

ETSC UPDATE:

VISIONS, TARGETS & STRATEGIES

Newsletter on road safety management Sixth Edition: Summer 2003

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SUMMARY

Main features

- The European Commission has adopted its Third Road Safety Action Programme (2003-2010): Halving the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010: A shared responsibility.
- EU Member States welcomed the Third Road Safety Action Programme and adopted 15 recommendations outlining their commitment and responsibilities in road safety.
- Belgium introduces road casualty reduction targets for the first time.
- Switzerland adopts “Vision Zero” as a basis for its new road safety policy.
- ETSC’s Best in Europe 2003 road safety conference highlighted best practices in targeted programmes.

EC 3rd ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME

The European Commission adopted on 2 June 2003 its long-awaited Third Road Safety Action Programme (2003-2010): Halving the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010: A shared responsibility (See at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/rsap/index_en.htm).

“Saving human life through a genuine road safety policy is a challenge and an obligation, and all the public authorities should work together to this end: it is high time that, at all levels, actions are commensurate with intentions” said Loyola de Palacio, European Commissioner for Transport and Energy. “For its part, the Commission will shoulder its responsibilities and will not hesitate to make all necessary proposals to make it possible to radically change the trends observable in many countries” she added.

The Commission said that its proposal to halve the number of people killed on the roads by 2010 is much more than a legal requirement: it was a political commitment on all those involved in road safety.

The 3rd Road Safety Action Programme (RSAP) covers the traditional areas for action: user behaviour, the vehicle and the infrastructure.

It aims at:

- **Encouraging users to behave better:** especially by complying more strictly with the existing legislation on drink-driving, speed and seat belt wearing, through initial and continuous training of private and commercial drivers and by continuing with the efforts to combat dangerous driving.
- **Making vehicles safer,** in particular by harmonising passive safety measures (fitting and compulsory wearing of seat belts, widespread use of universal attachment systems for child-restraint devices, development of vehicle design to reduce the impact of accidents, etc...) and support for technical progress.
- **Improving road infrastructure,** in particular by identifying best practices and disseminating them at local level. In addition, the Commission will propose a framework directive on the safety of road infrastructure in order to establish a harmonised management system for high-risk sites and road safety audits for roads on the trans-European network.

The European Commission is also going to set up in its premises a European Road Safety Observatory with the aim of collecting, analysing and disseminating road safety data and information.

It also proposes a European Road Safety Charter, a platform for those who want to go beyond the minimum legislative requirements. Each co-signatory would have to submit to the European Commission a paper stating concrete actions they would undertake to help meeting the EU target.

The European Commission will monitor periodically to verify the progress made and will review the target when the new Member States join. It will carry out in 2006 a mid-term review of the progress made in the implementation of the programme. On that

occasion, it will assess the implications for road safety of the enlargement of the European Union. The European Commission will use performance indicators to target actions in key areas systematically and to monitor implementation.

MEMBER STATES' RESPONSE TO THE 3rd RSAP

At its meeting on 5 June 2003 the Transport Council welcomed the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme and endorsed the objective of halving road deaths by 2010. In the 15 conclusions it adopted on the Programme, the Council reiterated that the number of deaths and injuries which resulted from road accidents in Europe was unacceptable and recalled the ensuing socio-economic damage to society as a whole.

Stressing that each casualty was one too many, and considering that there was an urgent need for more to be done and new steps to be taken, the Council:

- urged Member States to cooperate fully with the Commission in its efforts to carry out comprehensive analysis on the basis of appropriate data collection with particular attention to accident data, data on research and development, road safety performance indicators, risk exposure variables, investigation of accident causes and trauma data.
- stressed that efficient monitoring and the exchange of information on best practices was essential if significant improvements were to be achieved.
- underlined the urgent need to give special attention to the specific needs of vulnerable road users - such as pedestrians, motorcycle riders, moped riders, and cyclists, as well as young and elderly persons and people with disabilities - which should be duly reflected in Member States' road safety policies.

- stressed against the background of the increasing internationalisation of both private and professional transport, a convergence of rules, where appropriate - in particular with respect to road traffic rules, driving licence schemes and rules in commercial transport - would contribute to road safety.

