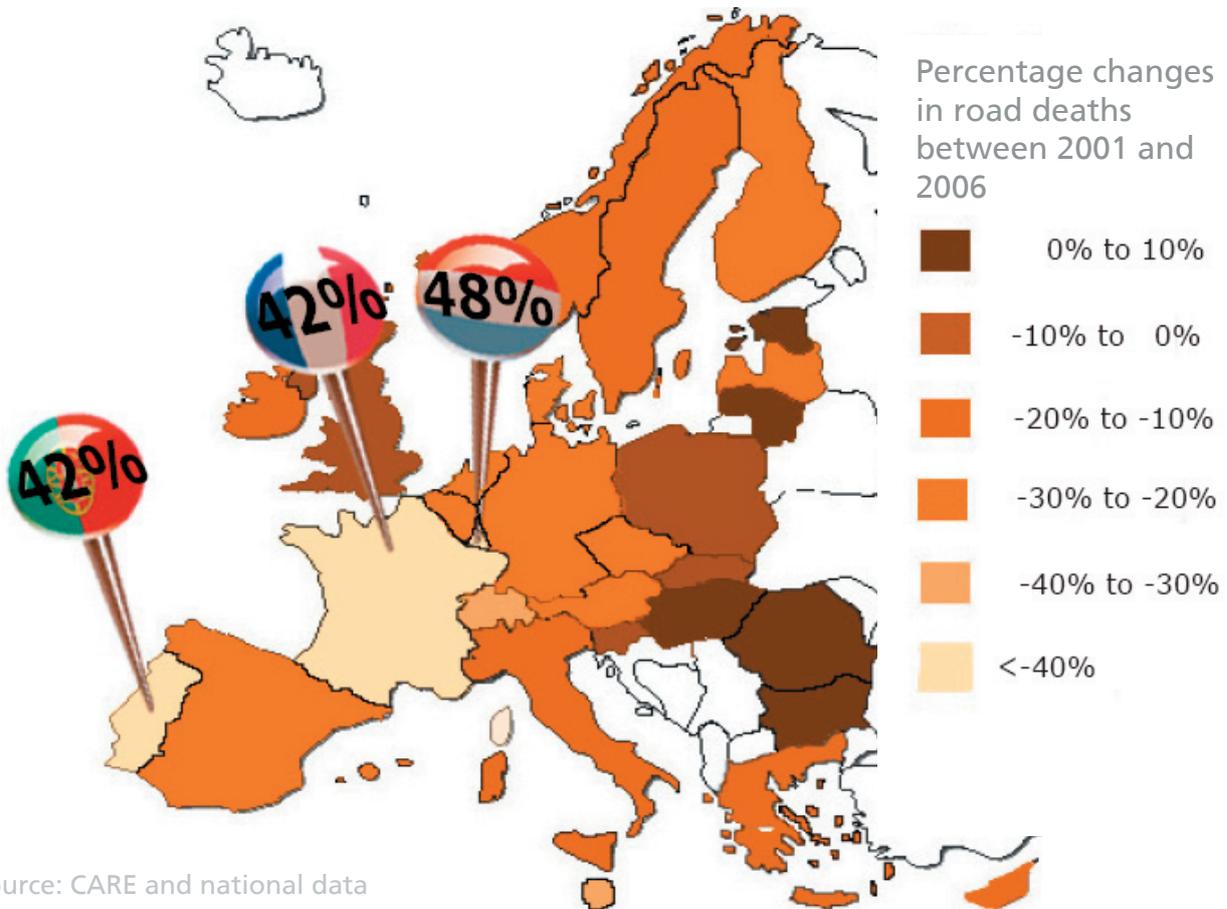




Driving deaths further down

The European Union has set itself the ambitious target of cutting back the number of annual road deaths by 50% over nine years from 2001 to 2010. Are we on course to reach this target? Which are the countries that are driving progress, which are the ones that rely on the others to make the effort?

The European Transport Safety Council, under its Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme, is monitoring progress toward the EU target for individual Member States, as well as for the EU as a whole.



Source: CARE and national data

Following up on Road Safety PIN Flash 2, issued in September 2006, this latest ranking under the PIN Programme shows that between 2001 and 2006, **Luxembourg, France and Portugal**, three countries with a medium level of road safety, have progressed best. These countries have reached a reduction in road deaths more than 40% over five years. In **Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania**, the number of road deaths was higher in 2006 than in 2001. Only a slight reduction was registered in **Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia**.

