SECBeltMonitor



Editorial

Road safety is not distributed evenly across Europe. In some countries of the enlarged European Union, the risk of being killed in a traffic accident is up to eight times higher than in other countries. For pedestrians, the risk differs up to tenfold from one country to another.

Against this background, the European Transport Safety Council has set up a three-year project, which focuses specifically on those countries whose road risk is higher than the former EU-15's average. These countries include all the new EU Member States, Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Greece. Together, they form a belt stretching from the South-West to the North-Eastern parts of Europe. ETSC has named them the **SEC Belt countries**, with SEC standing for Southern, Eastern and Central European countries.

Why is it that these countries' safety performance is so poor? What can be done to improve this situation? In the framework of its new **SEC Belt project**, ETSC has started looking into the specific problems arising in these countries, particularly in relation to vulnerable road users. Our efforts are concentrated mostly on the collection and analysis of reliable data and on the evaluation of national road safety strategies. On the basis of our analysis, we will however also propose measures that the countries can implement in the short term, with a view to reaching the European target of a 50% cut in annual road deaths by 2010.

With this biannual supplement to ETSC's Safety Monitor, we want to keep the road safety community informed about the latest road safety developments in these countries. Our **SEC Belt Monitor** will, of course, also give you a regular update on ETSC's own activities in this respect. Each issue will focus on a different geographical area: the Central and Eastern European, Mediterranean or Western European SEC Belt countries.

The current edition of SEC Belt Monitor is dedicated to the **Central and Eastern European countries** (CEEC) that have joined the EU only very recently. These countries have all emerged from the former Eastern Block, and yet there are marked differences not only in their economical and political situations, but also in their road safety records.

There is however a general trend emerging from all these different paths (see **Trends and figures**, p. 2), and it looks like these countries will have to substantially step up their efforts to contribute to the EU's road safety target for 2010. Will they at all be able to do so? Dr Josef Mikulík, Director of the Czech Transport Research Centre (CDV), is optimistic: „Due to the fact that road safety used to receive too little attention in the past, we can now employ effective measures that are readily available and that can improve safety in a relatively short term. (…) As long as there is a strong political will to assure the implementation of these measures, I believe that the EU task can be achieved," Mr Mikulik said (see **Opinion**, p. 2).

To improve road safety situation, most of the Central and Eastern European countries have adopted ambitious strategies. Poland, the largest of the new Central and Eastern European EU countries, adopted its national safety programme three years ago. With a strategy that is firmly based on scientific evidence, Poland's road safety work still encounters many problems. ETSC has talked with Prof Ryszard Krystek, leading author of the national road safety programme about the programme's implementation and the challenges ahead (see **Country focus**, p. 5).

As part of the SEC Belt project, ETSC has had a chance to meet and talk about road safety also with many other experts from the SEC Belt countries. Through our capacity building seminars in Madrid, Warsaw and Brno we got a detailed and systematic view of the situation of vulnerable road users in all 16 countries. "The seminars were very successful in that we discussed road safety problems of the SEC Belt countries with experts from these countries themselves. For us, it was a very good learning exercise." Antonio Avenoso, ETSC's Policy and Research Officer, said (see **SEC Belt brief**, p. 7).

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Trends and figures

ETSC experts have shown that in the total of the 10 new EU countries, the fatality rate per 10,000 vehicles has dropped steadily, with the exception of an upward shift in 1989/1990. After 1991, the trend continued at the same rate as before the peak. The experts concluded that, based on the expected fatality and motorisation trends, there would be a total of about 8,600 fatalities in these 10 countries in 2010. To reach the target of a 50% reduction, fatalities must however be brought back to about 5,700 in 2010.

