

ETSC UPDATE:

VISIONS, TARGETS & STRATEGIES

Newsletter on road safety management Sixth Edition: Summer 2002

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SUMMARY

Main features

- The EU institutions discuss the Commission's proposal for an ambitious EU-wide road fatality reduction target
- Austria introduces road casualty reduction targets for the first time
- The UK backtracks on promises of blood alcohol limits and safer car fronts legislation, but rolls out speed camera implementation plan nationally
- Setback for Dutch programme as Parliament fails to approve new 2010 target and programme
- New Danish Government cuts road safety research staff
- EU-wide CARE road accident data now on line
- ETSC's Best in Europe 2003 road safety conference (June) to highlight best practice in targeted programmes

A NEW AMBITIOUS EU-WIDE TARGET TO REDUCE ROAD DEATHS

Last September, the European Commission adopted its White Paper "European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide". The White Paper cites safety as a priority in road transport, in particular, concluding that "Road safety is a major concern of the people of Europe, possibly even their prime concern".

To address this concern, the Commission has proposed for the first time a very ambitious aspirational EU-wide target of halving the number of road deaths by 2010 (20,000) compared with the total in the year 2000.

The White Paper mentions several measures but foresees a 3rd Road Safety Action Programme which will set out the measures needed to reach this target. The Commission intends in the short term to give priority to the exchange of good practice and to propose measures applying to the Trans-European network. New developments include the intention to create a European Road Safety Observatory and to introduce EU best practice guidelines in road safety work.

The White Paper is currently under discussion by the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers and can be found on:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/en/lb_en.html

ETSC's RESPONSE

ETSC noted in its response to the White Paper that the majority of the annual 40,000 deaths occur in the most heavily motorised countries - Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The highest fatality risks occur in Greece, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium and Austria. There is a sevenfold difference in the risk of dying in a road accident between the best and worst performing EU countries.

Most injuries result from collisions with cars. While car users comprise the greatest proportion of overall road deaths (57 per cent), the risk of death on EU roads is some 8-9 times higher for pedestrians and cyclists and around 20 times higher for motorcyclists.

Meeting this challenge means encouraging the use of the safer modes of travel, targeting reductions in total numbers of deaths, reducing the highest risks borne by vulnerable road users, and using the holistic approach to the safety of the traffic system which has been more evident in the other transport and travel modes. Preventing road death and disabling injury means a traffic system that is better adapted to the needs, errors and physical vulnerabilities of its users rather than one which expects users to cope with increasingly demanding conditions.

- THE PROPOSED TARGET

Having long campaigned for an EU-wide target, ETSC strongly supports the intention to set a target to cut road deaths by the year 2010.

Meeting the proposed target means that the EU as a whole would have to do better than even the two best performing Member States - Sweden and the UK - have achieved to date.

ETSC has outlined in briefings to policymakers the need for the programme to go well beyond the fields of action foreseen in the White Paper to 2010: harmonising penalties (where there is little evidence of casualty reduction effect) and implementing new technologies (truly effective measures would be unlikely to feature in all cars within the next 9 years).

The two legislative measures proposed to 2005 in the White Paper hardly address the core of the problem. These are measures for the EU's safest roads - the largely motorway element of the Trans-European Road Network - and comprise harmonised signs at high risk accident sites and harmonised checks and penalties for commercial road transport drivers.

Up to 2005, the Commission intends to give priority to exchange of good practice but reserves the right to propose further legislation if there is no drop in the number of deaths. This means that, if in 2005, the number of road deaths has not dropped significantly, the Commission will have only 5 years to meet a target it has defined as already difficult to reach on a 9year basis!

- EXPECTATIONS OF THE 3RD ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME

As MEPs are acknowledging, meeting this highly ambitious target requires an unprecedented level of demonstrably effective EU policies. Understandably, the expectations of the forthcoming 3^d Road Safety Action Programme are very high.

Noting the broad scope which the EU has to act on road safety, ETSC expects the programme to address systematically the most important common road safety problems by the following means:

- Legislating where it has exclusive and shared responsibilities
- Using financial instruments and support to create a market for safety

- Encouraging best practice and information exchange
- Accident and injury data gathering and analysis
- Research and development towards future solutions

ETSC estimates that appropriate EU measures could save at least 40% of the targeted reduction by the year 2010 and urges the adoption of a programme that includes the following research-based actions:

Legislative responsibilities:

Action where the EU has exclusive responsibility (such as Single Market vehicle standards legislation) is of particular importance.