- recognised that, since the main causes of accidents were due to inappropriate and illegal user behaviour, an effective mechanism for the enforcement of rules, adequate training of road users, and information campaigns constitute key elements of a preventive strategy, in particular with a view to promoting the use of safety belts and other restraint equipment in vehicles and also reducing the occurrence of speeding, and drunk driving.

- noted that although considerable progress has been made with respect to vehicle safety, such as that achieved under the European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP), there was still large scope for improvement, in particular as regards high added-value safety related technologies, such as speed limitation devices, intelligent speed adaptation devices, vehicle/infrastructure interaction, accident data recorders or seat belt reminders and in developing the eSafety programme.

- noted that although the quality and safety of road infrastructure has already been improved considerably, further substantial efforts were still needed, in particular in eliminating high-risk sites and improving the design of roads from a safety perspective, and with an additional emphasis in the short term on low-cost measures for improving the safety of existing infrastructure.

In view of these conclusions, the Council, whilst committing itself to further concrete steps during the second half of 2003, invited Member States to continue to accord a high

priority to their road safety policies and to enhance cooperation among themselves to that effect, with a view to achieving the overall objective of halving the number of road accident victims in the Community during the period 2001 - 2010, and to initiate the development of new and innovative measures in this regard (*See the full text of the Council's conclusions at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/rsap/index_en.htm*).

ETSC's RESPONSE

- THE PROPOSED TARGET

ETSC welcomes the fact that the EU Road Safety Action Programme sets, for the first time, a numerical aspirational target to cut road deaths. The target chosen by the Commission is to reduce road deaths by 50 percent by the year 2010 (20,000 deaths). ETSC strongly supports the Commission's ambitious target but notes that the targeted level of safety performance is more challenging than has ever been achieved by even the best performing Member States or proposed by safety organisations.

Moreover, the EU target has two main weaknesses:

Firstly, the forecasting of casualty rates, including the higher injury risks of forthcoming Members, has not been undertaken when setting the EU target. ETSC's casualty forecasts for the EU 15 predict a reduction of the road fatality total to 27,000 fatalities in 2010. Moreover, in 2004, 10 new Member States with comparatively higher road crash injury risks than many actual Member States will join the EU. Casualty forecasts for the 10 accession countries predict a road fatality total of more than 8,000 fatalities in 2010 ¹.

¹ ETSC (2003) Transport safety performance in the EU - a statistical overview

Secondly, experience shows that setting a target is a meaningless act unless backed up by practical attempts to reach it. ETSC believes that the EU target of 50% road traffic fatality reduction between 2000 and 2010 to about 20,000 fatalities in 2010 will not be achieved unless the EU itself takes additional actions that reduce the fatality risk more rapidly than in the past. Therefore, it is recommended that further actions within the competence of the EU itself are taken and that an EU road safety fund is created for financial incentives that support and trigger national road safety actions and measures of proven effectiveness².

ETSC's COMMENTS ON THE 3rd RSAP

ETSC welcomed the timely, although delayed, adoption by the European Commission of its very ambitious 3rd RSAP. As the successor to the two first Road Safety Action Programmes, which were of fairly limited duration and scope, the 3rd RSAP provides a unique opportunity for setting out a comprehensive long-term strategy guided by a numerical target.

ETSC generally endorses the approach taken and the measures proposed by the European Commission. In total, the plan represents a well-equipped toolbox of actions to improve the level of safety on roads across Europe. ETSC expects of a long-term road safety plan that it makes a tangible, and of course measurable, contribution towards reduced road risks in an enlarged Europe by providing for a fairer distribution of safety at the highest practicable level across the European Union – that is by harmonising upwards.

In light of the fact that the Road Safety Action Programme deals with some of the

² ETSC (2003) Cost-effective EU transport safety measures

most severe risks of transport, ETSC thinks that the RSAP is governed by an inappropriate caution. It runs the risk of remaining a toothless tiger, if the identification of actions is not followed by substantive legislative actions at Community level. For example:

- While the Commission recognises that legislation on mandatory crash helmets for two-wheelers could save up to 1,000 lives annually, it does not intend to propose legislation but will only support national initiatives to increase the rate of helmet use.
- While the Commission recognises that harmonisation of effective seat belt reminders could save up to 4,000 lives annually, the Commission only intends to promote their use by voluntary agreement.
- While the European Commission identifies alcohol as a key factor to influence the level of safety, it will merely encourage, but not legally force, Member States to take up the recommendation on the blood alcohol limit of at most 0,5 promille.

Moreover, the 3rd RSAP addresses well the common key safety problems but fails to introduce a timescale for actions; nor does it say which actions are likely to deliver what kind of results. As well as having no time-table, the plan generally lacks the kind of milestones that are necessary to measure progress and show the road to a successful implementation. Three points are particularly important here.

Firstly, the 3rd RSAP does not contain any evaluation of the 2nd Road Safety Action Programme. Evaluation, feedback and monitoring of the effects of various road safety measures are highly important and common practice in sound transport policy-making. Without an evaluation of policy implementation, past mistakes are likely to be repeated. An example: despite an invitation by the European Parliament to

prioritise the suggestions for action of the 2nd Action Programme ³, the 3rd RSAP once again does not prioritise actions.

Secondly, when considering EU road safety policy in the next decade, the 3rd RSAP should have answered the question: how will the new accession countries affect the EU road safety policies? The particular road safety problems of the new accession countries are to be assessed only in the 2006 mid-term review.

Thirdly, the 3rd RSAP presents a whole range of actions which will be difficult to deliver, given the shared responsibilities for many of the actions. In view of the responsibilities at different levels of government for different aspect of road safety, a successful EU-wide aspirational target cannot rely solely on activities at any one level for its achievement. Yet the Action Programme does not provide strong enough joint mechanisms between the EU and Member States on how to deliver the target. It also raises the issue of how the differences in ambitions between Member States will be tolerated. Despite Member States having agreed to the EU target at the Transport Council on 5 June 2003, several Member States have set up lower targets.

Finally, The European Commission will carry out a mid-term review in 2006 and reserves the right to propose legislation if there is no drop in the number of deaths. This means that, if in 2006, the number of road deaths has not dropped significantly, the Commission will have only 4 years to meet a target it has defined as already difficult to reach on a 9-year basis!

The EU should identify the route to

³ An invitation, to which the European Commission responded with a further road safety Communication COM (2000) 125 final outlining six top priority measures.

achievement of its target, the respective roles of the EU and its Member States in doing so, and how the EU can help the Member States to deliver their respective contributions.

The EU has broad scope to act on road safety and should act to address systematically the most important common road safety problems. Safety measures should be targeted where relatively large gains can be made:

- Harmonisation of effective seat belt reminder systems in cars (Saving estimate: at least 3,000 lives annually).
- Improvements in the front and side impact crash testing legislation, supported by European New Car Assessment Programme testing (Saving estimate: 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; 1,200 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 (Saving estimate: around 1,000 lives annually).
- Effective harmonisation of driving and 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) astonishingly still allows an 80-hour working week!
- A blood alcohol limit of at most 0.5g/l and a modest increase in enforcement (Saving estimate: around 1,000 lives annually).

NATIONAL VISIONS, TARGETS, STRATEGIES

TARGETS IN BELGIUM

When compared with the other Member States of the European Union, the number of deaths per 100.000 inhabitants or per billion vehicle-km in Belgium is above the average. Against this background, the Belgian government decided on 8 February 2003 to set for the first time, numerical targets to cut road deaths.

THE TARGETS

By 2010
(*compared with 1998-2000 average*)
- to reduce deaths by 50%

By 2006
(*compared with 1998-2000 average*)
- to reduce deaths by 33%

THE PROGRAMME

The new programme covers four broad areas: road user behaviour, vehicles, infrastructure, traffic policing and legal provisions. The targets described below will be realised by deploying actions in 9 priority fields, together with some actions in the field of help to road victims:

- Inappropriate and excessive speed
- Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs
- Driver training and licensing
- Driver fatigue
- Heavy good vehicles
- The Street Code for the protection of vulnerable road users
- Seat belts and restraint systems
- Active and passive safety of vehicles
- Better and more adapted infrastructure

Enforcement of offences with regard to speeding, drunk driving, driving under the

influence of other drugs and the wearing of seat belts is considered as an absolute priority of the Belgian Road Safety Action Plan.

MONITORING

In August 2002, an Interministerial Road Safety Committee and a Federal Road Safety Commission were founded, in order to ensure adequate monitoring and follow-up of the road safety targets.

Indicators have been created in order to monitor the implementation of the programme. Indicators actually covered the behaviour of road users (% of seat belt wearing, % of drivers who drive under the influence of alcohol and drugs), police checks, the safety of vehicles and the safety of infrastructure.