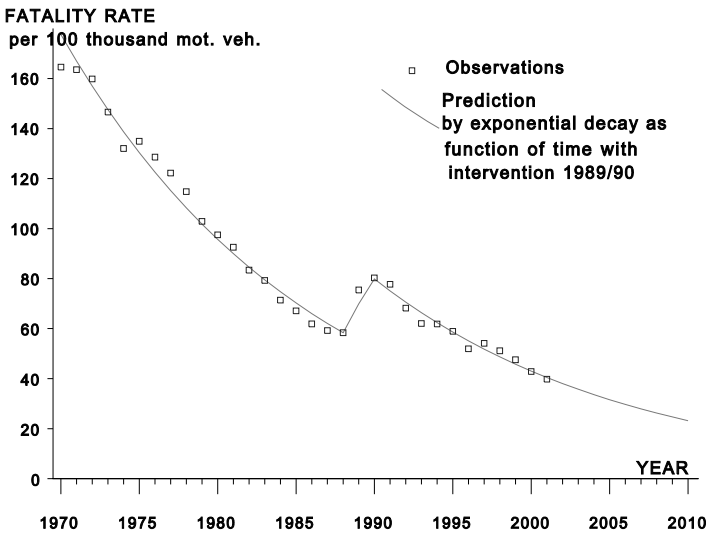


Fig. 1 Fatality rates and their forecast to 2010 for the total of the accession countries. Source: ETSC, 2003

Opinion

Against this background, ETSC has asked a safety expert from one of the countries concerned what he thinks can be expected from the new EU Member States in the near future.

Is it possible to reach the EU target in the new EU countries?

Not long ago, the European Union decided to cut its annual road deaths by half by the year 2010. However, at the time when this was being approved, it was not clear if and when the enlargement of the European Union would be completed. Are the new EU countries able to fulfil the same task or will they struggle to reach the EU road safety target, due to their own high accident records? To what extent have they implemented the EU road safety policy so far?

Here is the answer of **Dr. Josef Mikulík**, Director of the Czech Transport Research Centre (CDV), ETSC's first member organisation from the new EU countries.

The Central and Eastern European countries that have now joined the EU have made substantial efforts to improve their road safety record. The accession process in particular has brought new wind to our countries' road safety policies, and that has happened in two different ways. On the one hand, our countries had to implement currently binding EU safety legislation related to technical aspects of vehicles, the use of safety belts and child seats, driving tests, professional drivers etc. This has brought important benefits in terms of road safety, even if this legislation covers only a relatively small part of the measures which can be taken in our countries.

On the other hand, the accession countries closely followed the discussion and adoption of EU strategic documents such as the 'White Paper on the European Transport Policy' and the 'European Road Safety Action Programme'.

This has no doubt contributed significantly to accelerating our efforts to enhance road safety.

"The accession process in particular has brought new wind to our countries' road safety policies, even if none of the EC institutions officially asked about the road safety situation in our countries."

Unfortunately, the EU's road safety policy in general was not part of the accession process and

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none of the EC institutions officially asked about the road safety situation in our countries. I think this was one of the weak elements of the accession process, which should be improved during the expected new wave of EU enlargement. Pressure from the EU would have helped to achieve a greater commitment to road safety concerns at the political level, and this would have resulted, I am sure, in a better road safety situation in our countries.

The accession process has also brought new opportunities for our road safety experts to exchange their knowledge with colleagues from other countries. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary became members of OECD, and their representatives joined international non-governmental organisations such as PRI, CIECA and research associations like FERSI, FEHRL and ECTRI. Bilateral contacts between the EU members and the accession countries have also been established. In the Czech Republic, for example, we work in close co-operation with the countries that have the safest roads in Europe, i.e. the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden.

"Our road safety experts learned a lot from contacts with their Western colleagues, but we have also our own positive experiences which we would like to bring into the European debate."

All these contacts have had a very positive impact in terms of implementing new safety measures such as low cost engineering measures in urban areas, compulsory cycle helmet use, 50 km/h speed limit in urban areas etc. They have also been very fruitful in the preparation of our national road safety plans, although some of these plans existed before the political changes, e.g. in the Czech Republic.

During the accession process, the CEEC also changed their administrative structures to correspond with those in the EU countries. In most of our countries, road safety used to be mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, and it was part of security rather than transport policy. The Police Force was responsible for everything – starting from drafting laws and regulations, through testing of driving licence applicants, issuing of driving licences, up to enforcement at the roadside.