If current trends continue, the European Union will not reach its target in 2010. This is true for the new, enlarged Union and even for the old Union of 15 Member States. Estimates show that the target of a maximum 25,000 deaths per year for the EU-25 will be reached only in 2015 if current efforts are not substantially enhanced. We need a new, fresh impetus in all countries if we want to make up for this delay and deliver what the citizens of Europe deserve – a safe and sustainable road transport system that safeguards the highest level of protection for everyone across the continent.

The EU needs further efforts

About 39,200 people were killed in road traffic crashes in the European Union in 2006. If recent trends continue, the European Union and its Member States will not be able to deliver the reduction in deaths that its citizens were led to expect by the setting of the target for 2010. To reach the EU target, a year-to-year reduction of at least 7.4% is needed. Up to 2006 however, the European Union's yearly reduction in road deaths is only 4.9% on average.

At the current rate of reduction the EU-25 will be able to reduce the yearly number of road deaths to 25,000 only in 2015. Even those EU countries that were part of the EU when the target was originally devised, will collectively reach the original objective of no more than 20,000 road deaths only in 2012 (see Fig. 1).

There is clearly the need to accelerate progress during the four remaining years of the target period. Experience shows that every country has the potential to improve its situation and to make fast progress, independently of its starting point. However, only concerted and lasting efforts that are supported by the public and politicians alike

can lead to success. Today, **Luxembourg, France and Portugal** set the example.

The frontrunners...

Best results in reducing road deaths over 2001 to 2006 have been achieved by some Western European countries with a medium level of safety (see Fig. 2, 4). **France and Luxembourg**, among the top-three for reductions up to 2005, scored further reductions in road deaths by 11% and 22% respectively, keeping their lead position also this year. An exceptional 22% reduction in 2006 catapulted **Portugal** to this group after the country had already been doing well up to 2005.

France, Luxembourg and Portugal have reduced road deaths by more than 8% yearly, on average, and are well on their way to hitting the EU target at a national level. **Belgium** comes close to being on course to reach the EU target at a national level and may do so if efforts are stepped up. The country reached an average annual reduction of just under 7.4% between 2001 and 2006.

... cannot do the work for the others!

Slowest progress has been made in Eastern and Central European countries where 2001-2006 re-

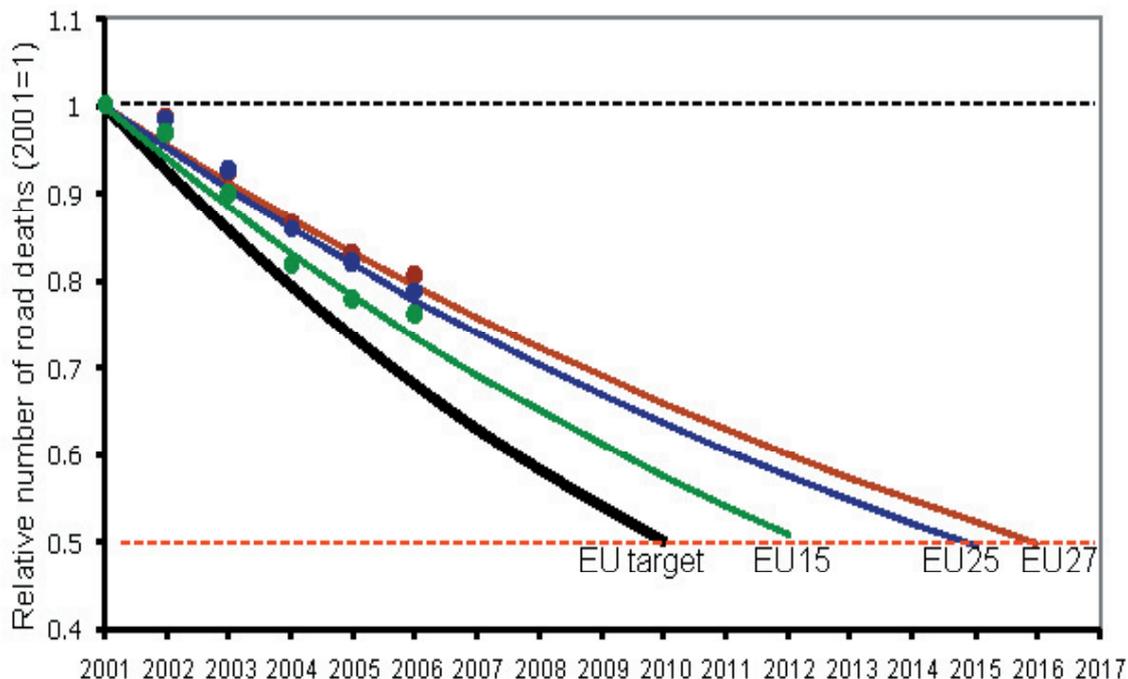
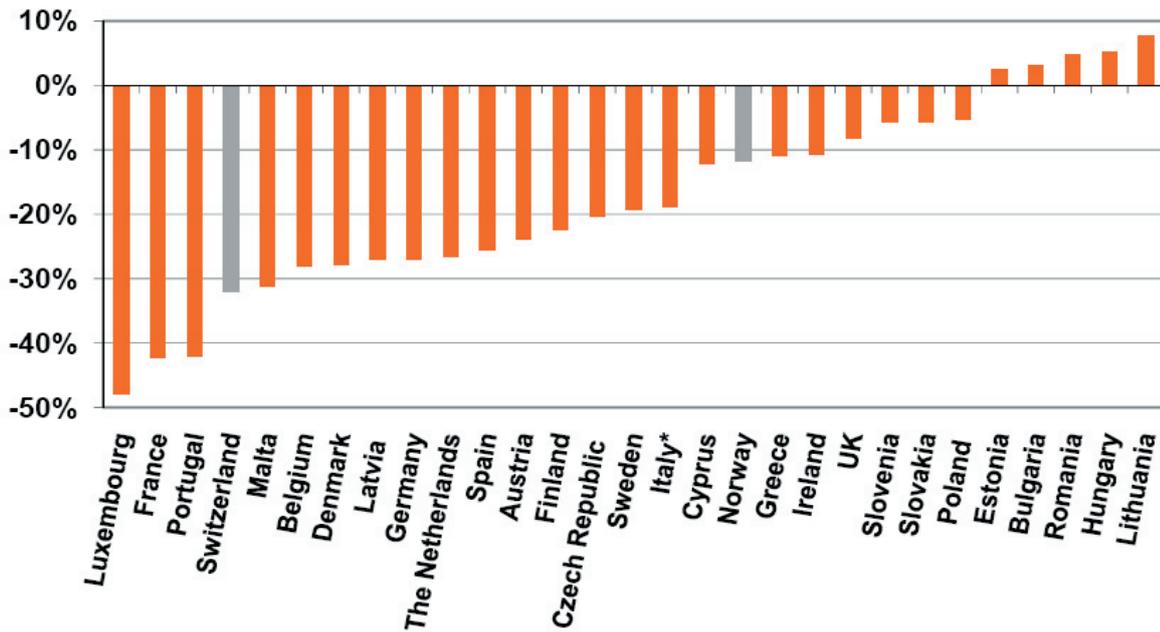


Fig.1 Trends in road deaths in the EU-15 and EU-25, based on developments in 2001-2006



*Italy: 2005

Fig. 2 Percentage changes in road deaths between 2001 and 2006. Source: CARE and national data

ductions did not exceed 6%. In **Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania**, numbers of deaths actually rose over the last five years. Latvia and the **Czech Republic** are exceptions with reductions of 27% and 20% respectively.

The **UK** is the only large Western European country among the last third of the 29 European coun-

tries covered under the Road Safety PIN.

These countries, which will not be able to reach a 50% reduction at a national level without remarkable improvements in the remaining four years, must redouble their efforts so as not to thwart the progress of others and hold back the Union as a whole.

