



European Transport Safety Council

BRIEFING | Road Safety Priorities for the EU in 2020

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

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Introduction

The German Presidency takes the EU Presidency helm on the 1st of July in the middle of a huge crisis: Covid-19, challenging governments and the EU leaders alike with implications for the area of transport and mobility policy.

22,660 people lost their lives on EU roads in 2019, representing a 3% reduction compared to 2018. Since 2010, the EU27 achieved an overall reduction in road deaths of 24%, which equates to a 2.7% annual average reduction (Fig.1). Most of that progress was made in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The number of road deaths in the EU have declined by only 7% since 2013.

The EU, and its Member States, agreed a target to cut road deaths by half in the decade to 2020. A 6.7% year-to-year reduction was needed over the 2010-2020 period to reach the 2020 target through consistent annual progress. Since 2013, the EU as a whole has been struggling to make a breakthrough. For the EU to reach the 2020 target, road deaths now need to be reduced by around 34.5% from 2019 to 2020 – an unprecedented and highly unlikely possibility.

While it is expected that the lockdowns imposed across Europe due to the Covid-19 virus may bring a drop in the number of road deaths in 2020, it seems unlikely that the numbers will fall far enough.

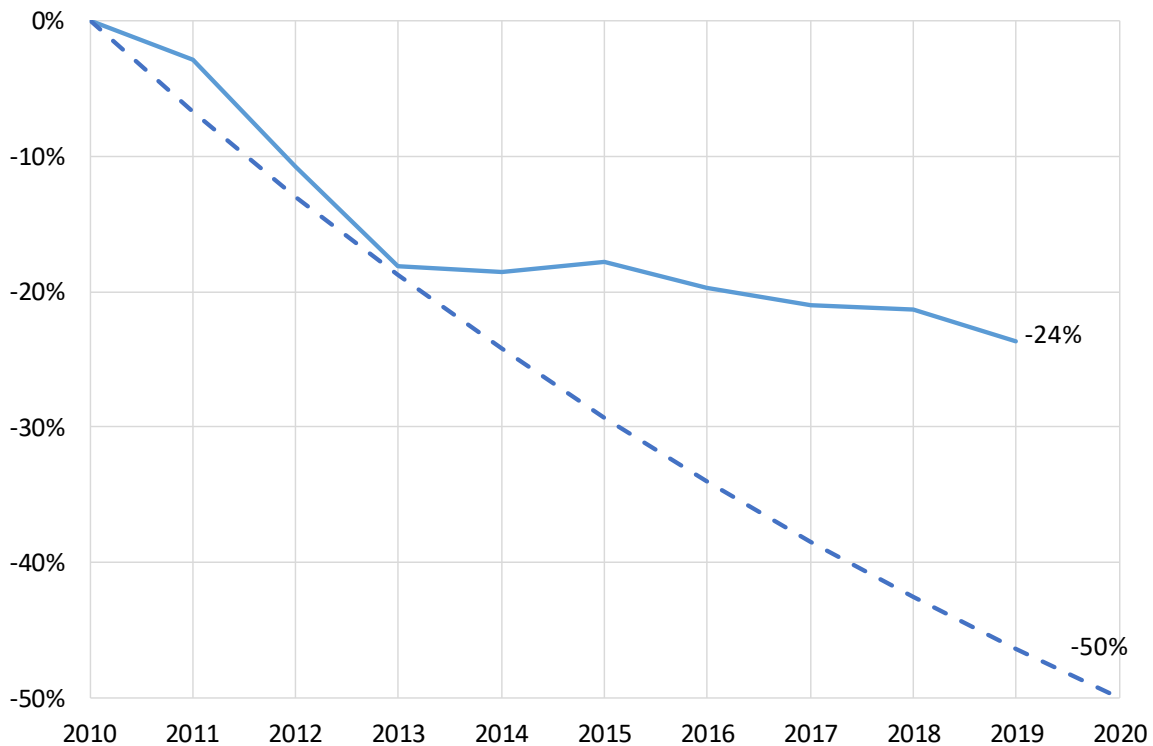


Figure 1. Reduction in the number of road deaths in the EU27 since 2010 (blue line) plotted against the EU target for 2020 (blue dotted line).

The weekly number of road deaths in the EU is equivalent to two typical passenger airliners crashing and killing everyone on board.

In addition, around 120,000 people were seriously injured on EU27 roads in 2019 according to European Commission estimates based on the MAIS3+ standard definition of a serious injury.¹

In this briefing, ETSC outlines its recommendations on the key EU road safety policy dossiers to be steered by the German Presidency of the European Union in the second part of 2020.

The EC is currently preparing the revision of two important pieces of road safety related legislation: the Driving Licence Directive 2006/126 and the Cross Border Enforcement Directive 2015/413. The preparations from the side of the Presidencies will most likely only start to feature on the agenda in 2021, so under the auspices of the Portuguese and Slovene members of the current EU Presidency Trio.

¹ European Commission Press release (11 June 2020), Road safety: Europe's roads are getting safer but progress remains too slow, https://ec.europa.eu/transport/media/news/2020-06-11-road-safety-statistics-2019_en

Six years of extremely slow progress in road death reductions since 2013 highlight the urgent need for strong action at EU level. In 2018, the European Commission adopted its EU Strategic Action Plan for Road Safety which includes a new target to halve road deaths by 2030 compared to 2020 levels, as well as, for the first time, a target to halve the number of seriously injured over the same period of time. It was followed up in 2019 with the publication of the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030, which introduced a number of Key Performance Indicators with which the EU will measure the overall safety performance of EU Member States. The new European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, reaffirmed her commitment to the new 2030 target and the Safe System approach in her first address to the European Parliament as Commissioner.²

The EU Strategic Action Plan³ was published as part of the third mobility package, which also included new vehicle safety standards, updated rules on road infrastructure safety management and a strategy for automated driving. Now road safety in the EU is likely to see a boost over the next decade thanks to the new legislation on minimum vehicle and infrastructure safety standards agreed last year.

Among the upcoming important EU initiatives are the revisions of the directive on driving licence and cross-border enforcement as well as a recommendation on Sustainable and Safe mobility strategy.

The period of currency of the EU white paper “Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system”⁴ is due to end in 2020. It is of utmost importance to ensure that road safety remains a priority in the upcoming decade within the new transport white paper.

Alongside that is the focus on the EC’s latest announcements for the Budget including financing the European Green Deal. Both deaths and serious injuries carry a huge cost to society. In monetary terms alone, the yearly cost of road crashes in the EU has been estimated in a new study to be around EUR 280 billion, equivalent to about 2% of GDP.⁵

Given the financial difficulties that many EU countries face especially now as they exit from the Covid-19 crisis, 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. It should be clear to policy-makers that road safety policies are a sound investment.

² ETSC news article <https://bit.ly/2U5lo8l>

³ ETSC Briefing: EU Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety <https://bit.ly/2TQZEP4>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3cdfcms>

⁵ European Commission (2019), Handbook on the External Costs of Transport (https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/sustainable/studies/sustainable_en)

The political will to improve on recent poor progress is important. The lack of it at EU member state level has contributed to a decline in levels of police enforcement, a failure to invest in safer infrastructure and limited action on tackling speed and drink driving in a number of countries.

Germany takes the helm of the EU presidency as Europe exits from one of the biggest challenges it has ever faced: Covid-19. It's a once-in-a-lifetime crisis that presents great threats, but also great opportunities for road safety.

On the one hand, there have been many reports of excessive speed during lockdown, this is clearly a challenge that must be dealt with to avoid a new normal of speeding with impunity. On the other hand, we have seen incredible examples of cities and towns across the continent responding to the new demand for safe cycling and walking. At ETSC, we have been making the case for many years that cities need to be redesigned to promote the safest and most sustainable forms of transport – keeping vulnerable road users separate from cars, vans and lorries. The transition out of lockdown could lead to a transport safety revolution, or a return to business as usual.

The German Presidency can also play its part now in making sure that road safety finds its place high on the list of priorities within the Exit Strategy and Recovery Plan.

Given the fact that the German EU presidency coincides with the preparation of both a new German Road Safety Programme and a National Cycling Plan for the next decade, road safety issues ought to rank high on the agenda.

Key Priorities for the German Presidency

Road Safety within the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy

It is of utmost importance to ensure that road safety remains a priority within the new Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy under preparation by the EC and due for publication this autumn. Key actions from the 'EU Road Safety Framework 2021-2030' must be included. The new Strategy should recommit to the EC's ambitious new road safety targets to reduce deaths and serious injuries as well as applying the "safe system" approach.⁶ The Road Safety Framework proposes eight new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against which EU Member State performance will be analysed, as well as the intention, in a second phase, to set outcome targets based on the indicators.

The Road Safety Framework sets up a new governance framework and action within four themes including: infrastructure safety, vehicle safety, safe road use (including speed, alcohol and drugs, distraction and the use of protective equipment), emergency response as well as the two cross-cutting issues of enforcement and training.⁷

Action to start implementing the priorities set out in the EU's new road safety strategy is needed now. ETSC also calls upon the Commission and MEPs, to tackle the main killers, which are still speeding, drink and drug driving, distraction and the failure to wear a seatbelt. The lives of thousands of EU citizens are at stake. The German Presidency will also engage in the discussion to shape the new Mobility Strategy, which, as well as including smart and sustainable actions, should also include a strong section on road safety and integrate road safety into other related areas.

⁶ European Commission (2019) EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 Next Steps Towards Vision Zero <https://bit.ly/2XXX8Xh>

⁷ ibid

Road Safety as a Priority within the Transport Exit Plan and Urban Mobility Package

The European Commission has published a series of recommendations for transport policy as Member States transition out of lockdown following Covid-19 in May.⁸ The main focus of the “communication” is to advise on ways of ensuring freight and passenger transport services can operate safely, with appropriate protections and physical distancing requirements. ETSC wrote to Commissioner Vălean in early May pointing out important road safety considerations to be taken into account for the exit strategy.⁹

One priority area is urban mobility. ETSC is monitoring with interest efforts by local authorities across Europe to rapidly improve the safety of vulnerable road users. Cities including Athens, Paris, Berlin, Milan, Madrid, Budapest and Brussels have boldly introduced new or expanded pedestrian and cycling infrastructure with unprecedented haste. More appropriate speed limits are also being introduced in several cases. These measures will help ease pressure on public transport modes that have been obliged to introduce physical distancing.

Regarding urban mobility, the Commission in its Exit Strategy says: “Many European cities are taking steps to make active mobility (e.g. walking and cycling) a safe and more attractive mobility option during the COVID-19 outbreak. Urban areas could consider temporary enlargements of pavements and increased space on the road for active mobility options to facilitate the needs of the population to move in a safe and efficient way, while reducing speed limits of vehicles in increased active mobility areas.¹⁰” The Commission also, “encourages and supports the development and implementation of new urban mobility solutions and measures to facilitate active, collective and shared mobility in a safe manner, and to ensure trust among citizens.”¹¹

ETSC supports this reprioritisation of transport infrastructure in dense, urban areas away from individual motorised transport towards public transport and sustainable, safer and healthier modes such as walking and cycling and that these changes should last into the long-term.¹²

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication_transportservices.pdf

⁹ <https://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Transport-Commissioner-on-exit-strategy-covid-19-and-Road-safety-08.05.2020.pdf>

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² ETSC PIN Flash 38, How Safe is Walking and Cycling in Europe (2020) <https://etsc.eu/how-safe-is-walking-and-cycling-in-europe-pin-flash-38/>

ETSC welcomes the EC's intended support for such measures in the exit strategy and hopes this will be further expanded with specific funding streams to support the introduction of new infrastructure for both cyclists and pedestrians in the recovery package under the EU's Green Deal package and upcoming Urban Mobility Package.

A recent report of the European Court of Auditors, which evaluated the use of EU funds in the area of urban mobility, found that to date the hoped for 'step change' to improve sustainable urban mobility has not taken place.¹³ The report calls upon the EC to publish better data on urban mobility, encourage more uptake of SUMP's and link access of funds to SUMP's. These recommendations echo ETSC's recommendations from its recently published PIN Reports on Urban Mobility (2019) and Pedestrian and Cyclist safety (2020).

The German Presidency could support the measures proposed in the area of urban mobility in the EC Exit Strategy and showcase and share experience from their own German cities, especially within the context of the upcoming new Urban Mobility Package in preparation by the EC.

Further reading:

ETSC (2020) PIN Flash Report 38 How Safe is Walking and Cycling in Europe?

<https://etsc.eu/how-safe-is-walking-and-cycling-in-europe-pin-flash-38/>

ETSC (2019) PIN Flash Report 37 Safer Roads Safer Cities How to Improve Urban Road Safety in the EU?

<https://etsc.eu/safer-roads-safer-cities-how-to-improve-urban-road-safety-in-the-eu-pin-flash-37/>

ETSC PIN Flash [Safer Roads Safer Cities How to Improve Urban Road Safety in the EU](https://etsc.eu/safer-roads-safer-cities-how-to-improve-urban-road-safety-in-the-eu-pin-flash-37/)

¹³ European Court of Auditors (2020) Special Report Sustainable Urban Mobility in the EU: No substantial improvement is possible without Member States' commitment
https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR20_06/SR_Sustainable_Urban_Mobility_EN.pdf

EU budget and financing the European Green Deal

Both deaths and serious injuries carry a huge cost to society. In monetary terms alone, the yearly cost of road crashes in the EU has been estimated in a new study to be around EUR 280 billion, equivalent to about 2% of GDP.¹⁴ The EU Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety proposes a package of funding measures.¹⁵

In May 2020, the Commission proposed a revamped long-term EU budget boosted by an emergency recovery instrument called Next Generation EU, to help repair the immediate damage brought by the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁶ The European Green Deal is cited as the focus of the European recovery and the instruments that the EC has proposed to enable it. Specifically under the 'Next Generation EU'¹⁷ the EC proposals stress that the investment must be for a 'green and 'digital' transition. The enhanced InvestEU fund also includes a new envelope of 20 BN EUR for 'sustainable infrastructure', which includes transport and digital infrastructure.¹⁸ ETSC calls for the clear inclusion of road safety under these headings within the elaboration and implementation of the proposals. Road safety must also be included in the EC's country specific recommendations, which will be developed under the European Semester Process within the 'Recovery and Resilience' instrument.¹⁹ ETSC also calls for road safety as a major European health priority to be included in the newly proposed Health Programme, EU4Health with a budget of €9.4 billion.²⁰ Improving the EU's health service in the wake of Covid-19 is crucial. More EU action could also be taken to improve emergency response following road traffic collisions but also looking at the health benefits of walking and cycling and the need therefore to ensure safe environments for active travel.²¹

¹⁴ European Commission (2019), Handbook on the External Costs of Transport (https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/sustainable/studies/sustainable_en)

¹⁵ European Commission (2019) EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 Next Steps Towards Vision Zero <https://bit.ly/2XXX8Xh>

¹⁶ EU Budget Proposals Overview https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940

¹⁷ European Commission (2020) EC Communication Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation [https://eur-](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?qid=1590732521013&uri=COM:2020:456:FIN)

[lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?qid=1590732521013&uri=COM:2020:456:FIN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?qid=1590732521013&uri=COM:2020:456:FIN)

¹⁸ European Commission (2020) Proposal for a Invest EU Regulation

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com_2020_403_1_en_act_part1_v10.pdf

¹⁹ European Commission (2020) Proposal for a Regulation for a 'Recovery and Resilience Facility

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com_2020_408_en_act_part1_v9.pdf

²⁰ EU4Health Proposal <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0405>

²¹ ETSC (2019) ETSC Response to the EU Strategic Action Plan

https://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/ETSC_response_EU_strategic_action_plan_road_safety.pdf

ETSC welcomed the original EC proposal for the 'common provisions' regulation of the European Social Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the cohesion funds in 2018. Especially, the new possibility for financial support to "assess road safety risk in line with existing national road safety strategies, together with a mapping of the affected roads and sections and proving with a prioritisation of the corresponding investments".²² ETSC recommends that regional funds for roads be conditional on improving infrastructure safety. ETSC also welcomed that "safe and secure mobility" is included in the new CEF regulation objectives under article 3 and "actions implementing safe and secure infrastructure and mobility including road safety" are included under the eligible actions under article 9.²³

ETSC welcomes the possibility to access funding for the introduction of new safe and sustainable infrastructure for both cyclists and pedestrians as foreseen under the European Regional Funds and also under the Recovery and Resilience Instrument.

ETSC calls on the German Presidency to maintain and further improve the prioritisation of road safety in the negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament on these different budgetary instruments.

Further reading:

ETSC (2018) Position Paper: EU Funds for Road Safety in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

<https://etsc.eu/position-paper-eu-funds-for-road-safety-in-the-multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027/>

²² European Commission (2018), ANNEXES to the Proposal for a REGULATION laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund[...]. <https://goo.gl/bi22JA>

²³ European Commission (2018), Proposal for a Regulation [...] establishing the Connecting Europe Facility and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 <https://goo.gl/X57oXW>

Vehicle safety

The EU has the exclusive competence to set minimum safety standards for all new vehicles sold on the EU market. These standards were updated in 2019.²⁴ They represent the most direct and effective measures the EU has to further reduce road deaths and injuries. TRL, the UK transport research laboratory, estimated in a study for the European Commission that the package of proposed vehicle safety measures could prevent around 25,000 deaths and 140,000 people seriously injured across all vehicle categories within 15 years.²⁵

Although the regulation has now been published, discussions on the specifications for each technology and safety measure will continue throughout 2020. Much will depend on the detailed technical standards for the newly mandated vehicle requirements, which are currently being worked out. ETSC is particularly concerned about the requirements for Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) technology for new cars, and “direct vision” standards (to improve visibility around the vehicle for drivers) for new Heavy Goods Vehicles and EDRs. ETSC strongly recommends that the German presidency continues to support the highest level of standards in the elaboration of these specifications given their critical and long-lasting importance for improving road safety in Europe.

Further reading:

Agreed text: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/2144/oj>

ETSC position: <http://etsc.eu/cBDdz>

ETSC (2020), Ranking EU Progress on Road Safety, 14th PIN Annual Report, <https://etsc.eu/projects/pin/>

ETSC (2020), How to improve the safety of goods vehicles in the EU? (PIN Flash 39), <https://etsc.eu/projects/pin/>

²⁴REGULATION (EU) 2019/2144 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 November 2019 on type-approval requirements for motor vehicles and their trailers, and systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles, as regards their general safety and the protection of vehicle occupants and vulnerable road users, amending Regulation (EU) 2018/858 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulations (EC) No 78/2009, (EC) No 79/2009 and (EC) No 661/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulations (EC) No 631/2009, (EU) No 406/2010, (EU) No 672/2010, (EU) No 1003/2010, (EU) No 1005/2010, (EU) No 1008/2010, (EU) No 1009/2010, (EU) No 19/2011, (EU) No 109/2011, (EU) No 458/2011, (EU) No 65/2012, (EU) No 130/2012, (EU), (EU) No 351/2012, (EU) No 1230/2012 and (EU) 2015/166 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/ No 347/20122144/oj>

²⁵ See page 13 of TRL on behalf of the European Commission (2018), Cost-effectiveness analysis of policy options for the mandatory implementation of different sets of vehicle safety measures - Review of the General Safety and Pedestrian Safety Regulations : technical annex to GSR2 report SI2.733025: final report <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ed4aff17-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

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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.