



BRIEFING | Road safety priorities for the EU in 2017

Memorandum to the Maltese Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

January 2017

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Summary

2015 was the second consecutive poor year for road safety: 26,300 people lost their lives on EU roads compared to 25,970 in 2014, an increase of 1%. A 9.7% annual reduction is now needed every year between 2015 and 2020 in order to reach the EU target for 2020 to halve the number of road deaths. The drastic slowdown in progress puts at risk the region's target of halving road deaths by 2020.

As well as the unbearable human cost, road casualties cost 2% of European GDP.

In this briefing, ETSC outlines its recommendations on the key EU road safety policy dossiers to be steered by the Maltese Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2017. These include preparing for the new EU roads package, which includes several safety elements.

ETSC strongly welcomes the Maltese initiative to put road safety on the agenda with an Informal Council on road safety on the 29th of March 2017 in Valletta where the Ministers are due to adopt a Road Safety Declaration. A stakeholder conference on the 28th of March will precede the Informal Council. ETSC is calling on transport ministers to back an EU target to reduce serious road injuries in the declaration.

The briefing also examines the upcoming policy initiatives from the European Commission including progress towards the 2020 target with recommendations for maximising the results of road safety work.

Context

The annual socio-economic cost of road traffic deaths and injuries was estimated to be equivalent to around 2% of GDP, or EUR 250 billion in 2012¹. Alongside legal and moral obligations, there is also a strong economic case to include the prevention of road traffic deaths and serious injuries in EU health policy as well as transport policy.

The total value of the reductions in road deaths in the EU28 for 2015 compared to 2010 is thus estimated at approximately 10.4 billion €, and the value of the reductions in the years 2011-2015 taken together compared with four years at the 2010 rate is about € 40.6 billion. If the EU countries had moved towards the 2020 road safety target through constant progress of 6.7%, the greater reductions in deaths in the years 2011-2015 would have increased the benefit to society by about 16.7 billion € to about 57.3 billion € over those years.

Given the financial difficulties that many EU countries face due to the economic slowdown, the value to society of improving road safety should be taken into account in the policy and budgetary planning process, expressing in monetary terms the moral imperative of reducing road risk.

The high value of societal costs avoided during 2011-2015 shows once more that the saving potential offered by sustained road safety improvements is considerable, making clear to policy-makers the potential for road safety policies to provide a sound investment.

The Maltese Presidency, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament, should acknowledge the strong return on investment of road safety improvements and prioritise life saving measures at EU and national level.

¹ WHO (2004), World report on road traffic injury prevention.

Key priorities for the Maltese presidency

Reversing the slowdown in reduction in road deaths and increase in serious injuries

The EU28 collectively reduced the number of road deaths by 17% over the period 2010-2015, far less than the required reduction of 29% (Fig. 1) needed to meet the 2020 target. Since the setting of the new road safety target Greece, Portugal, Spain and Denmark are the only EU member states that have maintained progress towards the 29% reduction. Norway (a non-EU country) made the most progress of all countries tracked by the ETSC PIN programme.²

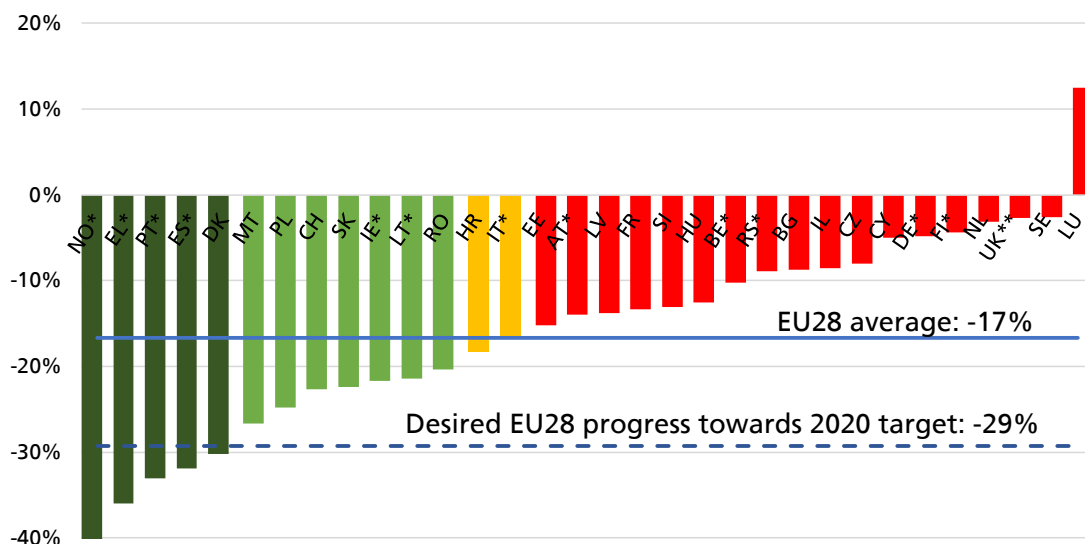


Fig.1: Relative change in road deaths between 2010 and 2015. *National provisional estimates used for 2015, as the final figures for 2015 are not yet available at the time of going to print. **UK data for 2015 are GB provisional total for year ending September 2015 and Northern Ireland total for the calendar year 2015. Numbers of deaths in LU and MT are small and therefore subject to substantial annual fluctuation.