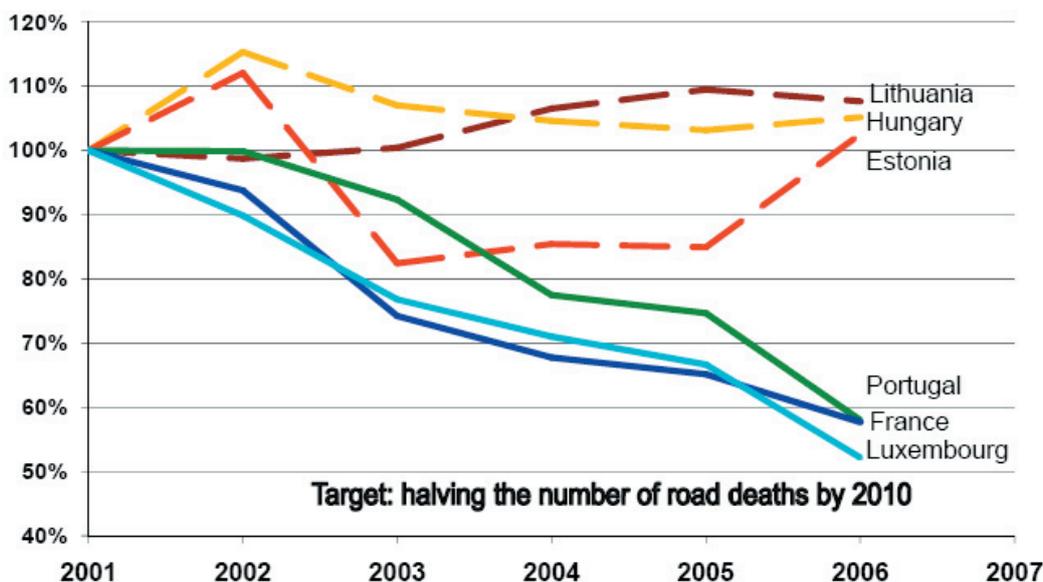


Fig. 3 The fastest and some of the slowest percentage reductions in deaths 2001-2006. Source: CARE and national data

Background

Significant changes in 2006

For some countries, the good result in 2006 has meant a continuation of previous success, whereas for other countries, 2006 was an exceptionally good year and progress may be hard to sustain into this year.

From good to better in 2006

Luxembourg, Portugal and France all improved fast between 2001 and 2005 and recorded further large percentage reductions in road deaths during 2006.

Luxembourg continued the positive reduction in road deaths in 2006, having been at the top of last year's ranking of progress between 2001 and 2005 already (see PIN Flash 2). In 2004, the new elected government made road safety one of its first priorities. Transport Minister Lucien Lux has since initiated numerous measures, including important changes to the Traffic Law. Since 1 October 2007, **Luxembourg** has a permitted blood alcohol content of 0.5g/l (instead of 0.8g/l) for most drivers, and 0.2g/l for novice and professional drivers. The new law also extends police powers to allow for on-the-spot withdrawal of the driving licence in cases of the most serious drink driving and speeding offences. The Minister also announced the deployment of automatic speed cameras but did not yet specify the timeframe. **Luxembourg** is also working to increase the share of motorised journeys that are made by public transport to 25%.

"Even if we consider that 2001 was a bad year with an exceptionally high number of people killed, it is remarkable that we have had a close to 50% reduction in road deaths over five years. This would not have been possible had road safety not been one of the key elements of our government strategy. We expect that the new measures will help to consolidate the promising trend."

Christian Ginter, Ministry of Transport, Luxembourg

Also in **Portugal**, road deaths were reduced by more than a fifth in 2006 (see Fig. 5). While this is the best result ever achieved in Portugal, closer

analysis reveals that this is consistent with the overall trend of the last 10 years (see Fig 6) Experts point out that much of this reduction could be due to infrastructure improvements on existing roads and the transfer of high speed traffic from rural roads to newly built motorways (see Interview p. 7).

"In Portugal, traffic volume has been stable or slightly reduced in recent years. However, this does not explain all the observed reductions in fatalities and serious injuries, which most probably result from work carried out in Portugal in safety education, enforcement and engineering for several years."

Joao Cardoso, LNEC, Portugal

In **France**, road deaths went down by 11.5% in 2006, which represents the second biggest reduction since 2003. The country, among the EU's underperformers in 2001, has seen a rapid improvement of road safety over the past five years. Fully automated speed control has been at the heart of **France's** new road safety strategy. At the end of 2006, the number of fixed safety cameras reached 1,100 and the total of detected speeding offences doubled in 2006 compared to 2005. The number of withdrawn penalty points continued to rise, leading drivers to check their speed to avoid losing their licence. Driving speeds could be further reduced in 2006, particularly on rural roads (90 km/h).

"Despite a difficult first half of the year, when we had a 1.8% increase in the number of road deaths over seven months, I am optimistic that we will reach a further reduction in 2007."

Jean Chapelon, ONISR, France

Switzerland, one of the best-performing countries on road safety (see Fig. 4), recorded in 2006 a further 9.5% decrease in road deaths. "The main reason for this good result has been a better control of two of the main causes of accidents, speeding and alcohol," says Stefan Siegrist from the Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu).

Both the number of drivers checked for speed and the number of drivers checked for alcohol doubled between 2000 and 2006. This increase in police enforcement has been backed up by a reduction in the legal BAC from 0.8g/l to 0.5g/l and an improved sanction regime for repeat offenders. The new Traffic Law, which came into effect on 1 January 2005, also empowered the police to run random breath tests.

"There has been great attention in the media for speeding and drink driving. This was partly triggered by our alcohol campaign which provoked substantial controversy in the media. This controversy has certainly heightened driver's attention for the campaign and its message."

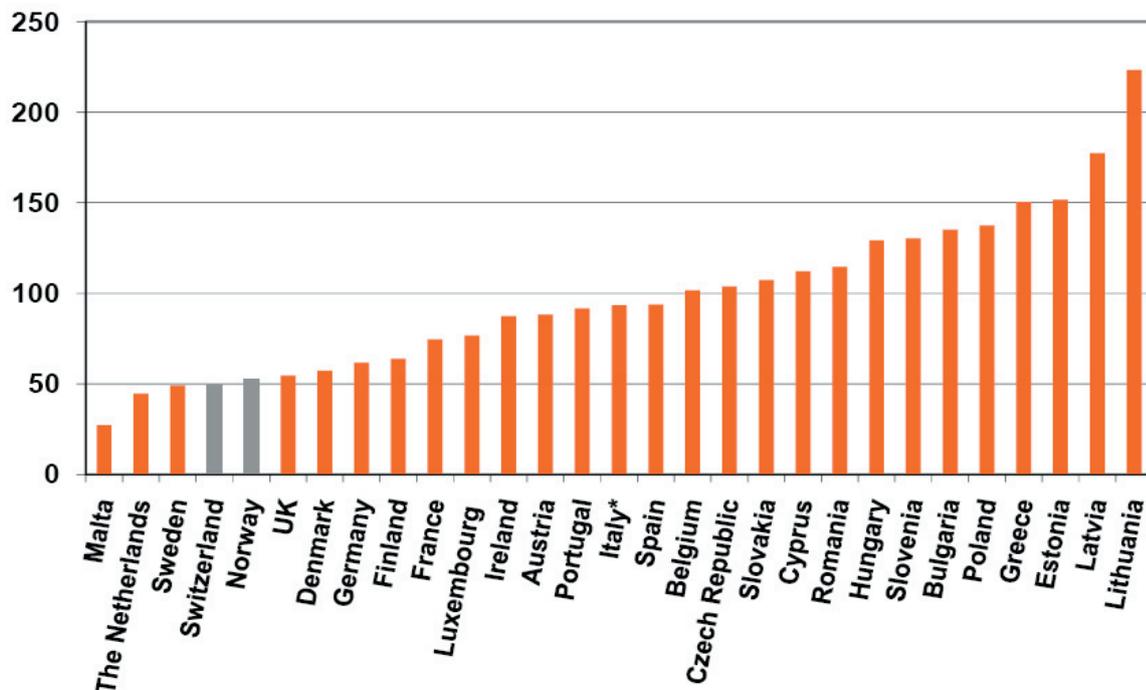
Stefan Siegrist, bfu, Switzerland

According to bfu, two additional influences may have given police forces additional legitimacy for increasing enforcement. A public discussion has been going on for nearly three years in the mass media regarding speeding offenders, and the bfu set up an awareness campaign on drink driving that was highly visible and coordinated with police activity. This campaign has also been widely discussed in the media.

Challenging starts to 2007 after an exceptionally good 2006

The **Czech Republic**, **Cyprus** and **Finland** all achieved significant reductions by more than 10% between 2005 and 2006 (see Fig.5). However, road deaths increased in all three countries during the first months of 2007, emphasising the need for governments to maintain the impetus for improvement.

With a 17% drop in deaths, the **Czech Republic** recorded last year the biggest percentage reduction after **Portugal** and **Luxembourg**. This reduction has been attributed to the revised Traffic Law that came into force on 1 July 2006. The new law introduced a penalty point system, made daytime running lights obligatory during the



*Italy: 2005

Fig. 4 Road deaths per million population (2006). Source: Eurostat and national data

whole year and increased the severity of sanctions for all kinds of offences. It was preceded by a major information campaign on all media. The effect of the new system on the drivers' behaviour seemed clear, and could already be seen before 1 July 2006. However, during the second half of the year, police enforcement was limited, the campaign was discontinued and politicians started expressing doubts.

The Czech Ministry of Transport has commissioned the Transport Research Centre (CDV) to carry out an evaluation of the new law while numbers of road deaths continue to rise. "There is a sense of disillusionment with the new legislation. Currently, new measures are being considered by the Ministry of Transport," says researcher Vojtech Eksler from CDV.

"We are optimistic that we will be able to convince our politicians of the effectiveness of the new penalty point system as well as new steps to further improve it."

Josef Mikulik, CDV, Czech Republic

Also in **Cyprus**, experts point to changes in driver behaviour to explain the improvement made. Cyprus lowered its legal BAC limit from 0.9g/l to 0.5g/l in spring 2006. Police also introduced a new and highly controversial practice during the same year whereby drivers caught by the police with a BAC of over 0.9g/l were detained overnight at the police station. Following heavy controversy, this practice was withdrawn in early 2007 by the new chief of police who argued that it ran counter to principles of human rights. Cyprus also introduced speed and red light cameras

"We have introduced a number of important measures, mainly targeting driver behaviour, but unfortunately not all of the measures could be sustained. During the first half of 2007, we had a slight increase in road deaths whereas injuries decreased substantially. Police efforts in enforcement and awareness raising have been stepped up, which makes us optimistic that the ascending trend in fatalities will be reversed."

George Morfakis, Ministry of Transport, Cyprus

starting in October 2006. The warning signs were put out a few months earlier so drivers started to slow down earlier.

An 11% reduction in **Finland** has resulted mainly from a clear decrease in the number of frontal collisions on highways, which has been explained by a dry and cold winter. The impact of the growing number of automatic speed controls could not be confirmed as speed data are as yet unavailable for 2006.

Numbers of deaths have risen during the first half of 2007 when weather conditions were less favourable. There has also been a negative trend in drink driving. The number of drivers with illegal blood alcohol levels was 10% to 15% higher during January-July 2007 compared with the same period last year.

"In fact, 2006 was an exceptionally good year. In 2007, we are going back to 2005 levels. But the upward trend has woken up the media and decision makers and new measures are being discussed, such as an 0.2 BAC for novice and professional drivers."

Mika Hattaka, Central Organisation for Traffic Safety, Finland

Other countries

Also **Malta, Latvia, Ireland, Spain, Romania, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Lithuania** and the **UK** recorded reductions in road deaths last year. The reductions in **Germany, Poland, Romania** and **Spain** are unlikely to have arisen by chance but reductions in **Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania** and the **Netherlands** and the **UK** are small in relation to absolute numbers of road deaths and may have arisen by chance. This is also true for **Malta** where 11 people died in traffic crashes in 2006 against 17 fatalities recorded in 2005 (see Fig 5).

In **Bulgaria** and **Estonia**, road traffic deaths even increased in 2006. This is also the case for **Greece, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia** and **Norway**, but the increases in these countries are small enough to have arisen by chance (see Fig. 5).

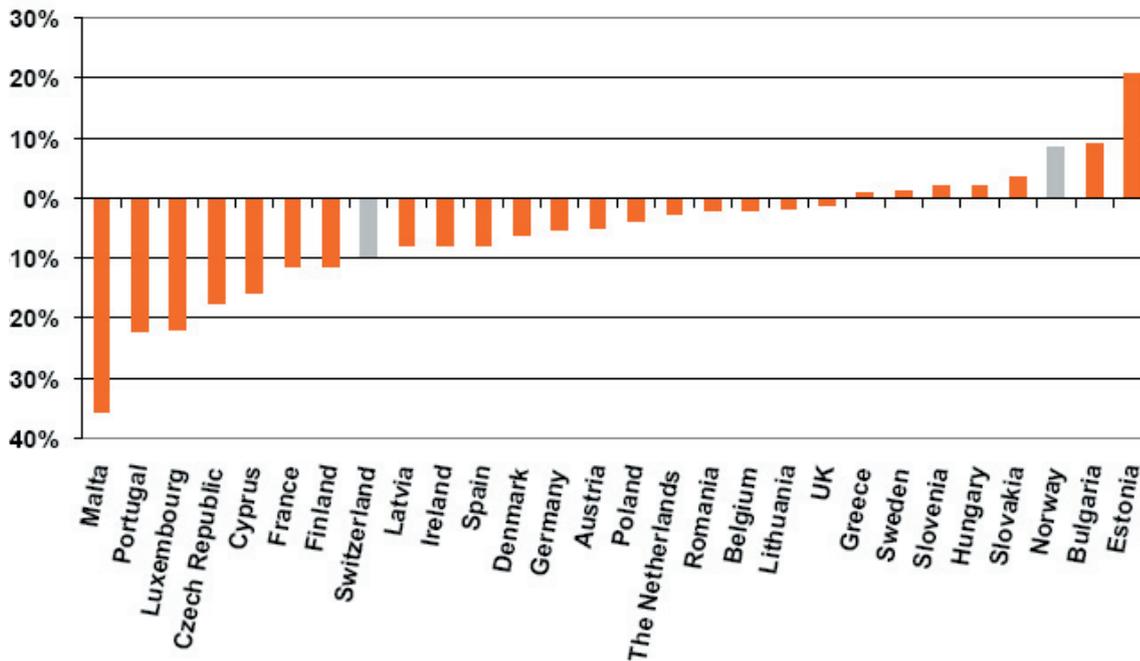


Fig. 5 Percentage changes in road deaths between 2005 and 2006 (except Italy). Source: CARE and national data

The Portuguese experience

“The public expect the government to continue its efforts”

In 2006, Portugal has reached with 22.3% the best reduction in road traffic deaths among all European countries. What is the background to this success? ETSC has spoken with Paulo Marques, President of the newly created Road Safety Authority in Portugal.

ETSC: This is the best result ever achieved in Portugal. What is it that happened in 2006 that made the difference?

Last year’s reduction in road deaths was indeed very good. But this is not the result of any specific measure. It is the consequence of the work carried out for more than ten years, and more specifically the actions taken to accelerate progress since 2003.

ETSC: In 2003, Portugal adopted its first National Road Safety Plan. How far has it been implemented? Has it received the necessary political support?

The National Road Safety Plan has been a very important document. It has identified the main

problems in road safety and proposed actions to deal with these problems. Unfortunately, it has not received very much support from the politicians and not all the measures detailed in the plan could be achieved. But this is hardly surprising taking into account that the plan includes more than 100 actions and does not indicate the entity responsible nor costs and terms for each action.

” Last year’s reduction is the consequence of the work carried out for more than ten years, and more specifically the actions taken to accelerate progress since 2003.

ETSC: Which are the actions that have been implemented successfully?

Two of the more important measures taken on the basis of the Road Safety Plan include the revision of the Traffic Law and the implementation of an extensive high risk site removal scheme.

The new Traffic Law allows police to issue on-the-spot penalty fines, which has really made an impact on people's behaviour. The fines themselves have also been increased. Other than that, we introduced new theoretical and practical driving tests and increased the provisional period for novice drivers from two to three years.

» The public, much as they are reluctant to change their own behaviour in traffic, want the government to do more.

ETSC: How did the Portuguese public react to these measures?

The public have accepted these measures very well and they will accept even more drastic measures. We have recently run a survey in which we polled opinions regarding the introduction of a penalty point system and fixed speed cameras, among other things. It turned out that the public agree with these measures even though accept-

ance of the safety camera system in Lisbon is not very high.

In Portugal, people are very well informed about road safety and levels of injuries and deaths. This year, our casualty figures do not look so good and there is a big pressure from civil society to achieve further progress. The public, much as they are reluctant to change their own behaviour in traffic, want the government to do more about road safety.

ETSC: The 2003 Road Safety Plan called for a targeted minimum compliance of 90% for front seat belt use and 60% for rear seat belt use by 2010. But front seat wearing rates have remained almost constant in recent years: 87% in 1999, 86% in 2003 and 2006. Rear seat wearing rates have improved: 11% in 1999, 25% in 2003, and 45% in 2006 but still have some way to go to reach the target. What is being done to address this issue?

I am optimistic that we will reach the objective of 90% for seat belt use in the front seat. Seat belt wearing rates are much higher for front seat occupants than for rear seat passengers. This is why the police authorities have increased the enforcement of seat belt use, particularly in the

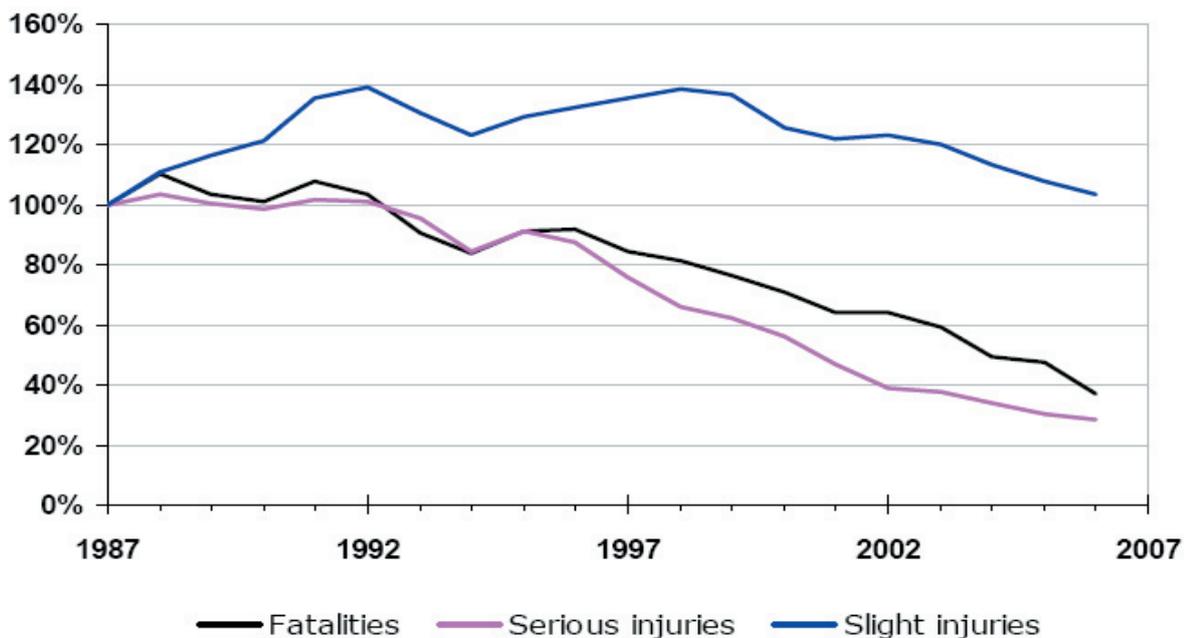


Fig. 6 Percentage changes in road traffic casualties in Portugal 1997-2006. Source: LNEC

back seat. We have also set up campaigns providing information to drivers and passengers that show the consequences of travelling unbelted.

ETSC: It is very difficult to evaluate the drink driving situation in Portugal. Official statistics reveal that in 2005, only 15 out of 674 killed drivers were tested for alcohol. How do you see this problem?

In Portugal there are two sources of data to assess the extent of drink driving accidents: accident data gathered by the police and information provided by the National Institute for Forensic Medicine. The police data are incomplete because they only include data on those drivers who were breath tested at the time of the accident. The Forensic Medicine Institute's toxicological department provides information on the level of alcohol in the blood of road accident fatalities. According to the last year's data, 41,4% of the drivers killed in road accidents who were tested were over the legal alcohol limit of 0.5 g/l. Presently we are working to produce a better estimate of the number of alcohol-related accidents based on both sources - the police and the National Forensic Medicine Institute reports.

ETSC: Originally, the Portuguese Road Safety Plan aimed at halving the number of road deaths by 2010. This target takes a baseline of 1998-2000 as a starting point. However, based on the good results so far, the government decided to shorten the target period and achieve the 50% drop by

2009. What are the ambitions beyond 2009?

We are presently developing a National Road Safety Strategy which will include new quantitative targets for the period 2008-2015 and the actions to achieve them. This will be organised in two periods: 2008-2011, and 2011-2015. The National Road Safety Strategy will be launched in the beginning of 2008.

Paulo Marques is the President of the National Road Safety Authority in Portugal. A trained Civil Engineer, he worked for the Cascais Borough on traffic and urban area management for 14 years before joining the National Road Authority Estradas de Portugal as the Director of the Road Safety Department. Under his leadership, the Road Safety Department was responsible, among other matters, for the annual national road safety plans, road safety inspections, black spot



management and traffic calming in built-up areas. In April 2007, Paulo Marques was appointed President of Portugal's National Road Safety Authority, a new government agency in charge of road accident prevention and safety policies.

PIN Panel

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Belgium	Patric Derweduwen, Belgian Road Safety institute (IBSR/ BIVV)
Cyprus	George Morfakis, Ministry of Communications
Czech Republic	Jaroslav Heinrich, Transport Research Centre (CDV)
Denmark	Jesper Solund, 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
Hungary	Peter Holló, Institute for Transport Sciences (KTI)
Ireland	Noel Brett, Road Safety Authority
Italy	Luciana Iorio, Ministry of Transport
Latvia	Aldis Lama, Ministry of Transport
Lithuania	Vidmantas Pumputis, Ministry of Transport
Luxembourg	Guy Heintz, Ministry of Transport
Malta	Maria Attard, Malta Transport Authority
Netherlands	Peter M. Mak, Transport Research Centre (AVV)
Norway	Rune Elvik, Institute of Transport Economics (TOI)
Poland	Ilona Buttler, Motor Transport Institute (ITS)
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Slovenia	Tomaz Pavcic, Ministry of Transport
Spain	Pilar Zori Bertolin, Ministry of Interior
Sweden	Jane Summerton, National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI)
Switzerland	Stefan Siegrist, Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu)
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