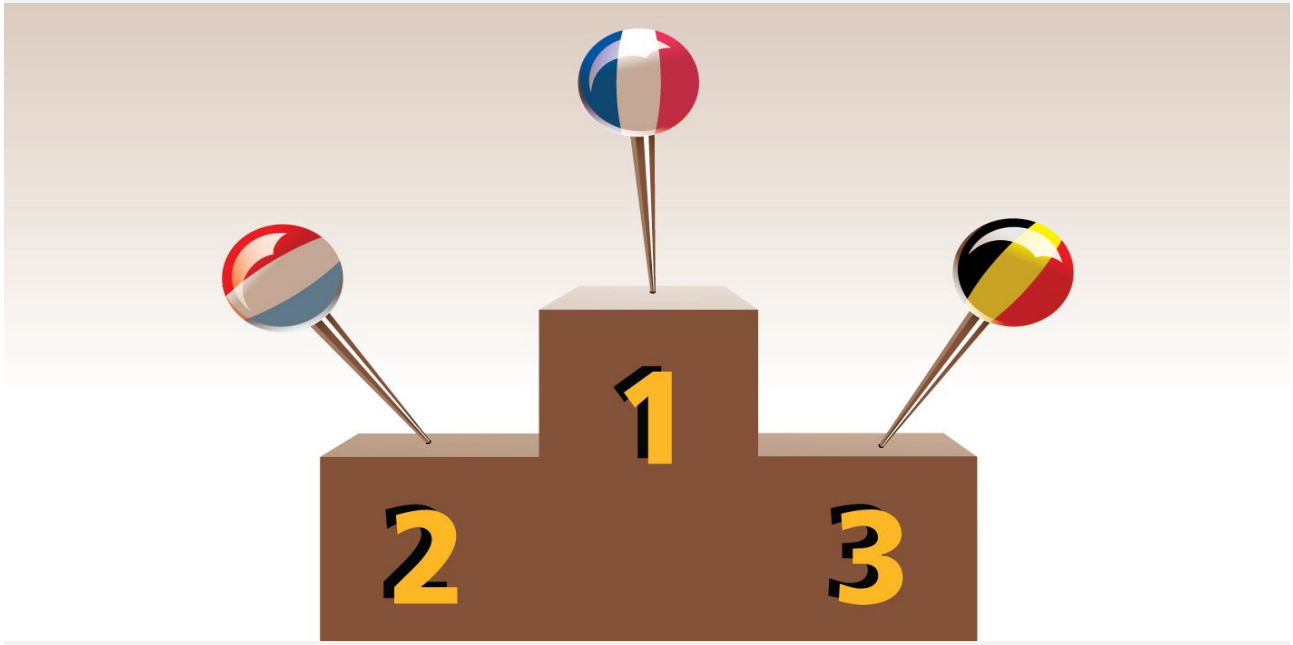
Making progress happen

EU transport ministers have set themselves the target of cutting annual road deaths by 50% between 2001 and 2010. Accession countries, one by one, adopted similar objectives at a national level, and the EU target was revised to include these countries. How far have we come since then? A first review carried out by the European Commission earlier this year has found that traffic deaths in the EU have dropped by only 17-18%. Are Member States dragging their feet?



This first ranking under the Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) shows that some countries are contributing fully to the European target even though the majority do not. Over the last four years, **France** has achieved an outstanding **35%** drop, closely followed by **Luxembourg** with **34%**. In **Belgium**, the reduction has been of the order of **27%**.

Also countries like **Portugal**, **Sweden**, the **Netherlands**, **Denmark**, **Germany** and – maybe – **Italy** are on track to reaching the target. They have all been able to reduce road deaths by more than 20% up to 2005.

This Road Safety PIN Flash presents these developments and their backgound. It includes an interview with Interministerial Delegate Rémy Heitz, senior official under the Prime Minister's authority, who is in charge of road safety policy in France.