I would like to stress however, that we have not only improved by drawing upon the experiences of our Western European colleagues. We have also had strong points in our old systems, which can continue to help us improve road safety in our countries. I am talking here for example about our driver training system, a system of obligatory practical and theoretical classes under strict supervision of the government, which is now - in a modified form - discussed in some of the old EU Member States.

Many of the CEEC have also kept their 0,00 BAC and their efficient ways of carrying out drink driving checks. In the Czech Republic, we also have a very good accident database system. These are experiences that we would like to bring into the European debate.

So the process has begun, and we have already booked good results. If we further increase our efforts, I am quite optimistic that we can do our share to reach the EU target. Due to the fact that road safety used to receive too little attention in the past, we can now employ a wide range of effective low-cost measures that are readily available and that can improve safety in a relatively short period.

Country	Latest road safety plan	Reduction target	Period
Czech Republic	2004	50%	2002-2010
Poland	2001	36%	2000-2010
Hungary	1993	25-30%	1992-2000
Estonia	2003	55%	2003-2015
Latvia	1999	50%	2000-2006
Lithuania	2002	15%	2002-2004
Slovenia	2002	50%	1995-2005
Slovakia	none		

Table 1 National road safety plans and targets. Source: ETSC

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We can achieve a lot for example if we bring the use of safety belts up to a European level, or if we apply proven methods in the enforcement of speed limits. Good co-operation among EU countries, supported by safety oriented EU strategic documents and joint projects such as the SEC Safety Belt and Sunflower Plus6 are also very supportive.

"Because road safety received too little attention in the past, we can now employ effective measures that are readily available and that can improve safety in a relatively short period."

As long as there is a strong political will to assure the implementation of these measures, I believe that the EU task can be achieved. Unfortunately, in some of our countries politicians are not really keen to tackle the road safety problem. But there is hope. In the Czech Republic, for example, the government's interest in road safety has not only been declared in the country's Transport Policy, but the politicians' willingness to be involved in these issues is truly increasing.

We hope, of course, that EU membership will also help us in this respect. The Czech Republic is ready to be an active player in the EU road safety policy. European legislation is one of the most important tools to improve road safety in Europe, and it can greatly help countries such as the Czech Republic to implement important safety measures more swiftly.

The EU of 25 should work towards a greater harmonisation of traffic rules and regulations, harmonisation of the traffic environment (especially on motorways and international corridors), the creation of a common system of signposting, increased and harmonized police enforcement and a common way of sanctioning traffic offences (especially those related to speeding and drinking driving).

The dissemination of best practice in road safety work and of information on the road environment in different EU countries is of course also an important task the EU should fulfill. Common European safety campaigns are important as well, and CEEC bodies and institutions should become more actively involved in them.

A joint effort of all the EU member countries and their close co-operation is the base for fulfilling the ambitious EU safety target.



Dr Josef Mikulík, Director of the Czech Transport Research Centre (CDV), has been working in transport safety research since 1976, when he first joined the Transport Research Institute of the former Czechoslovakia. Dr Mikulík has been actively involved in road safety work both at national and international level. He has represented the Czech Republic in the Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Committee, the PIARC Road Safety Committee, FERSI, ECTRI and ERTRAC. Dr Mikulík is the chairman of the OECD-IRTAD Operational Committee and Chairman of the COST Transport Technical Committee.

	CZ	EST	H	LV	LT	PL	SK	SLO
2000	1486	204	1200	588	641	6294	628	313
2001	1334	199	1239	517	706	5534	614	278
2002	1431	221	1429	518	697	5827	610	269
Change 2000/2002 in %	-4	+8	+19	-12	+9	-7	-3	-14

Table 2 Development of road accident fatalities between 2000-2002 in the eight Eastern and Central European accession countries. Source: Motor Transport Institute, Poland

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Country focus: Poland

"The knowledge is available. Now we need to implement it."

In Poland, the largest of the new EU countries, 18 people die in traffic crashes every day, and almost 200 are injured. Forty percent of all fatalities are pedestrians, and the severity of road accidents is particularly high, with 12 people killed per 100 road accidents.