Vehicle engineering improvements for safety can either be achieved by modifying the vehicle to help the driver avoid accidents or by providing protection against injury in the event of a crash. Although much can be done to stop some accidents from happening, the European Commission's recent Barcelona Conference concluded that active safety improvement was still volatile with safety value, feasibility and public acceptability still needing to be demonstrated.

A recent study in one EU Member State reviewed the effectiveness of casualty reduction measures nationally since 1980 and demonstrated that the greatest reduction was from vehicle crash protection (15 per cent) compared to drink/drive measures (11 per cent) and road safety engineering measures (6.5 per cent). Reducing injury risk in accidents remains a priority and the single most effective way of achieving this is by improving the vehicle crash protection.

ETSC sees the following measures as the priority for EU legislative action:

- A Directive to implement the four EEVC performance tests leading to safer car fronts for pedestrian and cyclists (saving estimate: 2,000 lives annually);

- Harmonisation of effective seat belt reminder systems in cars (Saving estimate: at least 3,000 lives annually). Audible seat belt warning devices are intelligent devices which detect whether seat belts are in use and if not, give out increasingly aggressive warning signals until the belt is used. In-vehicle measures such as this could make a very cheap contribution in the short term to encouraging safe behaviour;
- Improvements in the front and side impact crash testing legislation for car occupants, supported by the European New Car Assessment Programme testing (EuroNCAP) (Saving estimate: substantial and at least 2500 lives annually);
- Energy absorbing frontal protection on heavy goods vehicles to prevent cars under running the fronts of heavy commercial vehicles (Saving estimate; 1200 lives annually);
- Mandatory fitment of daytime running lights to motorcycles and mopeds (Saving estimate: around 500 lives annually);
- A Directive requiring mandatory crash helmet use by motorcycle and moped riders (EU action on seat belt use is an exclusive EU competence) (Saving estimate: around 1000 lives annually);
- Effective harmonisation of driving/working times in road transport to reduce the effects of cumulative fatigue. The current driving time proposal (and the lack of any formal interface with the Working Time Directive) still allows a 70 hours plus working week;
- A common blood alcohol limit of 0.5g/l and a modest increase in enforcement (Saving estimate: around 1000 lives annually). The Commission's recent decision to withdraw its legislative proposal represents a major backtrack in policy;
- A requirement for safety impact assessment of all EU-funded infrastructure projects.

Financial instruments:

The EU can help to encourage a market for safety by providing financial support for initiatives to improve awareness about key safety problems and their solutions amongst policymakers, professionals and the wider public. The EU can also provide financial support for consumer information programmes such as EuroNCAP which is clearly having a large influence on encouraging safer design, at least as far as car occupants are concerned.

Ultimately, ETSC would like to see EU funding conditional on best practice standards being met. Requiring safety audit on EU-funded infrastructure is one example of using financial instruments to improve road safety.

Another priority is for support to be given to EU road safety databases (including in-depth data systems) and a EU-wide information system.

Best practice

ETSC believes the EU should promote best practice in road safety work by establishing a framework of best practice guidelines for the voluntary use of safety professionals.

The purpose of these EU guidelines, produced by professionals for professionals, would be to synthesise and promote universal best practice principles in road safety with detailed case study examples whether in road safety planning, road safety engineering, or enforcement.

ETSC believes the EU should encourage the development and the exchange of road safety guidelines in the fields of:

- Urban safety management
- Speed reduction
- Low cost measures
- Safety audit
- Police enforcement of key safety rules

Research and development

ETSC has recently set out its proposals for a EU transport safety research strategy. (<http://www.etsc.be/rep.htm>)

A European Road Safety Agency

In the Parliamentary discussion of the White Paper, the European Parliament's rapporteur has re-opened the debate about establishing a European Road Safety Agency.

ETSC's experts are currently examining best practice in transport safety organisation. However, it is already clear that any new agency would need to be a publicly-funded non-regulatory and independent organisation (at least independent of the regulating Directorates) which could help to speed up developments in road safety, provide a good catalyst for road safety information and data collection, and encourage best practice across the EU.

NATIONAL VISIONS, TARGETS, STRATEGIES

TARGETS IN AUSTRIA

When compared to other Member States of the European Union, Austrian road safety performance is about average. Significant success has been achieved in reducing road fatalities, but accident and injury figures have been increasing since the mid-1990s. Against this background the Austrian Government has decided to set, for the first time, national numerical targets to cut road deaths and injury accidents.

