has been hardly any coordination of road safety measures. Funding has come from a few unrelated sources including Polish ministries, central agencies, local authorities, insurance companies and state-owned enterprises. Recently, some of the accident prevention efforts have also received funding from World Bank loans, from the EU and from private companies (e.g. Renault, Shell or the Polish Zywiec brewery). But the decision on which measure they would like to support has been left entirely to the funding body. So typically, measures that are supported would include low cost road schemes, equipment purchases for the police and educational measures mainly addressed to children.

"The lack of a coherent funding mechanism has severely hampered the implementation of the GAMBIT 2000 programme."

Hardly any money has been made available for road safety research, with the effect that little has been done in recent years to analyse the various road safety problems. Research undertaken includes studies on infrastructure and road user behaviour. Most importantly, a regular monitoring of speeds and safety belt usage has been carried out for the Ministry of Infrastructure since June 2002. Poland has also been involved in the SARTRE project, and there have been several public surveys (e.g. on aggressive behaviour, on the use of safety belts and child restraints). Unfortunately, the results of these studies have only been used on an ad-hoc basis, and there has been no close link between research and the delivery of the national and regional GAMBIT programmes.

The lack of a coherent funding mechanism that matches the ambitions of the well-devised GAMBIT strategy has severely hampered the implementation of the programme. Many attempts have been made to establish a separate Road Safety Fund, but so far these attempts have failed. Apparently, governments are reluctant to allocate public funds to road safety work, and Poland's major insurance companies have no interest in the issue. In other words, the problem of road safety funding is still very much an unsolved one.

Unexpected increase in fatalities

Over the last few years, this situation has not been a major cause for concern. Poland's accident prevention policy was seen as effective, as road-deaths continued to decrease gradually. But the increase in road accident fatalities in 2004 and in the first months of 2005 has come as a shock.

In mid-April of 2005 the government of Poland reacted by adopting a revised road safety programme, GAMBIT 2005 (Fig. 4). The problems of road safety have also found their way into other proposed government documents including the National Transport Policy 2005–2025, the National Development Strategy and the Strategy for Transport Development 2007–2013. The new strategy papers, while welcome and necessary, can however not replace consistent action to improve safety.

In the last decade, Poland has introduced a number of measures that have been proven to be successful in other countries and the awareness for road safety issues has grown. Still, the results of the country's road safety policy and its road safety management system are far from what can be expected. The only comfort is that more and more people in Poland start to realise this.



Ilona Buttler is a psychologist and Senior Researcher at the Motor Transport Institute in Warsaw. Her main areas of expertise include road user behaviour, road safety education and road safety management. Ilona Buttler has been co-author of the Polish national road safety programme GAMBIT and the Regional Road Safety Programmes for the Warsaw and Mazovia regions. She has participated in several European projects such as SARTRE 2 and 3, BEST, NICHEs and DRUID.

Country focus: Hungary

"The 30% target for 2010 is a realistic one."

Road safety in Hungary has been a success story in the 1990s: from 1990 to 2000 the number of road deaths dropped by 50%, from 2,432 to 1,200. Recently however, progress has stalled. While the number of road deaths has remained roughly the same, the number of personal injury accidents has continued to rise. ETSC spoke with **Zsolt Csaba Horváth**, Deputy State Secretary of Transport of the Republic of Hungary.

ETSC: Why has Hungary been unable to continue improving road safety levels?

The main reason for the slight worsening of the accident statistics since 2000 is that traffic participants do not sufficiently comply with the traffic rules. About 80% of all accidents occur because safety rules are not adhered to. Also, international truck traffic across Hungary has grown and traffic density has increased.

To stop this worsening of the traffic safety situation in Hungary, a short term government action plan is being worked on. The Parliament is also discussing a proposal regarding technical and environmental vehicle standards, as well as rules regarding commercial transport. One of the objectives is to enable police to remove vehicles from traffic if checks have revealed major deficiencies in basic safety equipment (e.g. brakes, lights).

ETSC: Hungary has set itself the goal of reducing the number of road deaths by 30% by the year 2010. What are the steps foreseen to achieve it?

The need to reduce the number of killed persons in road accidents by 30% by the end of 2010 is a definite objective in Hungary's transport policy, and we consider it realistic to achieve this goal. There are several measures foreseen that will help us achieving our target. A development programme for the high-speed road network will be realised in the next years, roundabouts will be constructed and the level and efficiency of police enforcement will be improved. Also, passenger transport by road and rail will be strengthened to curb the growth of individual car traffic. Penalties for violating the most important traffic safety rules will become stricter, and communication related to accident prevention will be developed.