Currently, Poland is implementing its first national road safety programme termed GAMBIT 2000. The strategy was developed in close cooperation with German, Swedish, French and Dutch road safety experts, and its goal is to bring the number of road deaths down to less than 4000 in ten years time. The Polish government adopted the GAMBIT 2000 programme in May 2001. Since then, five regions have passed their own GAMBIT programmes.

ETSC has spoken with **Prof. Ryszard Krystek**, leading author of various national and regional GAMBIT programmes, including GAMBIT 2000.

"We have set up strong teams, and they have started to act"

ETSC: Poland has subscribed to the goal of bringing down the yearly number of fatalities to less than 4000 by the year 2010. The intermediate target defined in the programme was less than 5500 road deaths in 2003. Is the country well on track to reaching this target?

Yes, we are on track. Of course you need to look at the general trend, not at individual years. In 2001, the actual figure remained slightly below the forecast, in 2003 it was slightly above.

ETSC: So we can call the GAMBIT programme a success?

Absolutely. The most important thing is that we have started setting up the administrative structures to implement our strategy. The development of a road safety system is the first step in our programme. We have set up strong teams that have started to act, so we can expect to see the results in the near future.

"Getting the regions to act is a complex procedure"

ETSC: So far, five out of 16 Polish regions have adopted their own GAMBIT strategies. What exactly is the role of the regions? To what extent does the programme rely on their efforts?

Getting the regions to act is a very complicated procedure. We have to first convince the regional government to order a programme and sign a contract with us. They can receive funding for this from the Ministry of Infrastructure, and we advise them on how to get that.

When preparing the programme of course we need to involve the regional decision makers, the particular region's road safety council, government etc. The most delicate task is to find and 'create' a suitable leader. Once this has been achieved, we can slowly pull out and leave them to their own devices.

Meanwhile, the GAMBIT idea has also trickled down to the local level. Often this is the effect of the region's initiative. For example, when the GAMBIT programme for the Pomerania region was completed, the governor suggested that the region's largest city, Gdansk, should also issue a road safety programme. Recently, we were also contacted by an ambitious county in the Lublin region who needed some co-funding for its local GAMBIT. Having worked with Shell on a number of issues, we were able to win their support without any problem.

ETSC: Do you expect more regions to join in the near future?

The problem is our time, really. We are a small team, and the regions themselves are not very active. Of course we hope that more regions will take up the challenge. In this year's GAMBIT conference we had participants from five Polish

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regions that do not yet have a GAMBIT programme. This is a positive sign.

"The regions were inspired by the European dream"

ETSC: The Polish national target is to cut the number of road deaths by about 36%. Some of the regions have however set themselves a more ambitious target. They want to reduce fatalities by half until the year 2010. What do think about this?

When we defined our national target we based ourselves on a scientific forecast of accident figures for Poland, which was developed in close collaboration with the Dutch road safety institute SWOV. We wanted to make the same good progress in Poland as was made in Western European countries, without however being too ambitious. At that time, the EU had not yet adopted the 50% target.

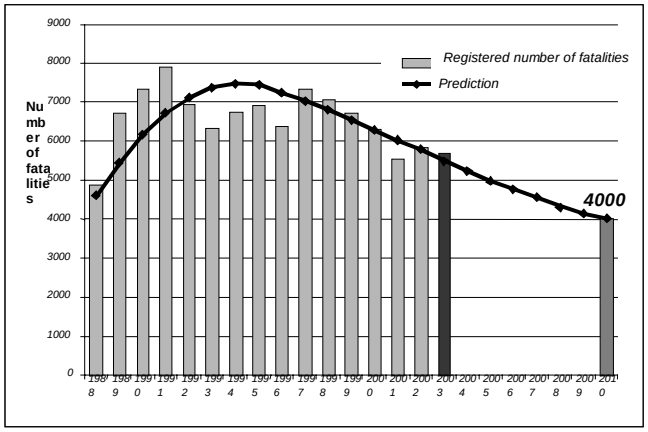


Fig. 2 Registered and predicted numbers of road fatalities. Source: National Road Safety Council, Poland

When the regional GAMBIT programmes were developed, the situation was quite different. The regions were inspired by the European dream and decided to set themselves a 50% target. This is of course a political goal, and really, I am sceptical that it can be reached, especially in the light of the financial support we are receiving here in Poland.