THE TARGETS

By 2010

(compared with 1998-2000 average):

- To reduce deaths by 50%
- To reduce injury accidents by 20%

By 2004

(compared with 1998-2000 average):

- To reduce deaths by 25%
- To reduce injury accidents by 10%

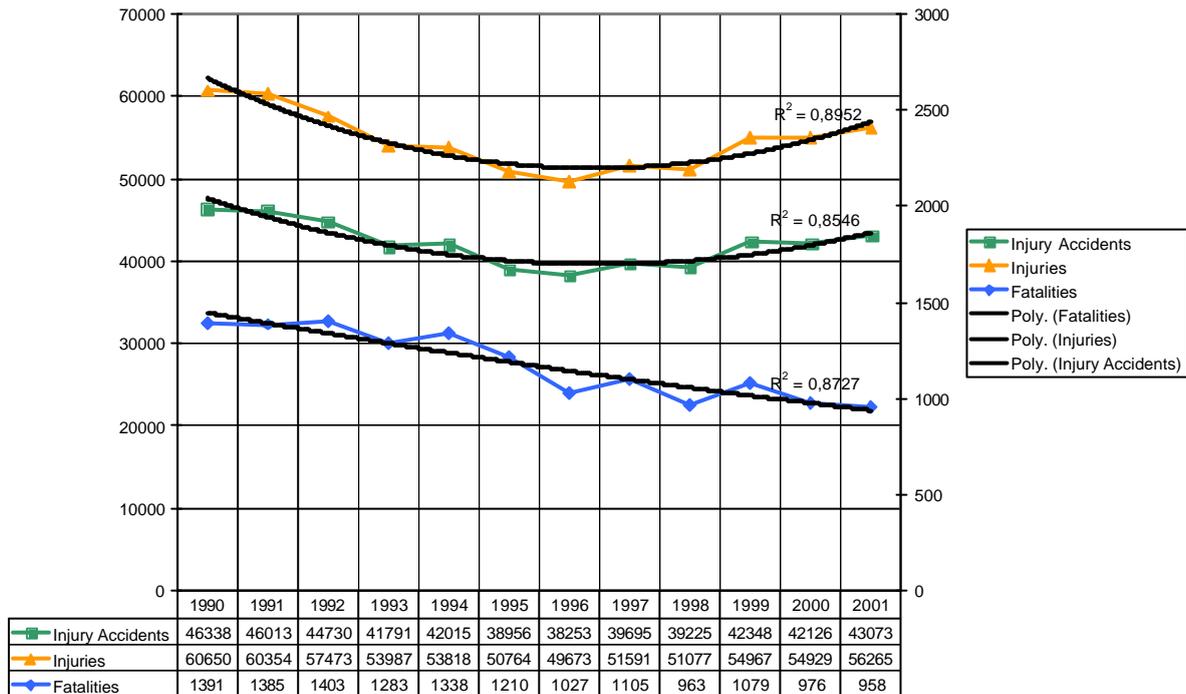
THE AUSTRIAN VISION

The Austrian Safety Programme is conceived on the basis that :

- Every death and serious injury is one too many

- Effective work on safety for rail and air travel should serve as a model for road safety objectives.
- A healthy society has, for socio-economic reasons, an obligation to reduce accidents.

Figure: Austrian trends in injury accidents, injuries, fatalities (1990-2001)



FIELDS OF ACTION IN AUSTRIAN PLAN

Road user behaviour	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Traffic policies and legal conditions
Seat belts and child restraints	Black spot treatment	Accident data recorders	Lorry traffic
Alcohol and other drugs	Safety of rural roads	Lorry safety	Modification of legal acts
Driving speeds	Tunnel safety	Passive vehicle safety	Land use planning
Basic driver education and advanced driver training	Driving in the wrong direction on motorways		Influencing modal choice
Pedestrian safety	Safety management in local authorities		
Driver fatigue	Safety audit		
Motorised 2 wheelers	Motorway work zones		
Headway (safety distance)	Properties of road surfacing materials		
Daytime running lights	Roadside telematics		
Traffic education			

THE PROGRAMME

The new programme covers four broad areas: road user behaviour, vehicles, infrastructure and traffic policies and legal provisions. Altogether, there are 26 priority areas and over a hundred separate measures.

In a start-up package to be implemented from 2002, priority measures which are expected to deliver the majority of savings include:

- seat belt use to increase by 10%
- child restraint use to increase to 95%
- breathtesting of all accident-involved drivers
- training of police and medical staff to detect drugs from driver behaviour
- moderating driving speeds through 'section control' of roads using digital cameras to derive mean driving speeds and vehicle licence plates starting with tunnels
- multi-phase driver licensing
- defining high risk accident spot in national guidelines and streamlining national evaluation requirements
- better urban safety management

MONITORING

Monitoring will take account, not only of accident and fatality figures, but also safety performance indicators, such as seat belt use, speed levels and excess alcohol, as derived from roadside surveys (to be set up in the new programme).