ETSC welcomes very much Belgium's initiative to set numerical targets. ETSC also welcomes the fact that Belgium has endorsed the EU target by setting the same numerical target at national level.

TARGETS IN SWITZERLAND

“VISION ZERO”: BASIS FOR A NEW ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY POLICY

Switzerland has committed itself to “VISION ZERO” for its new road traffic safety policy, VESIPO. The ultimate goal is “no fatal or severe injuries in road traffic”.

The implementation of “VISION ZERO” in Switzerland will require basic modifications to the philosophy of road safety. The new approach centres on the understanding that people make mistakes. As far as possible, the system must be adapted to people. It must be organised so that:

1. wrong behaviour is prevented as much as possible

2. wrong behaviour does not result in fatal or serious injuries

A report entitled "Definition of the principles for a federal road traffic safety policy", prepared jointly by the Swiss Federal Roads Authority and the Swiss Advisory Council for Accident Prevention and published last year, contained proposals that have served as the basis for the political process that has now been set in motion.

The necessary steps are now to be taken in the form of a participatory process, i.e. the policy is to be formulated in consultation with the various players in the traffic safety arena. The target and the vision have already been formulated in April 2003.

THE TARGET

By 2005

- adoption of new road safety policy and the introduction of already scheduled measures

By 2010

- application and exploitation of measures to reduce the total number of fatalities in road traffic to a maximum of 300 and the severely injured persons to 3,000 a year at most

By 2020

- achieving the long-term goal towards VISION ZERO by the use of a comprehensive package of measures.

The next steps are:

- by September 2003: development of a strategy
- by March 2004: Setting up of an evaluation system
- by December 2004: choice of the measures to be included in the action plan

BEST IN EUROPE 2003

This year ETSC's annual Best in Europe Conference highlighted best practice in road safety target setting and programmes.

A new international state-of-the-art ETSC Review on "Assessing risk and setting targets in transport safety programmes" was successfully launched during the Conference.

Richard Allsop, Professor of Transport Studies, University College London and chairman of the ETSC working group on risk assessment and target setting said: "Transport is the lifeblood of modern Europe, but this year it will kill about 40,000 people in the EU and about another 12,000 in the Accession Countries. ETSC estimates the cost to society in the EU of these deaths and associated injury and damage at 180 billion Euro – around twice the total EU budget for all activity. The EU and each Member State should robustly challenge this intolerable situation, and help each Accession Country to do the same".

"For road transport, where 97 per cent of the deaths occur, many Member States have safety strategies with numerical targets for reducing casualties. They should build upon this experience and the EU should help others to learn from them. The EU itself has an ambitious target for halving road deaths over 10 years but has yet to implement its strategy for reaching the target".

The Review calls for assessment of risk and setting of targets by the EU itself and by each Member State and Accession Country as effective tools for saving lives. Concerning road transport, the Review made five key recommendations:

1) The EU should embark urgently and vigorously upon a timetabled and fully funded programme to achieve consistency across Member States in recording road traffic collisions involving personal injury, estimating the level and pattern of underrecording of collisions, and estimating the amount of use of the roads, together with the assembly of resulting data from all

Member States in a common database accessible to all at marginal cost of access.

2) The EU and each Member State, and with their help each Accession Country, should continually and robustly challenge society's complacency about the level of risk in using the roads by adopting or further developing road safety strategies which evoke and channel coherent and effective action by all those stakeholders within and outside government who can contribute to reducing death and injury on the roads.

3) The EU and Member States and Accession Countries should focus their road safety strategies by setting numerical targets for casualty reduction over the period covered by the strategy which are challenging enough to motivate the stakeholders to strenuous effort, yet

achievable through the policies and measures envisaged in the strategies.

4) Experience of different aspects of the target-setting process, especially the forecasting of casualty rates and of the effectiveness of safety measures, should be shared among the EU, the Member States and the Accession Countries.

5) The EU should identify the route to achievement of its target, the respective roles of the EU and its Member States in doing so, and how the EU can help the Member States to deliver their respective contributions.

The Review is available from ETSC's secretariat or on ETSC's website at: www.etsc.be/pre.htm. The proceedings of the Conference will be available late in 2003 from ETSC's secretariat in Brussels.

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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