"We have installed 40 speed cameras"

ETSC: In the second part of the GAMBIT programme a number of concrete safety measures are proposed that address the problems of speed, pedestrians and cyclists, young drivers and accident black spots. How is the implementation of these measures progressing, say in relation to the speed problem?

There has been some progress. We have installed 40 speed cameras, for example. Unfortunately, the law is such that we need to find out each time who the driver was before we can issue a ticket. This needs to be changed so that we can punish on the basis of the registration number only. Generally speaking, speed enforcement is not yet efficient enough, although we do have some good experience in places where we have personal contacts with the police officers. We also organise workshops for police and road administration staff to improve their skills.

ETSC: What are the next steps?

First, we need to further elaborate our administrative road safety structures. We need to establish regional road safety centres, building on the existing driver examination centres. We also need a clear legal basis for these structures. Second, we need a stable source of funding. The third thing is already available, and that is knowledge. We now need to fully implement that knowledge.

ETSC: We wish you lots of success. Thank you very much for this conversation, Prof. Krystek.

Prof. Ryszard Krystek has worked on road transport research for many years. In 1993, he was asked to develop Poland's first national road safety strategy, commissioned by the Minister of Transport. Prof. Krystek set up an interdisciplinary Joint Authors Team that worked out a programme known as GAMBIT 1996. For political reasons the programme was however not adopted and in 1999/2000, Prof. Krystek formed a new team to work out another strategy. The GAMBIT 2000 programme was accepted as Poland's national road safety programme for the years 2001-2010. Prof Krystek is the dean of the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Gdansk. He is Vice-President of the Global Road Safety Partnership Committee.

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SEC Belt brief

European Transport Safety Lecture

This year's European Transport Safety Lecture focused on "the new Europe". Dr Josef Mikulík from the Czech Transport Research Centre (CDV) presented his view on road safety in the enlarged European Union. Experts from four other new Member States gave their comments. Respondents included Ilona Buttler (Motor Transport Institute, Poland), Mario Falzon (Transport Authority, Malta), Peter Holló (Institute for Transport Sciences, Hungary) and Tomaž Pavcic (Ministry of Transport, Slovenia). The proceedings will soon be published on the ETSC website.

Seminars with SEC Belt experts

In May 2004, ETSC held three capacity building and awareness raising seminars in Madrid (Spain), Warsaw (Poland) and Brno (Czech Republic). Experts from the SEC Belt countries discussed in particular the needs of vulnerable road users, tackling the issue from three different angles: human behaviour, infrastructure and the vehicle. By the end of this year, ETSC will summarise the results of the seminars in three different policy papers including clear policy recommendations.

GAMBIT 2004 conference

ETSC was invited to actively participate in this year's edition of Poland's national road safety gathering, GAMBIT 2004. The conference was held in Gdansk on 20-21 May 2004 with contributions from many foreign as well as Polish road safety experts.

Evaluation and Data Working Parties

ETSC has set up two new Working Parties which will write, by the end of 2005, two ETSC reviews related to specific concerns of the SEC Belt countries. The Working Parties held their first meetings in March and April this year. Three further meetings are planned before the completion of the reviews.

The Evaluation Working Party (Chairman: Maurizio Tira, Italy) will develop a methodology for the evaluation of national road safety policies in the SEC Belt countries. This methodology will allow national safety practitioners and policymakers to assess and benchmark their strategies.

The Data Working Party (Chairman: George Yannis, Greece) will gather and evaluate accident data from the SEC Belt countries, and it will formulate clear policy recommendations on how to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of such data.

Country	Checked "often", "very often" or "always" for speed on a typical journey (% of respondents)	Received penalty for excess speed in the past three years (% of respondents)
Czech Republic	10.1	21.2
Hungary	33.9	12.9
Poland	13.1	21.5
Slovakia	10.6	15.6
Slovenia	36.7	31.9
European Union	17.2	17.8

Table 3 Perceived risk of being checked for speed and corresponding fines in some EU accession countries (1996-97). Source: SARTRE 2

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