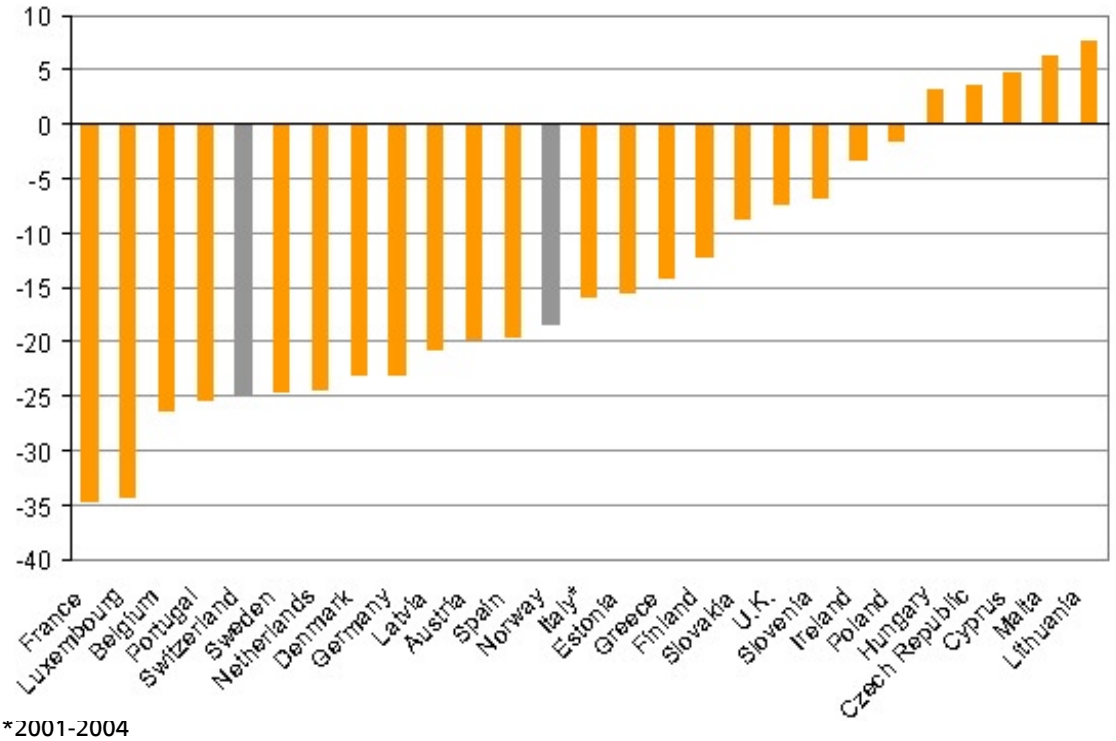
The EU target is achievable ... for all countries

France, **Luxembourg** and **Belgium** all used to be above the average of EU death rates. By 2005, they moved up from the last to the second third of the league (Fig. 2), confirming that progress can be achieved quickly by underperformers. This is also true for **Portugal**.

But also **Sweden** and the **Netherlands**, as well as Switzerland, have been able to improve quickly. These countries have been frontrunners in Europe for a long time. Still, they scored reductions between 24% and 25% over the last four years, showing that it is possible to make great progress even for countries that are top performers already (Fig. 1 and 3).

Denmark and **Germany** each reached a 23% decrease. If the trend of the last years continues, **Denmark**, **Germany** and **Italy** (where the 2005 figure is still not available) will also be able to cut road deaths by 50% until 2010.

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*2001-2004

Fig. 1 Reduction in road deaths 2001-2005 (in %). Source: CARE and national data

But some have not progressed

Some countries have not recorded any progress over the last years. In **Lithuania**, which holds the worst safety record overall, the situation has not picked up sustainably since the mid-nineties. **Hungary**, a country that used to be a fast improver in the 1990s, has not recovered from a sharp increase in 2002, when an increase in general speed limits outside urban areas took its toll.

In **Ireland**, traffic deaths are on the rise following a positive development in 2002/03.

Poland has not made any noteworthy progress in the last years though there has been improvement in 2005. Against the background of the positive developments in most other countries, Poland's share in the EU's road toll increased from 11% (2001) to 13% (2005) (Fig. 3). Poland's population represents only 8% of the EU population.

The indicator

This ranking is based on the best-trusted road safety figure: a count of deaths. In most countries, a person killed in traffic is someone who died within 30 days from injuries sustained in a crash. Some countries, such as Spain and Portugal, use however other definitions, and comparable data are calculated using transformation rules. France recently changed the rule from 6 days to 30 days. Another problem limiting comparability is that not all injury accidents are reported. The underreporting of death ranges up to 12% (France) and 26% (Italy).

Yet traffic deaths are only part of the problem. Many more people sustain injuries, but these are even harder to compare internationally. Only 8 European countries use the same definition regarding severe injuries, and underreporting of hospitalised casualties varies between 30% and 60%.

Glossary to the CARE database. **European Commission, 2006**
Road accident data in the enlarged European Union. **ETSC, 2006**

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Background

Why are some countries doing better than others?

Few studies have been carried out to pin down the causes of the latest developments in road safety in Europe. Moreover, these studies have not revealed the full range of causes for improvement. A recent study by the Dutch Road Safety Institute (SWOV), for example, has found an explanation for one third of the more-than-average reduction in road deaths in the Netherlands over the last two years. The causes of the other two-thirds could not be traced. Generally, it is difficult for methodological reasons to measure the effect of road safety measures shortly after their introduction.

Given this scarce scientific evidence, ETSC has turned to renowned experts from the seven fastest-improving countries in Europe. We found that, according to the experts, rapid improvement in their countries has not been a matter of chance. The outstanding success was in large part due to stepped up efforts by national policymakers supported by other stakeholders. Of course, external factors such as changes in mobility patterns have played a role too.

Political commitment

In **France**, the number one in reducing road deaths over the last four years, it was the highest political level who took up the challenge. On 14 July 2002, President Jacques Chirac declared the "fight against road violence" one of the top three priorities of his second term in office. In September 2002, a high-level meeting (États-Généraux) was convened and three months later, a first series of measures aimed at "ending drivers feeling of impunity" was adopted.

The developments very much parallel earlier steps made in **Belgium**. Here, the new focus on road safety dates back to 2000 when traffic crashes first featured as one of 9 priorities in a National Safety Plan. In May 2001, an États-Généraux meeting took place and a new strategy was worked out subsequently.

In **Luxembourg**, road safety has been declared one of the first political priorities, and in **Portugal**, all relevant actors agreed for the first time in 2003 on an integrated National Road Safety Plan. "*This plan is a very useful document. It is unfortunate that the political support for its implementation has recently diminished. We are currently well under way to reaching our 2010 target but this will not happen if we lose the momentum.*" Joao Cardoso of the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (LNEC) said.

"Road safety success in the Netherlands is the result of a joint effort by all parties concerned."

Peter M. Mak, Advisor, Dutch Transport Research Centre (AVV)

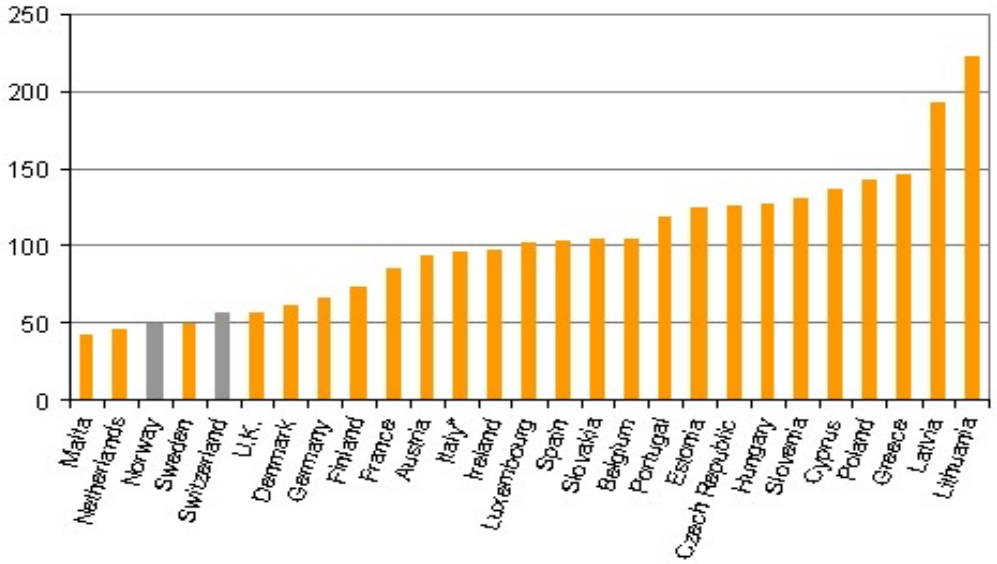


Fig. 2 Road deaths 2005 (per million population). Source: Eurostat, national data

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Enforcing and explaining the law…

Raising compliance with traffic safety law has been a key contributor to success in countries showing lower levels of road safety, such as **France**, **Luxembourg**, **Belgium** and **Portugal**.

France's flagship measure has been the introduction of a fully automated speed management system. Between end 2003 and end 2005, 870 fixed and mobile cameras were put in operation, and their number is still increasing. Checks and sanctions for all major traffic offences were tightened and procedures no longer dropped.

Also in **Luxembourg**, **Belgium** and **Portugal**, police checks on speeding, drink driving and seat belts have been tightened in conjunction with an overhaul of the sanction regime.

In **Luxembourg**, a penalty point system was introduced in late 2002. Other measures such as a revision of sanctions for major traffic offences and the introduction of 'zero tolerance' for drug driving are still pending in Parliament. It has also been envisaged to lower the legal BAC from 0.8 to 0.5‰ and to recommend all road users to turn on their headlights during daytime between October and March.

In **Belgium**, the system of fixed penalties has been revised for most traffic offences, relating penalties to the level of risk associated with the offence. A new Traffic Penalty Fund was created to enable local police forces to enhance their efforts in the areas of speeding, drink driving, safety restraints and heavy good vehicles. In 2006, they received a total of over 60 million euros.

Similarly in **Portugal**, penalties for speeding, drink driving and the non-use of seat belts were increased. The enforcement of existing rules was tightened, especially when it comes to speeding and the use of restraint systems.

In all these countries, road safety awareness increased significantly for all key players resulting in changes in attitudes, behaviour and professional practices. Beside legislation and enforcement, campaigns and education have also contributed to this. In Belgium, people have been able to sign up to a coalition bringing together all people and all initiatives to improve road safety (ikbenvoor.be; jesuispour.be). In Luxembourg, road safety programmes were introduced in primary schools as well as in the curricula of upper secondary school classes.

But these recent changes in behaviour cannot be taken for granted. "*The achievements made in France can only be made to last if road safety education and awareness raising activities receive the same priority as compliance with safety law,*" Pierre Gustin, Managing Director of Prévention Routière Française said.

Jean Chapelon, General Secretary of the French Interministerial Road Safety Observatory, is optimistic: "*If the current trend continues, we could witness another 10% reduction this year*", he said.

Did you know that …

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 traveling 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.

75%

***Impact du contrôle sanction automatisé sur la sécurité routière (2003-2005).* Observatoire national interministériel de sécurité routière, 2006**

"The commitment of stakeholders and policymakers has led us to record a substantial improvement of road safety. Communication and sensibilisation together with stronger enforcement were key to a successful policy."

Patric Derweduwen, Managing Director, Belgian Road Safety Institute (IBSR/BIVV)

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"Improving road safety is a permanent and never ending process which, in order to achieve sustainable results, presupposes a change of mentality amongst the population. Therefore, efforts to enhance education and to raise awareness of future road users, starting at an early age, must be strengthened."

Guy Heintz, Inspecteur Principal, Road Traffic Safety Directorate, Ministry of Transport, Luxembourg

… also for advanced students

Improvements in road user behaviour have also played an important part in the success stories of countries such as **Switzerland** and the **Netherlands**, both top performers in road safety in Europe.

Switzerland achieved in 2005 a spectacular 20% drop in traffic deaths, and preliminary figures show that this trend is continuing. The main reason for this has been a better control of two of the main causes of accidents, speed and alcohol. On 1 January 2005, the legal blood alcohol limit was lowered from 0.8 to 0.5‰ and police empowered to run random breath tests.

In the **Netherlands**, an impressive reduction in road deaths was achieved especially during 2004 (-19%) and 2005 (-7%). In this period, the number of road deaths was almost 20% lower than it would have been had the downward trend of the preceding years continued.

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 development. Moreover, speed enforcement has become a priority with the introduction of a new digital speed camera system and an increase in fines.

Sweden is working toward an intermediate target of no more than 270 road deaths in 2007. "*We may fail to reach this goal by 2007*," says Fridtjof Thomas from the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), "*but this failure comes with the golden opportunity to discuss broadly what it takes to seriously reduce the suffering on our roads.*"

"We assume that the extra decrease as a result of seat belt use, alcohol consumption and speed behaviour is not temporary, but will be of a permanent nature, provided that the enforcement and information remain at least at the same level."

Fred Wegman, Managing Director, SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research

Did you know that …

In the **Netherlands**, better compliance with key road safety rules contributed at least 25% to the spectacular progress of 2004/2005. Non-compliant behaviours such as speeding (by 16 km/h and more), drink driving (up to 1.3‰) and the non-use of seat belts went down significantly over these two years, accounting for the survival of an estimated extra 40 people.

25%

***De essentie van de daling in het aantal verkeersdoden.* SWOV, 2006**

Upgrading the infrastructure

In **Portugal**, infrastructure developments may have been equally important as improving traffic behaviour. New motorways continued to be constructed, and low-cost traffic calming measures were applied widely in high risk sites and on interurban roads passing through small villages. The National Road Administration improved its grant schemes to finance these works.

Road infrastructure improvements have also been a major focus in **Sweden** and the **Netherlands** over the last years. In Sweden, a large share of rural roads has been changed into 2+1 lane roads with wire fences separating the opposite traffic. In urban areas, 30 km/h zones were widely introduced. There have also been plans to introduce a new speed limit system, with limits adapted to the safety classification of each road. "*Sadly, the*

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plan has just been rejected by the Transport Minister. It has been the result of many experts' work and would bring down the number of casualties substantially," Nils Petter Gregersen from the Swedish National Society for Road Safety (NTF) said.

In the **Netherlands**, new guidelines, based on the 'Sustainable Safety' philosophy, have been introduced. In many urban areas, the speed limit has been lowered from 50 to 30 km/h, and in rural areas from 80 to 60 km/h. There has also been a large increase in the number of roundabouts. The effect of infrastructure works on road safety is however hard to quantify as measures are taken scattered, have small-sized effects and are often not well documented. The Dutch Road Safety Institute (SWOV) estimates that infrastructure measures contributed 6% to the reduction in deaths and serious injuries in 2002.

Changes in mobility

Some of the developments have also been explained through external factors. In the **Netherlands**, for example, a major decrease in moped use has been shown to be responsible for 8% of the extra drop in fatalities witnessed in 2004/2005. In **Portugal**, a parallel development has taken place. There has been a drop of about 40% in moped rider deaths over the last four years (85% since 1990). Moreover, the steep rise in traffic volumes has slowed down recently so road safety efforts are to a lesser extent offset by an increase in driving.

There is still immense scope for progress

Clearly, there is still a need to deepen our understanding of road safety developments in Europe. The causal relationship between measures taken and observed improvements needs to be clarified. The example of the fastest-improving countries suggests however that national governments can achieve a lot in a short time by focusing on improving road user's compliance with traffic law and upgrading the road infrastructure.

Today, 9 out of 25 EU countries stand a chance of reaching the EU target at a national level. To accelerate progress in all countries, more effective EU action will be indispensible.

"We should adopt strict European standards in all areas of road safety work, and especially in treating our high risk roads, enforcing the law and fitting effective safety technology to our vehicles. If we, in such a way, approach road safety systematically, Vision Zero may not only be about the philosophy"

Jörg Beckmann, Executive Director, ETSC

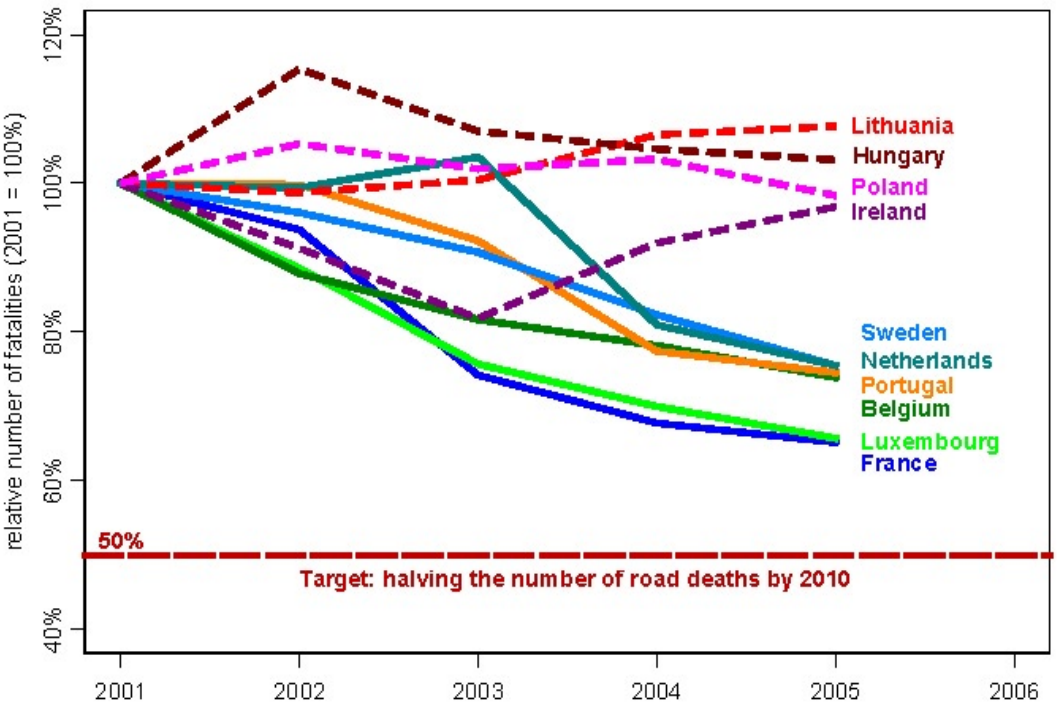


Fig. 3 Developments in road deaths 2001-2005. Source: CARE and national data

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The French experience

Everyone is equal before the Highway Code

France has seen a rapid improvement of road safety over the past years. From 2001 to 2005, the number of deaths has dropped by 34.8%, which represents the best progress of any EU country over this period. ETSC has asked Mr Rémy Heitz, Interministerial Delegate for Road Safety, about past and future priorities of France's road safety policy.

ETSC: In comparison with 2001, nearly 9,000 lives have been saved in 2005 on European roads. France has contributed by about 30% to this decrease in the number of deaths. Which lessons can the other EU Member States learn from the French example? What are the measures that you would like to see being adopted in Brussels?

We would like to say to our neighbours that it is possible to make progress wherever you stand and that the key element is a strong political will that brings about the means to achieve results.

One thing that we would expect from Brussels is a Directive on dedicated daytime headlights for all vehicles. In France, we have trialled the use of headlights during daytime. But we have not been able to show the usefulness of this measure. Its effect was too small on the background of a rapid decrease in driving speeds. We would also support better cross-border recognition of traffic sanctions and the mandatory introduction of manual speed limiters, which are already installed in some models today.

ETSC: What are the national priorities for the coming years?

One of the priorities is to continue increasing the compliance with speed limits. We want to root the habit of respecting the traffic rules. The government will also launch a major review of local speed limits. The préfêts have been asked to examine the limits that are no longer adapted to compliance levels. With the new policy of 'zero tolerance', the speed limit should better reflect the reality of the infrastructure.

It is also important that offences committed by foreigners are properly sanctioned. The government is negotiating bilateral conventions with our neighbouring countries to allow the exchange of information between police forces. We are also considering immobilising the vehicle of foreign offenders in case of a severe or repeated offence. A database of foreign drivers that have been caught in France is under construction.

The safety of two-wheelers will be a major issue in the coming years. The law has to be respected by every road user, also the motorcyclists. We believe that the message has been understood by the riders' associations, and we hope to find solutions together. Today, 50% of the radars in use are able to register riders that are speeding. We will continue to conduct targeted enforcement campaigns against speeding riders. We will also introduce an obligation for car drivers to follow training to be allowed to ride a 125cm3 motorcycle.

> We want to root the habit of respecting the traffic rules.

As far as infrastructure safety is concerned, we have set up commissions at the local level to look into basic aspects such as signalisation and roadside objects. The work of these commissions will be pragmatic and aim at identifying low-cost measures.

ETSC: The French départements are not equal when it comes to facing road violence. This is why audits of local road safety policy are currently undertaken in nine départements whose road safety levels are below average. What do you expect will be the result of these audits?

In France, we are aware that we have to improve road safety in all parts of the country without leaving anyone behind. We have spoken to the préfêts of these départements to draw their attention to the problem. The results of the audits are not known yet but we are already considering measures to improve the coordination between the different actors under the supervision of the préfêt and strengthen the dialogue with the police forces.



Rémy Heitz, magistrate by profession, joined Prime Minister Raffarin's cabinet in 2002. He was appointed Interministerial Delegate for Road Safety and Director of Road Safety and Traffic at the Ministry of Transport in 2003.

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PIN Panel

Austria	Klaus Machata, Road Safety Board (KfV)
Belgium	Patric Derweduwen, Belgian Road Safety institute (IBSR/ BIVV)
Cyprus	George Morfakis, Ministry of Com munications
Czech Republic	Jaroslav Heinrich, Transport Research Centre (CDV)
Denmark	René La Cour Sell, Danish Road Safety Council
Estonia	Dago Antov, Stratum Consultancy
Finland	Mika Hatakka, Central Organisation for Traffic Safety
France	Jean Chapelon, National Interministerial Road Safety Observatory
Germany	Sabine Degener, German Insurance Institute for Traffic Engineering (GDV)
Greece	George Yannis, Technical University of Athens
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Portugal	Joao Cardoso, National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (LNEC)
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Spain	Pilar Zori Bertolin, Ministry of Interior
Sweden	Fridtjof Thomas, National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI)
Switzerland	Stefan Siegrist, Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu)
U.K.	Lucy Rackliff, University of Loughborough

PIN Steering Group

Richard Allsop, ETSC Board of Directors (Chairman)
Urban Karlström, National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI)
Stephen Stacey, Toyota Motor Europe
Pete Thomas, Loughborough University
Claes Tingvall, Swedish Road Administration (SRA)
Stefan Tostmann, European Commission
Fred Wegman, Dutch Road Safety Research Institute (SWOV)
Jörg Beckmann, ETSC
Franziska Achterberg, ETSC

PIN Secretariat

Franziska Achterberg, ETSC
PIN Programme Director
franziska.achterberg@etsc.be

Graziella Jost, ETSC
PIN Programme Officer
graziella.jost@etsc.be

Road Safety PIN Flash

Franziska Achterberg
Graziella Jost

For more information about ETSC's activities, and membership, please contact
ETSC
rue du Cornet 22
B-1040 Brussels
Tel. + 32 2 230 4106
Fax. +32 2 230 4215
E-mail: information@etsc.be
Internet: www.etsc.be

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