Since 2010, the average annual progress in reducing the number of road deaths in the EU28 has been 3.6%. A 6.7% year-to-year reduction is needed between 2010 and 2020 to reach the target through consistent annual progress. Since the slowdown in 2014 and 2015, the number of road deaths over the period 2016-2020 now has to be reduced at a much faster pace of 9.7% each year for the EU to be on track by 2020.

² www.etsc.eu/pin

First ever EU-wide estimate of the annual number of serious road injuries based on the MAIS3+ definition

In spring 2016, the European Commission, for the first time, published an estimate for the number of people seriously injured on Europe's roads: 135,000 in 2014.³ This move required the adoption by all EU member states of a common definition of what constitutes a serious road injury, i.e. an in-patient with an injury level of MAIS 3 or more.

ETSC recommends the EU to adopt a target of 50% reduction between 2015 and 2025 in the number of people seriously injured on the roads. Between 2001 and 2014 at least 10 countries across Europe have reduced seriously injured at similar rates to deaths. So it is reasonable for Europe's ambition for reducing serious injuries to be as challenging as its ambition for reducing deaths.

In addition, the EU should adopt a joint strategy including measures against which delivery can be made accountable. In 2016, ETSC published a proposal for an EU strategy to reduce the number of people seriously injured on EU roads.⁴

³ European Commission Press release (March 2016), <http://goo.gl/w0IQky>

⁴ ETSC (2016), A Proposal for a strategy to reduce the number of people seriously injured on EU roads <http://etsc.eu/JtVp3>

New road safety initiatives from the European Commission in 2017

Vehicle Safety

The European Commission is currently preparing a review of the General Safety Regulation 661/2009, a piece of legislation regulating vehicle safety and in-vehicle technology in the EU⁵. A new report on the implementation of the GSR was published in December 2016, where the European Commission has identified a range of new vehicle safety technologies that are suitable for mandatory fitting as part of a review of EU vehicle safety legislation.⁶

The report names technologies including Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) and seat belt reminder systems in passenger seats as 'feasible in terms of the technology required', already available on the market and offering a positive benefit-cost ratio. To mitigate pedestrian and cyclist deaths, ETSC also supports the EC recommendation for mandating Advanced Emergency Braking (AEB), which can detect vulnerable road users.

These represent the high priorities for ETSC as they are mature technologies that are ready for deployment, however, the true safety potential will only be realised if the more advanced versions of the systems are introduced, and on a shorter timescale than that proposed by the European Commission.

ETSC would also like to see uniform standards for alcohol interlocks in Europe, which ensure that vehicle interfaces make it possible to easily fit an alcohol interlock. A key obstacle to wider use of alcohol interlocks is the lack of a standardised connection point on vehicles. Instead of this option, the Commission proposes to simply ask manufacturers to supply device installers with model-specific instructions, a much more cumbersome approach. The proposal is especially weak considering it is the only technical remedy proposed to tackle drink driving, which is responsible for around a quarter of road deaths in the EU.

With this addition, the three high-risk behaviours that cause many deaths can be

⁵ ETSC (2015) ETSC Position on the GSR Revision.

http://etsc.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2015_03_gsr_review_pp.pdf

⁶ European Commission (2016) Staff Working Document and Communication Saving Lives : Boosting Car Safety in the EU <http://bit.ly/2h7GKy1>

addressed: speeding, drink driving and non-use of seat belts.

The General Safety Regulation also includes the opportunity to mandate safety improvements to HGV fronts as well as underrun protection, measures that ETSC fully supports for swift introduction and uptake. In its recent report the Commission has failed to include 'front underrun protection' for lorries – physical changes that would help deflect vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in the event of a collision. The proposed deadline of 2028 for introducing 'direct vision' requirements that would enable drivers to see pedestrians and cyclists around the vehicle is also far too long.

A European Commission legislative proposal on the review of the 'General Safety Regulation' (GSR) is expected later in 2017.