"The slight worsening of the accidents statistics is mainly due to insufficient compliance with the traffic rules."

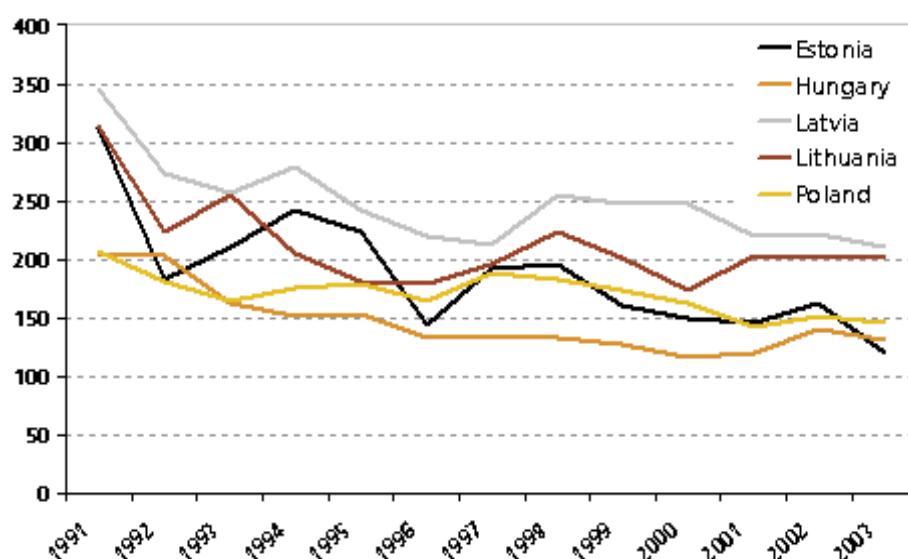


Fig. 5 Road accident deaths per million population, 1991-2003.
Source: ETSC

ETSC: It has been shown in the best-performing countries that research has a major role to play in the improvement of road safety. How do you use expert advice available in Hungary?

The Institute for Transport Sciences (KTI) collects accident data and analyses the causes of accidents, case by case supported by foreign experts. We take the scientific results into account during the implementation of the government measures. We also plan to establish an independent investigating body to analyse in detail the causes of severe accidents.

"A major safety belt campaign in 2005 has helped to increase use among drivers by 5%."

ETSC: A positive development in Hungary is that the wearing of safety belts has increased over the last years. How could this be achieved?

To improve the usage rate of safety belts, a significant portion of our efforts was spent on effective controls in 2005. As a first step, a research study was carried out concerning the habits and willingness to wear a safety belt. For a period of one month we then conducted intensive targeted controls, and those who failed to use the safety belt received penalty points. At the same time, we also used the media to motivate as many people as possible to use this life saving equipment. This campaign was then followed up by a second study to evaluate its efficiency. This research has shown that the safety belt usage rate has increased amongst drivers by about 5%.

ETSC: What can we learn from this success for other areas of policymaking such as drink driving and speeding?

Intensive targeted police checks in combination with information on the risks and consequences of unsafe behaviours have also proven to be effective in these areas.

ETSC: There has been a penalty point system set up and improved over the last years. Based on the experience in other countries, this can be seen as another very positive development. What are the experiences in Hungary with this system?

The penalty point system introduced in 2001 applies only to traffic offenders with a Hungarian driving licence. It cannot be applied in cases when the traffic offences have been committed by drivers holding a foreign licence. When the maximum number of 18 points is reached, the driving licence is withdrawn. The system has been made more stringent as of April 1, 2004 when the number of points that can be imposed was increased from 1 to 3 points. In the future, the system should become even stricter, and up to 5 points should be imposed for the more severe offences.

ETSC: Is there sufficient police enforcement so the system does indeed have the effect of deterring drivers from committing traffic offences?

It is our objective to continuously increase the frequency of the police controls, which requires budgetary resources as well.

ETSC: According to the Hungarian police, both equipment and staff are currently insufficient to deliver an effective enforcement of speed limits. What is the Hungarian government doing to remedy this?

The speed control devices used by the police will be replaced by better technology, and some more equipment will be bought in the near future. An efficient use of fully automated systems will however be possible only when the legal framework has been adapted, which is currently in progress.

"New legislation will enable the use of automated speed control systems."

A recent government proposal will introduce an administrative sanction that will be borne by the owner of the vehicle. It will however not be possible to impose the sanctions attached to the specific traffic offence (e.g. penalty points, driving ban) on the driver. The proposal is expected to become law in 2006.

Experiments with automated equipment were already started this year. Such systems are needed also because it is impossible in certain places to stop vehicles for controls. This is especially true in Budapest, in other major cities and on high speed roads.

ETSC: The EU Transport Ministers have pledged at meanwhile three Verona conferences that they will develop strong policies to reduce road casualties in Europe. Which of the commitments have been particularly important for Hungary, and what will Hungary do to honour these commitments?

Among the conclusions of the Verona III conference, it is of special importance for Hungary that the EU Directive on the driving licences is adopted, including the possibility of using a more stringent sanction system. In the interest of vulnerable road users we regard it as important to increase the use of light-reflecting vests and bicycle helmets and to further develop the bicycle networks. For its part, Hungary intends

to promote the distribution of "best practice" through the organisation of national and international conferences on traffic safety.



Zsolt Csaba Horváth holds a degree in Transport Engineering and an MBA from Budapest Technical University. Before becoming the Deputy State Secretary of Transport in 2005, he worked for a number of major transport operators in Hungary, including the Hungarian airline (Malév) and railways (MÁV).

"Hungary has shown in the 1990s that it can reduce road deaths by 50% within ten years"

What should Hungary do in the future to prevent death and injury from road accidents? What are the lessons to be learnt from the past? ETSC has asked Dr Sc Péter Holló of the Hungarian Institute for Transport Sciences (KTI) to give his view on this issue.

In its "Hungarian Transport Policy from 2003 to 2015" Hungary has set itself the target to reduce the 2001 number of fatalities by at least 30%, and also the number of personal injury accidents by at least 30% by 2010. By 2015, these numbers should decrease by 50%.

These targets are fairly modest in comparison with the EU or ECMT targets, but unfortunately they are only realistic at the moment, as road safety is not a high priority. In fact, the targets themselves are not really known to Hungarians, and not even to all experts. Moreover, no strategy has been proposed so far as to how these targets should be reached. An evaluation of the successful 1993-2000 road safety programme has been carried out, including some clear proposals for the future. It is important that the revision of the programme is finalised as soon as possible.

In Hungary, neither the public nor the decision-makers have been really interested in road safety problems in the last years. Measures that potentially increase the road risk, such as raising the speed limits, have been better received than measures improving safety, at least in the short term. Often, "letting the genie out of the lamp"

has been witnessed. Decisions were made without impact analyses, and it used to be common that independent expertise was only taken into consideration if it supported "popular" political decisions.

Today, the situation is changing, and the top political level is becoming more involved in the road safety effort. However, the responsibility for traffic safety is still not well defined in Hungary. Neither the Ministry of Home Affairs nor the Ministry of Transport is clearly responsible. Moreover, there is no high-level co-ordinating body that would be independent of the ministries. This body should be created to monitor the measures taken and to compare the results with the objectives laid down in the government's road safety programme.

"We need a high-level co-ordinating body that is independent of the ministries."

An individual measure that has been successful is the Hungarian penalty point system. The system, though not effective in the beginning, has lately been improved substantially. The non-wearing

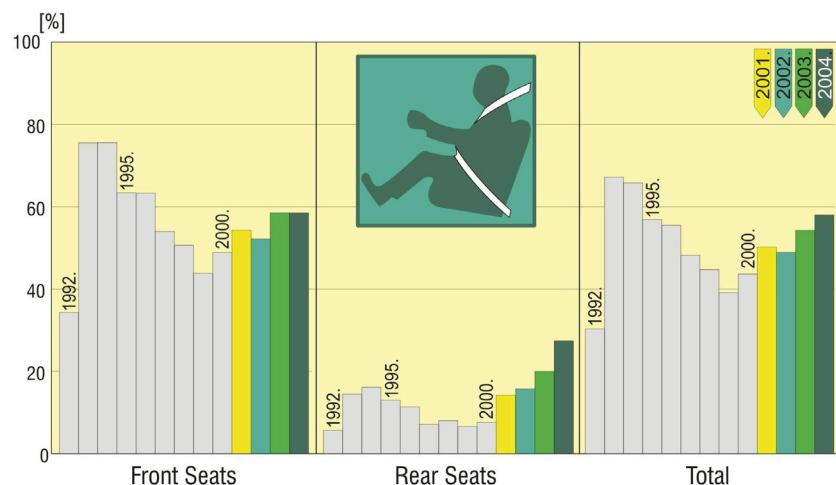


Fig. 6 Changes in the safety belt wearing rates from 1992 to 2004. Source: KTI

of safety belts has also been included in the list of offences carrying penalty points (Fig. 6)

"Car occupants' risk is decreasing"

Indeed, since the year 2000 seat belt wearing rates have no longer been decreasing, and there has even been a slightly increasing trend. Better protection through seat belts could be one of the reasons why – despite an increasing number of personal injury accidents – the number of car occupant deaths has dropped from 640 in 2003 to 606 in 2004.

However, no major result can be expected from the improved point demerit system if the presence of the traffic police is not enhanced. Currently, both police staff and equipment are insufficient in relation to the number of vehicles and population, and the length of the public road network, so that the probability for traffic offenders to be caught is not adequate. Intensive policing is required which consistently enforces the most important rules (speed limits, blood alcohol limit, wearing of safety belts).

"The enforcement of traffic law must be improved."

Most importantly, the drivers' compliance with speed limits should be strengthened. In view of the unsatisfactory level of police enforcement,

it would be very important to create the legal framework for the application of automatic speed cameras. For the moment, this is not yet possible in Hungary as the driver, and not the vehicle owner, is responsible for speeding offences. It would also be important to introduce new and cost-effective ways of police enforcement such as section control.

Hungary has already proved once that it is able to reduce the number of killed in road accidents by 50% within ten years: from 1990 to 2000 the number of road fatalities decreased from 2,432 to 1,200. But based on the developments of the last four years, reaching the EU objective seems beyond Hungary's grasp.



D. Sc. Péter Holló is the Head of the Road Safety and Traffic Engineering Department of the Hungarian Institute for Transport Sciences (KTI), where he has been working as a researcher and scientific counsellor for more than 30 years. He has worked on the effectiveness and cost-benefit ratio of different road safety measures, on the economic consequences of road crashes and on a uniform classification of road accident types for Hungary. Dr. Holló has also led the elaboration of Hungary's 1993 National Road Safety Programme.

SEC Belt brief

At the end of 2005, ETSC is about to conclude Phase II of the SEC Belt project.

Phase I, which was completed in 2004, addressed safety practitioners and road users in the SEC Belt countries. During this phase three seminars on vulnerable road users were organised in Spain, Poland and the Czech Republic. The results of these seminars were documented in an **ETSC Policy Paper on "The Safety of vulnerable road users in the Southern, Eastern and Central European countries"**. This project phase also led to the development of a concept for a mobile exhibition on road safety in the SEC Belt countries.

Phase II addressed international/European safety experts. It focused on overarching transport safety issues such as the evaluation of data and policies. This phase includes three scientific publications.

An ETSC Working Party is currently in the final phase of drafting a **Review on the "Achieving national policies for safety on the road"** to help national policymakers in the SEC Belt countries to assess and benchmark their policies. The Working Party held its final meeting in Paris on 20 September 2005.

Another Working Party is preparing a **Review on "Road accident data in the European Union - Learning from each other"**, including a set of recommendations to national and European policy makers on how to improve road safety data collection, analysis and dissemination. The experts of this Working Party held their last meeting in Budapest on 2 September 2005 to discuss the final draft. Both Reviews are expected to be disseminated in early 2006.

Phase II has also lead to the publication of the first **ETSC Year Book on "Safety and Sustainability"**, which identifies synergies between safety and environmental transport measures in order to help reduce all negative consequences from transport. The Yearbook, published in September 2005, comprises nine articles focusing on low-cost, short-term measures to improve both safety and environmental protection. The Yearbook is available on ETSC's website.

At the same time, ETSC has also continued promoting best practice in traffic safety. This is the aim of Phase III of the SEC Belt project, which stretches over a period of three years (2004-2006). Since July 2005, ETSC has published two more **Fact Sheets on "Motor Vehicle Speed in the EU" and "The Safety of Heavy Duty Vehicles"**.



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