In order to ensure continuity of the programme to 2010, consideration is being given as to whether to write the quantified target into legislation.

ETSC COMMENT

ETSC very much welcomes Austria's initiative to set numerical casualty reduction targets, its focus on key problem areas and its identification of priority measures for the short term. Given the highly ambitious targets, the commitment to regular monitoring will be especially important.

UK BACKTRACKS ON BAC LIMITS AND SAFER CAR FRONTS LEGISLATION, BUT MOVES ON SPEED CAMERA IMPLEMENTATION

As the British Government backtracked this year on promises in its national plan of blood alcohol limits and safer car fronts legislation, British MPs and the national transport safety organisation, PACTS have expressed concerns about a weakening in the national road safety policy (See *Visions Targets and Strategies*, April 2000 edition for report)

In a recent report in June on speed, the British Parliament's Commons Select Committee on Transport said: "In March 2000, the Prime Minister launched the Government's Road Safety Strategy *Tomorrows roads - safer for everyone*, but unfortunately since then little has happened: projects have not been undertaken; some proposals have not been implemented; others have been dropped".

One area, however, where the UK has moved considerably is in the national roll out of speed camera implementation in a new scheme which allows money collected from speeding fines to be invested in speed camera purchase and deployment.

Enjoying broad public support (80-85% as measured consistently in public opinion surveys) and Parliamentary support, in view of the large casualty reductions experienced to date and despite objections raised by a vociferous minority, the National Safety Camera scheme has now been taken up by 25 of the 43 police areas in Britain. Since the scheme started the 8 pilot local partnerships comprising representatives of local highway, health, police and magistrates authorities have grown to 33 partnerships in total, each having a dedicated budget. The British Association of Chief Police Officers expects that all police areas will have joined the scheme within two years.

So far cameras can only be implemented at high risk accident sites and must be

painted yellow to ensure maximum visibility. The House of Commons' Transport Committee of MPs has called in their speed report for further developments in policy:

- improve the National Safety Camera Scheme by allowing local and police authorities to decide where to site cameras; and ensure that the whole country is covered by 2004
- issue the promised revised Guidance to local authorities about speed limits; this should include a number of changes, in particular, that 30 mph should be the maximum speed in villages,
- re-engineer the roads to ensure that speed limits are obeyed and to make roads safer and more pleasant for pedestrians
- ensure that the funding of Local Transport Plans is dependent on measures to reduce speeds; and
- make road safety a priority for the Ten Year Plan and provide specific funds for a national programme to re-engineer and re-design our roads.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/557/55>

DUTCH PARLIAMENT FAILS TO APPROVE NEW TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC PLAN

Just weeks before the last elections, the Dutch Parliament failed to approve the new NVVP (National Transport and Traffic Plan) containing the new road safety target to 2010 and the budgeted programme for sustainable safety.

Parliament's concerns were mainly the lack of financial backing of the plan in general and the lack of attention to congestion problems, rather than on the safety content.

It is expected that after further review by the new Government, further discussion will take place in Parliament within the next twelve months.

In the meantime the existing targets as mentioned in the previous plan which started in the 1990s still hold (reduction of 50% fatalities and 40% reduction of injuries by 2010 compared to the 1986 level).

When such good progress is being made in re-engineering the Dutch network with safety in mind, ETSC can only urge the new Dutch government to give its full support to the internationally recognised ground-breaking programme of sustainable safety.

NEW DANISH GOVERNMENT CUTS TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE RESOURCES BY 40%.

Since taking power in January, the new Danish Government has authorised cuts in publicly-funded road safety research activities resulting in the closing of some governmental road safety and environmental activities. Annual resources for the newly established Danish Transportation Research Institute have been cut by 40%.

What impact this will have on the excellent Danish road safety plan (see last edition of Visions Targets and Strategies) remains to be seen.

The current Danish Presidency of the EU Council of Transport Ministers - however told MEPs before the summer break that road safety was an absolute priority.

EU-WIDE ROAD ACCIDENT DATA ON LINE

Tables from the European Commission's road accident database – CARE – are now on line which is good news - but offer as yet, very limited datasets.

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/home/care/index_en.html)

BEST IN EUROPE 2003

ETSC's annual road safety conference - Best in Europe 2003 will highlight next June best practice in road safety target-setting and programmes.

Visions Targets and Strategies provides information on new national and local road safety policies in all EU Member States. National and local authorities, in particular, are invited to forward details to ETSC for sharing with colleagues internationally.

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