The Maltese Presidency should take the initiative to promote the safety benefits of these key measures and promote their uptake in the EU with the context of the Review of the General Safety Regulation.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Protection

The European Commission is currently reviewing the Pedestrian Safety Regulation adopted in 2009. In the European Union, some 21% of all road deaths are pedestrians.⁷ The largest share of these are 65 years or over.⁸ The current Regulation 78/2009 lays down vehicle type approval requirements with respect to the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. It provides for the mandatory installation of Brake Assist Systems on N1 and M1 vehicles in an attempt to compensate for the relaxation of certain parameters on passive safety performance tests. ETSC fought hard against the relaxation of the tests arguing that the benefits accident avoidance technologies offer should have been additional rather than substitutive.⁹ There is now scope for further improving the current tests covering pedestrian upper leg and pelvis to bonnet leading edge tests and the adult head to windscreen test. The aforementioned European Commission communication on the review of the 'General Safety Regulation' (GSR) also covers Pedestrian Protection. ETSC regrets that it did not include the a new crash test critical to improving pedestrian protection, namely the 'upper leg form to bonnet leading edge' test and strongly calls upon the EC to include this within the legislative proposal which is due to follow later in 2017.

⁷ European Commission (2016) Staff Working Document and Communication Saving Lives : Boosting Car Safety in the EU <http://bit.ly/2h7GKy1>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/users/pedestrians/index_en.htm

⁹ ETSC, 2013, CARS2020 Position http://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CARS_2020_ETSC-Contribution_May_2013.pdf

Professional Driver Training

The European Commission is due to put forward a proposal to review the Directive on the Initial Qualification and Periodic Driver Training of drivers of certain vehicles (2003/59). This review is welcomed by ETSC.

Before the advent of the Directive very few EU drivers had followed professional competence training. The Directive includes a syllabus which covers elements to improve road safety in general. An objective of the Directive is also to make drivers aware of the risks of the road and of accidents at work. ETSC would welcome an update of the topics covered in the syllabus and further harmonisation of the content. ETSC would also call for new topics such as driver awareness of what it is like to be a cyclist interacting with large vehicles and the dangers of distracted driving to be included.

Member States issue the driver with a certificate of professional competence, referred to as 'CPC', certifying his or her initial qualification or periodic training. These skills and knowledge are kept up to date through periodic training. Periodic training is designed to complement the individual driver's work and be relevant to their everyday job. For both the initial and periodic training ETSC would welcome a shift to more quality in the training reaching "learning outcomes" as set out in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education & Training (EQAVET). "Learning outcomes" can be defined as what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of a learning process, as opposed to length of study. This would help the Directive contribute to better engagement in the training by the participants and increased professionalism amongst this group of workers.

All professional drivers should follow specific driver training because of the greater risks they face and associated responsibility they hold. ETSC would support ending the exemptions that currently exist in the Directive under Article 2. Nearly 4,000 deaths occurred in Europe in 2012 in collisions involving vans^{10,11}. ETSC advocates the extension of driver training under the CPC to van drivers¹². Very often employees have to drive vans on a daily basis, spending as much as half of their working time on the road. Monitoring of the training centres should also be introduced. Finally, professional driver trainers should follow proper qualifications themselves and ETSC would support the proposal for a certification scheme linked to national standards.

¹⁰ ETSC, 2013, 7th Annual Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Report.

¹¹ Goods vehicles with a maximum permitted mass below 3.5 tons.

¹² ETSC, 2012, Fit for Road Safety: From Risk Assessment to Training.

Infrastructure safety

The European Commission is reviewing the Infrastructure Safety Directive adopted in 2008. A study commissioned by the European Commission has found that the impact has been positive for road safety in a number of key areas¹³.

ETSC supports the European Commission's recognition and findings of the study that much more benefit could be achieved by extending the principles of Directive 2008/96 to other parts of the road network, in particular rural roads, where many more road users are killed. Almost half of EU countries already apply the rules on some other parts of their national road networks¹⁴. The application of the infrastructure safety Directive to the TEN-T roads has been calculated to potentially save 600 lives and prevent 7,000 serious injuries: if applied to all motorways and main roads, this rises to 1,300 lives¹⁵. In the EC Policy Orientations 2011-2020, the EC recommended to EU Member States to extend these requirements to the secondary road network (i.e. beyond the main motorways). This has become even more of a priority given the new objective to reduce serious injuries. Investment should also be continued to be made in road maintenance, even in times of financial hardship.

Within the context of the EU Refit¹⁶ programme to cut red tape, the tunnel safety Directive 2004/54 on minimum safety requirements for tunnels in the trans-European road network will be evaluated with a possible view to revise or repeal it. ETSC strongly supports the upholding of this important piece of EU road safety legislation and is looking forward to inputting its expert knowledge to this review process.

Further Reading

ETSC (2016) 10th Road Safety Performance Index Report

<http://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/10-PIN-annual-report-FINAL.pdf>

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/evaluations/doc/2014-12-ex-post-evaluation-study-road-infra-safety-mgmt.pdf>

¹⁴ ETSC (2015) Ranking EU Progress on Improving Motorway Safety (PIN Flash 28).

¹⁵ Rosebud Project (2005).

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/rosebud.pdf

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/refit/index_en.htm

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The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe.