



European Transport Safety Council

Position Paper

Saving Lives on EU Roads

EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034: Funds for Road Safety

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Introduction

Last year, there were 20,418 deaths on EU roads.¹ Unfortunately, this represents a decrease of only 1% compared to 2022, falling far short of the 6.1% annual reduction needed to achieve the EU target.

In March 2024, the European Court of Auditors issued its first ever report on road safety, concluding that the EU and its Member States will need to “move their efforts up a gear” to reach the 2030 targets.²

In mid-2025, the European Commission is expected to set out proposals for the next long-term EU budget, known as the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), covering the seven years 2028-2034.

In this briefing, ETSC suggests how EU funds can be harnessed to support road safety in the context of the European Union’s target to cut road deaths and serious injuries by half by 2030.

Funding needs to be identified within the new MFF to support investment in road safety measures. Financing road safety would support the principles that underpin the EU budget. Adopting measures to protect EU citizens’ right to life and mobility delivers a high EU added value and supports transport, one of the EU common policy areas.

The current EU Strategic Action Plan on road safety includes a package of funding measures, further bolstered by the 2021-2027 EU budget.³

The action plan emphasised that road safety actions must be more clearly eligible in future instruments. The ‘common provisions’ regulation for the European Social Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the cohesion funds included a 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.”⁴ A new Advisory Hub on road safety was established in collaboration with the European Investment Bank. The action plan also included new measures to support capacity building at the Member State level, such as developing Safe System strategies and collecting Key Performance Indicators.⁵ Road safety priorities were also

¹ ETSC (2024) Annual Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Report <https://tinyurl.com/nhfba8mn>

² European Court of Auditors (2024) Reaching EU road safety objectives, Time to move up a Gear <https://tinyurl.com/4294wr74>

³ European Commission (2019) EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030- Next Steps towards “Vision Zero”. <https://bit.ly/2XX8Xh>

⁴ 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>

⁵ *ibid*

integrated into the 2021-2027 Research and Innovation Framework Programme, Horizon Europe.

From the Council's perspective, the Valletta Declaration on Road Safety (2017) saw Transport Ministers calling upon the European Commission to "ensure that necessary resources are allocated to research, programmes and projects promoting road safety in Europe."⁶ As recently as June 2024, Transport Ministers emphasised the importance of infrastructure, stating that "road safety is a thematic enabling condition for the mapping of projects under the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, and the Cohesion Fund."⁷

The European Parliament has consistently shown strong support for EU action on road safety, including advocating for a matching budget to achieve its objectives. In 2021, it called for "the Commission to support initiatives that could improve road safety and thus help to achieve the strategic goal of cutting the number of deaths on European roads in half by 2030 as well as the number of serious injuries."⁸

An EU Road Safety Agency

Unlike aviation, maritime, and rail transport in Europe, which have dedicated EU agencies overseeing safety, road transport lacks such an agency. The emergence of new technologies and trends underscores the urgent need for an EU Road Safety Agency. ETSC envisions a multifaceted role for this agency, as outlined below. Establishing this agency along these lines, has the potential to not only enhance safety but also have significant implications for funding, leading to benefits and cost savings.

ETSC Recommendation - create a European Road Safety Agency to:

- Collect and analyse data, helping speed up developments in road safety and providing a catalyst for road safety information and data collection;
- Develop methods for monitoring and evaluating national road safety strategies;
- Regulate and oversee independent investigation of road collisions, similar to other transport modes. Develop new safety standards for vehicles as well as overseeing and coordinating EU input to the UNECE vehicle regulation process;
- Mandate independent investigation of crashes involving vehicles equipped with assisted and automated driving systems, ideally coordinated by the EU Agency, before more advanced systems are put on the market;

⁶ Valletta Declaration on Improving Road Safety (2017), <https://goo.gl/JsX7gS>

⁷ Transport Council Conclusions June 2024 <https://tinyurl.com/2p999wnw>

⁸ European Parliament (2021) Own Initiative Report the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 – Recommendations on next steps towards 'Vision Zero' <https://tinyurl.com/5n75885u>

- Oversee the safe rollout of automated vehicles through market surveillance and real-world testing.

Equal Access to Road Safety for EU Citizens

Funding initiatives to enhance road safety across the EU provide clear added value and contribute significantly to the European public good. Road mortality rates still vary drastically among EU Member States, with Sweden experiencing 22 deaths per million inhabitants, compared to 82 in Bulgaria and 81 in Romania. This disparity underscores the need for consistent and effective road safety measures throughout the EU.⁹

The disparities in road safety among EU Member States also highlight that local, regional, and national governments alone cannot establish a policy framework that ensures both the highest practicable level of safety and an equitable distribution of safety across the European Union.¹⁰

⁹ ETSC (2024), 18th Annual PIN Report, <https://etsc.eu/18th-annual-road-safety-performance-index-pin-report/>

¹⁰ ETSC (2003) Towards Reduced Road Risk in a Larger Europe, Response to 3rd Road Safety Action Programme, <https://goo.gl/BQDDAi>

Preventing Road Deaths is Good for the European Economy

EU funds should prioritise enhancing road safety by applying proven, effective, science-based countermeasures that target the most life-saving actions. These funds should support the implementation of measures outlined in the EU's Road Safety Strategy 2020-2030, focusing on those with the highest potential to save lives.

While assigning a monetary value to the prevention of loss of human life and limb can be ethically debated, it allows for an objective assessment of the costs and benefits of road safety measures. This approach helps ensure the most effective use of generally limited resources. Both deaths and serious injuries impose a significant cost on society. Therefore, it is crucial to allocate funding within the new EU budget to support investment in new road safety measures and mitigate these costs.

The Value of Preventing one road Fatality (VPF), estimated for 2016 in the EU Handbook on the external costs of transport (2019),¹¹ has been updated in ETSC's latest Annual PIN report to take account of changes to the economic situation in the intervening years.¹² As a result, we have taken the monetary value for 2023 of the human losses avoided by preventing one road death to be €2.5 million at market prices in 2023.¹³

The total value of the human losses avoided by reductions in road deaths in the EU27 for 2023 compared to 2013 is estimated at approximately €10 billion, and the value of human losses avoided by the reductions in road deaths in the years 2014-2023 taken together compared with 2013 is about €53 billion (Fig.1, right column).

If EU road deaths had reduced at a constant annual rate of progress of 6.7%, the greater reductions in deaths in the years 2014-2023 would have increased the valuation of the benefit to society by about €134 billion to about €187 billion over those years (Fig.1, right column).

¹¹ European Commission (2019), Handbook on the external costs of transport, <http://bit.ly/2t4gAr7>

¹² Please note that the values used have not been updated in light of the VALOR study, <https://tinyurl.com/yskp3f5e>

¹³ For more information, see ETSC (2020), Updated methodological note to the 14th Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Report.

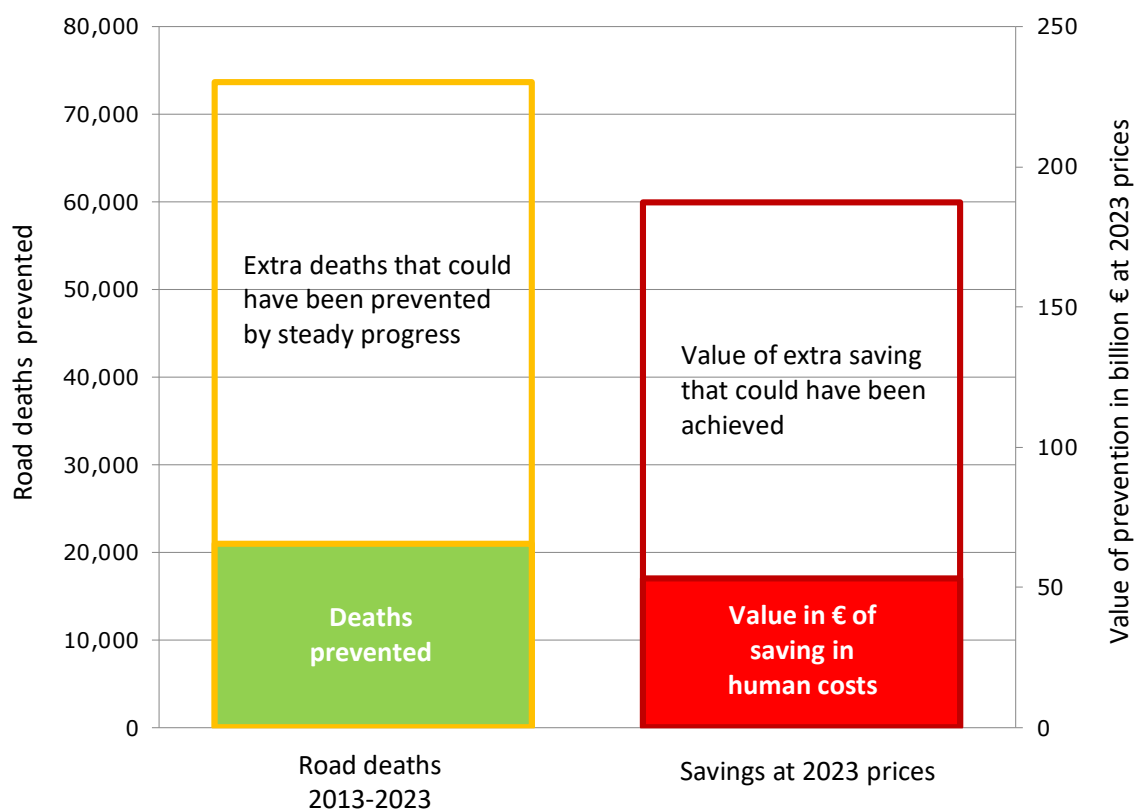


Figure 1. Reduction in the number of road deaths in EU27 over the period 2013-2023 and valuation at 2023 prices and value, together with the additional savings – both in deaths prevented and costs of this number of deaths – that could have been achieved if the EU had a steady annual reduction of 6.7%.

The Cost of Serious Injuries

Many road users involved in traffic collisions recover from their injuries. However, some never fully recover and endure lifelong suffering or permanent disabilities. The annual reduction in serious injuries lags behind the reduction in road deaths.¹⁴ In 2020, the European Commission updated the estimated number of serious road traffic injuries. According to this estimate, 110,000 people were seriously injured on EU27 roads in 2019, based on the common EU definition of a serious road injury—an in-patient with an injury level of MAIS3+. An increasing number of people live with serious injuries as a result of road traffic collisions, which can be life-changing for both the injured individuals and their caregivers.

ETSC welcomes the EU's recognition that road collisions and injuries are a public health problem. In its Road Safety Strategy, the EU communicated the benefits of countermeasures in terms of public health and costs to EU citizens. Despite the increasingly ambitious goals and targets, identified risks, and demonstrated benefit-to-cost ratios of publicly acceptable

¹⁴ ETSC (2024) Annual Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Report <https://tinyurl.com/nhfba8mn>

measures, investment in preventing serious health loss from road crashes is not commensurate with the high socio-economic value of its prevention, either at the EU or national levels.¹⁵

¹⁵ DaCoTA (2012) Road safety management, Deliverable 4.8p of the EC FP7 project DaCoTA.

Current EU Funding for Road Safety: It's Complicated

The main opportunities for road safety funding in EU countries are found in various areas, including the key sources listed below. However, this piecemeal approach is not ideal. It is ineffective to have numerous instruments without a structured overview of available budgets for road safety actions. This can lead to overlaps in some areas and gaps in others, leaving certain priorities unaddressed.

- TEN-T (network safety management, tunnel safety, HGV rest areas) through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)
- European Regional Development Fund
- Cohesion Fund
- Recovery and Resilience Facility
- InvestEU
- EU Social Climate Fund
- DG GROW (Single Market vehicle safety standards development)
- The European Social Fund (for work-related road safety)
- European Parliament Pilot Project, Preparatory Action funds
- DG SANTE (health sector surveillance of road traffic injury and public health)
- EU-OSHA (the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work)
- DG ENLARGEMENT
- DG REGIO (Regional Development Fund, IPA, TAIEX and other initiatives)
- DG RESEARCH (road safety research)
- For neighbourhood and accession countries in the European region, a regional framework agreement for road safety was established by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2014.

Evaluation

Evaluating and calculating the benefits of road safety interventions, particularly in terms of reducing road deaths and serious injuries, is an internationally recognised challenge. Additional support would be welcomed to facilitate these evaluations, enabling countries to demonstrate the national cost benefits of funding specific road safety initiatives. The results of these evaluations could then be used to justify continued funding.

ETSC Recommendation:

- Set up a mechanism to track and trace EU funds invested in road safety, evaluate the impact and co-ordinate the lessons learnt.

Funds for Road Safety in the Next EU Budget

Funds for Improving Road Infrastructure Safety

The majority of EU road safety funding is spent on improving road infrastructure safety. EU Member States and the European Commission should ensure that EU budget invested in building new roads and upgrading the current network is actually used to make roads safer. The TEN-T Regulation, updated in 2024 and now includes a specific reference to the two main infrastructure directives: Directive 2019/1936 and Directive 2004/54 obliging EU Member States to apply the requirements of these two Directives to the entire TEN-T network.¹⁶

Infrastructure safety requires budgets and programmes proportionate to the costs of road collisions.¹⁷ Targeting travel on existing road networks with high safety standards, which have benefited from investment, will help achieve safety targets. For example, Sweden has set a goal that by 2030, 70% of total traffic volume will occur on roads with median separation and speed limits between 80 and 120 km/h. By the end of 2022, this figure had already reached 65%.¹⁸

In its 2021 report on road safety, the European Parliament called for “the Commission to further promote EU funding opportunities through the Connecting Europe Facility, regional and cohesion funds, InvestEU, and the Safer Transport Platform launched by the European Investment Bank (EIB), especially in Member States with a relatively poor road safety performance.” The report also “stresses the importance of making the eligibility criteria for those instruments clearer for road safety actions.”¹⁹

The recent European Court of Auditors report found that three instruments were used to finance national and regional transport infrastructure projects contributing to road safety: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF), where management is shared between the Commission and the Member States.

The Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) approves multiannual programmes, including funding priorities designed by Member States, and

¹⁶ TEN-T Regulation text <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/18/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t-council-and-parliament-strike-a-deal-to-ensure-sustainable-connectivity-in-europe/>

¹⁷ Ministerial Conference on Road Safety 29.03.2017. Valletta, Malta, Rapporteurs’ Reports from the Stakeholders’ Conference 28 March 2017, <https://goo.gl/g5LC1U>

¹⁸ Hurtig, P., et al (2022) Analysis of Road Safety Trends. <http://tinyurl.com/yj8n983u>

¹⁹ European Parliament (2021) Own Initiative Report the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 – Recommendations on next steps towards ‘Vision Zero’ <https://tinyurl.com/5n75885u>

monitors implementation. National or regional managing authorities are responsible for selecting and implementing specific projects co-funded by the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) is managed directly by the Commission (DG MOVE), which has delegated responsibility for awarding grants and monitoring implementation to the CINEA. These three instruments remain sources of funding for the 2021-2027 period. Additionally, the Recovery and Resilience Facility can support projects contributing to road safety during this period.

The European Green Deal and European recovery were the focus of the last MFF. The enhanced InvestEU fund also included a new budget line of 20 billion EUR for ‘sustainable infrastructure,’ which encompasses transport and digital infrastructure. In the last CEF revision, ETSC also welcomed that “safe and secure mobility” was included in the CEF regulation.

As national project promoters and authorities were not required to specifically identify the EU co-funded projects that contributed to road safety in the 2014-2020 period, the European Court of Auditors was unable to compile an overview at the EU level of the total amount of funding contributing to road safety. The ECA’s report identified the committed amounts but did not provide an overview of actual expenditures. For the purpose of the European Court of Auditors’ audit, they estimated the relevant amount of EU funding provided under the ERDF, the CF, and the CEF over the period for projects that contributed to road safety. As of February 2023, the amount committed was €6,663 million (CEF €1,477 million; ERDF and CF €5,186 million). **ETSC recommends that the EU set up a mechanism to track and trace EU funds invested in road safety and evaluate the impact.**

There are new requirements under the funding instruments, known as ‘enabling conditions,’ which Member States must meet in terms of achievement and assessment to qualify for funding.²⁰ EU Member States must include, for example, an assessment of road safety risks in their multimodal transport plans in line with their existing road safety strategies. They also have to include a mapping of affected roads and sections, together with a prioritisation of the corresponding investments.

Yet, when EU funds are available and used for infrastructure, the recent ECA report says road safety was not a key criterion when selecting projects. Additionally, “selection criteria often failed to target accident hotspots”.²¹

Feedback and guidance from the European Commission are crucial. The ETSC calls for road safety to be included in the EC’s country-specific recommendations under the European

²⁰ As noted in European Court of Auditors (2024) Reaching EU road safety objectives: Time to move up a gear Enabling condition 3.1.8 Annex IV of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060

<https://tinyurl.com/j5a6rdp7>

²¹ Ibid

Semester process. This annual cycle provides a framework for coordinating the economic policies of EU Member States and monitoring progress. The ECA report found that no European Semester country-specific recommendations had been issued regarding road safety.²²

In a few cases, the Commission commented on road safety issues in the country reports prepared as part of the process. For example, comments highlighted the need for further road safety action for cyclists in Belgium (2023) and the need to invest in safer infrastructure in Lithuania (2019) and Romania (2020). However, they found no evidence of consistent monitoring of Member States' actions regarding road safety.²³

The ECA also highlighted another shortcoming to be addressed in the next round: EU funding currently only supports the construction or upgrading of road infrastructure.²⁴ Currently, project promoters are not obligated to maintain roads to ensure a specific level of road safety. During their performance review, the ECA conducted site visits and identified shortcomings where EU budget funds had been spent on new infrastructure but were not followed up with proper maintenance.²⁵ The quality of implementation and maintenance of EU co-funded infrastructure can have a significant impact on safety.

Regional funding for improving road infrastructure safety should not be further reduced in the next funding period 2028-2034.²⁶ The ECA noted that there has been less cohesion funding for road safety during the current 2021-2027 period compared to the previous one (2014-2020) (See Fig.2). For example, the cohesion policy funds earmarked for road infrastructure (including cycle paths) are around 33% lower than for the previous period.²⁷ This reduction in available funding may result in at least a proportional reduction in the funding for future projects specifically aimed at road safety, unless strong prioritisation rules are set in their favour.

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ CEF Manifesto More EU Budget for Transport <https://tinyurl.com/fbna825p>

²⁷ European Court of Auditors (2024) Reaching EU road safety objectives, Time to move up a Gear <https://tinyurl.com/4294wr74>

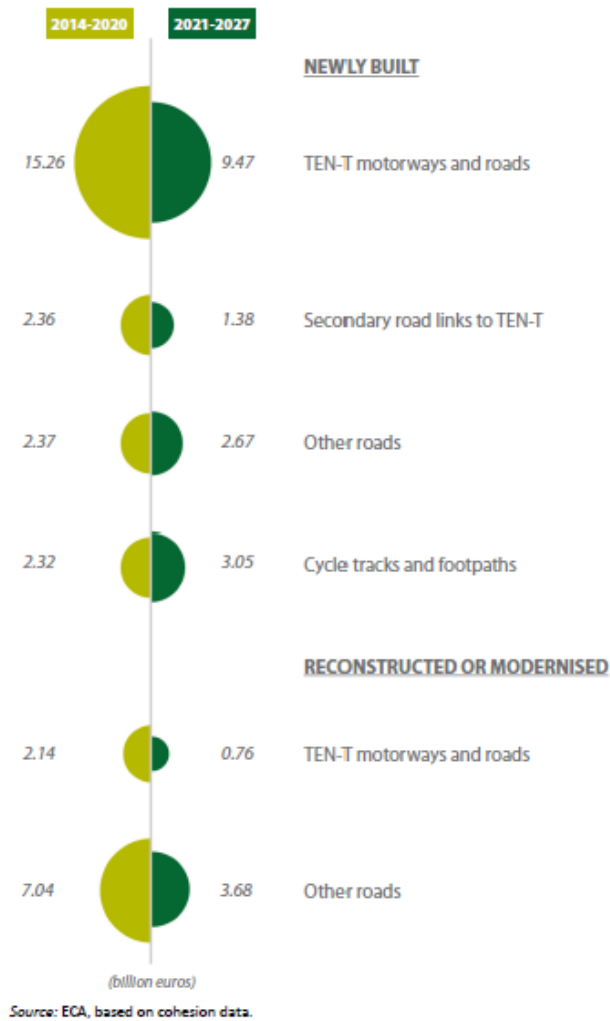


Figure 2. Comparison of the EU co-funding from cohesion policy funds allocated to road infrastructure for the 2014-2020 and the 2021-2027 periods. Source: ECA, based on cohesion data. Newly Build, Reconstructed or Modernised 2014-2020

ETSC says EU funds for road infrastructure should comply with the EU's infrastructure safety legislation and include maintenance funding. Any EU funds destined to support urban and rural mobility should also comply with safety standards. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding should also be used for 'primary' roads identified within the scope of Directive 2019/1936, to allow for critical safety improvements on key national and regional roads. These may not be part of the trans-European network but still carry significant traffic volumes and pose significant road safety risks. Moreover, a certain percentage should be earmarked specifically for safety including, for example, investments in public transport, cycle lanes and pedestrian infrastructure.

To date a number of EU Member States have improved road safety by building and/or upgrading roads. For example, Greece built new EU-funded motorways and traffic

consequently moved away from higher-risk rural roads.²⁸

ETSC Recommendations:

- Include road safety in the EC's country specific recommendations, under the European Semester process.
- Ensure that any EU funds used for road infrastructure comply with the EU's infrastructure safety legislation and that funds are used for maintenance over the entire life cycle of the road infrastructure.
- Earmark a percentage of the funds invested on infrastructure projects specifically for safety including, for example, investments in public transport, cycle lanes and pedestrian infrastructure in urban and rural areas.
- Create an EU fund to support priority measures such as for cities to introduce 30 km/h zones (particularly in residential areas and where there are a high number of VRUs) and to invest in improving high-risk roads that carry a high percentage of traffic.

Research Funding

EU funds for research and development can play a crucial role in enhancing road safety across the EU. Horizon Europe (HE) is the EU's primary funding programme for research. Within HE, road safety research falls under the Pillar II cluster, which focuses on Climate, Energy, and Mobility. Pillar II addresses 'global challenges and European industrial competitiveness.' The proposal for the 10th Framework Programme, set to succeed 'Horizon 2020,' is expected to be adopted for launch in 2028. This proposal will consider an evaluation of the current programme, which was published in early 2024.²⁹

The evaluation found that Horizon 2020 contributed to urban transport improvements by supporting sustainable urban mobility plans. This included implementing well-designed parking measures and enhancing cycling infrastructure, which collectively improved urban liveability and sustainability.³⁰

Member States have started preparations for the next funding round led by the European Road Transport Research Advisory Council (ERTRAC).

Sound policies are based on known, effective, science-based countermeasures, which in turn are grounded in good research. The EU's research on road safety has continued in the past decade funding a range of topics. Collaborative research co-funded by the European

²⁸ ETSC Annual PIN Report <https://etsc.eu/15th-annual-road-safety-performance-index-pin-report/>

²⁹ Evaluation of Horizon 2020 Report https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/evaluation-impact-assessment-and-monitoring/horizon-2020_en

³⁰ ibid

Commission has contributions has led to improvements in road safety.

The EU has a global reputation as a centre of excellence and innovation in research and development in road safety. Road safety research should continue to benefit from European funds under the next research framework programme. There is a continuing need to ensure the dissemination of knowledge about successful measures (good practice) and research results among decision-makers and practitioners.

The ETSC recommends following general principles for conducting research in the field of road safety ³¹:

- Freely available and easily accessible data for use by all independent research organisations. The responsibility of collecting the basic police, hospital, and exposure data at the national level should be separated from departments of transport and should be given to either an independent transport research institute, or a national statistical institute;
- Research aims are best achieved by having independent specialists overseeing the funding arrangements, a multiplicity of research establishments and separation of those establishments from operational agencies;
- Open peer review process and open dissemination of results. Research findings should be publishable, and published in the open literature. From the organisational viewpoint this should lead to the active support of journals and reports with independent assessment of content from specialists outside of the organisations. At the EU level there is a clear opportunity for such activity to be supported;
- Separation of the research and evaluation functions. To encourage independence, research should be separated from the operational aspects of transport safety. Research should encompass the evaluation of the operational aspects of transport safety but should remain outside those operations.

The budget for dedicated road safety research is alarmingly small, partly due to the organisational structure of EU funds, as noted in a recent paper by the Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes (FERSI).³² At present, in order to be funded, road safety research must 'contribute to European competitiveness' and, hence, must have a clear focus on technology development and industrial involvement. The current scope of the European research programmes, but also the selection criteria and procedures should be reconsidered.³³

Fundamental road safety research hardly receives any funds from European research programmes.³⁴ In a recent review by FERSI of two funding years (2021-2022), only 7% of

³¹Transport Safety Organisations In Private and Public Sector, ETSC Review 2003.

³² FERSI: Essential European Road Safety Research Lacking (2023). <https://tinyurl.com/2s3surzt>

³³ ibid

³⁴ For instance, in the HE Working Programme 2021-2022 of the cluster Climate, Energy and Mobility, there were five topics primarily focussed on road safety. Their total budget was around 56 M € of which

the total budget was awarded to basic road safety research projects. FERSI highlighted the importance of earlier fundamental research projects such as DRUID and SafetyNet which gave critical insights respectively on driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs and key performance indicators.³⁵ The recent figures show there is a substantial and undesirable imbalance between technology-based and non-technology-based road safety research projects.

Moreover, the project-based approach often results in discontinuity: when one project ends, follow-up is not guaranteed. The application process and related uncertainty results in inefficiency. Research organisations spend a lot of time applying for research projects, time that could be better used. Each research project has to set up its own dissemination and promotion activities with for example its own website, newsletter and final conference. Public money should be better used in contributing to EU road safety research programmes with longer continuity.

ETSC Recommendations:

- Earmark funds for basic road safety research in the next EU research budget line.
- Review selection criteria and procedures and increase transparency of EU research budget lines.

ETSC has developed recommendations on road safety research priorities for the next round including a specific section on vehicle safety and automation.³⁶ This list is not exhaustive and stems from the conclusions of recent ETSC publications.

Priorities:

- Conduct research on new and improved care and rescue measures to further minimise the long-term effects of road crashes, in particular for children.
- Improve data collection and analysis including registration of deaths and injuries and tackle underreporting amongst VRUs.
- Prioritise safety improvements to road infrastructure, and harness potential of digital infrastructure (such as digital speed limit maps and analysis of crash data to prioritise treatment of high-risk sites).
- Conduct research on the road safety implications of electrically assisted cycles

just one project (2022-D6-01-06 area B) focused on European road safety without explicit coverage of technology development and/or economic growth. The indicated budget for this project was around 4 M €. FERSI: Essential European Road Safety Research Lacking (2023). <https://tinyurl.com/2s3surzt>

³⁵ ibid

³⁶ Reference is also made to priorities included in ERTRAC's Input to the 9th Framework Programme <https://tinyurl.com/32xwn5wy>

including tampering prevention and infrastructure needs and other new forms of transport using the roads such as unicycles.

- Develop effective enforcement strategies and tactics (building on the work of previous EU-funded projects such as ESCAPE and PEPPER).
- Undertake further research into young road user risk and its causes, including competencies linked to safe road use such as hazard perception, the content and effectiveness of training and education.
- Research on the potential safety benefits of the provision and take-up of telematics-based insurance for young people.
- Conduct in-depth collision analysis across the EU.

Vehicle safety priorities:

- Further look at the safety implications of the transitional phase of mixed automated and semi-automated vehicles and interaction with vulnerable road users.
- Continue to research the safety benefit of automated and semi-automated vehicles.
- Continue to study the safety implications of driver dis-engagement and re-engagement during automated driving.
- Carry out in-depth collision investigations of a representative sample of road deaths and use the findings for policymaking.
- Vehicles are getting heavier and larger, while at the same time new emerging mobility solutions appear, increasing the issue of compatibility between vehicles and other vulnerable road users.
- Conduct research on optimised and intuitive Human-Machine-Interfaces following the concept of cognitive safety.
- Mandate an evaluation study on the effectiveness of national roadworthiness testing.
- Conduct research on the adaptability of occupant protection devices to biomechanical characteristics linked to age, gender and morphology of the occupant.
- Research the cost-effectiveness of retrofitting older vehicles with new safety technologies such as distraction warning or speed limiting technologies and on-board units which could provide basic C-ITS services that enhance road safety.
- Conduct research on the correlation between laboratory tests and real world performance of vehicles.
- DG GROW: funding should be made available to support defining the safest standards for life-saving technologies at the UN or EU level. Example: when GSR was adopted, no funding was available to help define the standards for Intelligent Speed Assistance, made mandatory in the General Safety Regulation. Risk: Basing decisions on industry 'expertise' alone.
- Conduct a feasibility study on the standard implementation of a digital driving license ignition lock making it possible to check on-line if the driver has a valid license.

Support for NGOs and Civil Society Active in Road Safety across the EU

It is crucial for NGOs to engage in dialogue with EU institutions, as their involvement ensures a balanced representation of various interests. European NGOs play a vital role in coordinating and channeling the perspectives of national organizations and citizens into the decision-making process. They are instrumental in generating scientific knowledge through research and in raising public awareness about the need for improved road safety. Additionally, associations of road traffic victims must be considered when balancing interests in EU policymaking.

Support for NGOs active in road safety should be strengthened, and their networks expanded at both national and European levels. This support should include core funding to cover basic operational costs, ensuring stability and sustainability. NGO-led projects often operate at low cost while delivering high returns.

Therefore, the European Commission should adopt a similar approach to supporting road safety NGOs as it does for those in the fields of environment, education, youth, development, anti-poverty, equal opportunity, and social issues. These NGOs currently have access to annual core funding, which provides greater stability and sustainability. Extending such funding to road safety NGOs would enable them to grow and reduce their dependence on other donors.

ETSC Recommendations:

- Provide core funding to both EU umbrella NGOs and the expansion of networks for NGOs active in road safety within EU Member States.
- Support a Member State level action to explore sustainable funding opportunities for road victim associations and their core activities: for instance through personalised license plate fees, revenue from specific traffic fines and traffic-related fees.

Exchange of Best Practice and Capacity Building

Over the past decade, DG MOVE has supported numerous projects aimed at improving road safety, funded through a dedicated budget line. This funding, which reached as high as €9.1 million in 2007, concluded in 2018. These projects, carried out by NGOs including ETSC, encompassed a wide range of activities. The annual call for operational road safety support was under budget line 06 02 03 in the annual budget and Heading 1A - Competitiveness for Growth and Employment of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

For ETSC, the availability of these funds enabled the implementation of crucial projects in areas such as improving road safety in South, Central, and Eastern European countries post-accession, protecting vulnerable road users, enhancing work-related road safety, promoting cycle safety, and addressing the needs of young people. These projects identified best practices and disseminated findings and recommendations across the EU, contributing to road safety objectives in a highly cost-effective manner.

The European Commission must now continue its essential role in supporting and funding the exchange of road safety best practices among EU Member States. Additionally, it should advocate for the adoption of national targets and road safety action plans.

Currently a review of the 27 national road safety strategies is in preparation. This is being carried out by a consortium in the framework of the European Road Safety Observatory. The review will look firstly at data on deaths and serious injuries and key safety KPIs. A second phase will look at implementation under key policy areas. The final phase will evaluate how far policies are leading to improvements in road safety. This analysis will also provide important input into shaping funding priorities.

The EU Road Safety Exchange project aims to help tackle the disparities that exist between EU Member States on road safety.³⁷ The project is funded by the European Parliament and led by the European Commission. The project is managed by ETSC on behalf of the European Commission. The project is a three-year Preparatory Action of the EU (2023-2025) that consolidates and expands the network of road safety professionals built under an earlier pilot project. Road safety professionals from the participating countries work together to share best practices on reducing speed, building safe infrastructure and improving enforcement and data collection, as well as the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in urban areas. At the core of the project is a series of exchange activities whereby leading EU road safety professionals share effective road safety measures and policies with their counterparts from the supported Member States.

ETSC Recommendation:

- Set up a permanent funding mechanism for capacity building and exchange of best practice for EU Member States.

Support for EU Member States in Benchmarking: KPIs and serious injury data

The EU's Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 introduced a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are being used to measure overall road safety performance. The KPIs were further detailed in the EU Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety.³⁸

In an initial phase, eight KPIs will form the basis for monitoring progress in joint road safety work at EU, Member State, regional and local levels. The aim is to continue strengthening the existing KPIs and to develop additional ones.³⁹ To facilitate the work on data collection, the European Commission has offered financial support to Member States. The long-term goal is to collect comparable data, bearing in mind that some differences in national rules will

³⁷ Road Safety Exchange Website for more information <https://tinyurl.com/2nmb9vff>

³⁸ ETSC (2019), Briefing EU Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety, <https://bit.ly/36Ua5Xe>

³⁹ Ibid

constrain comparison for some indicators.

Key Performance Indicators can give a more complete picture of the level of road safety than just numbers of road deaths and serious injuries and can help detect the emergence of problems at an earlier stage.⁴⁰ Furthermore, outcome targets can be set based on the data collected.

The 'Baseline' project, supported by the European Commission and coordinated by the VIAS Institute, was launched in 2020 to produce values for the EU Road Safety KPIs in the 18 Member States participating in the project. Each participating country provided between one and eight national KPI values that were comparable across countries and which met the minimum methodological requirements of the European Commission.⁴¹

In 2023, as a follow-up to the 'Baseline' project, the 'Trendline' project was launched, supported by the European Commission and coordinated by SWOV.⁴² In addition to the eight KPIs that had originally been defined by the European Commission and used within the 'Baseline' project, the 'Trendline' consortium will also identify some new indicators, develop appropriate methodologies and test these on a limited scale. The 'Trendline' project brings together 29 European countries. Financial support from the EU should continue to support this important work in the next budgetary period.

Serious Injuries

Following the announcement of the EU target to reduce serious injuries by 50% by 2030, EU Member States undertook to collect data on road injuries rated MAIS3 or higher. All methods used for estimating the number of serious traffic injuries (MAIS3+) are in one way or another based on hospital records while data based on national serious injury definitions are collected by the police. Collecting data based on hospital records is not straightforward and to date only thirteen EU MS are collecting MAIS3+ data. The progress in reducing serious road traffic injuries over the last decade in the EU24 collectively was poor, especially in comparison with the reduction in road deaths. There has only been a 10% reduction over the period 2013-2023. The number of serious injuries remained almost unchanged until 2019. As with road deaths, there was a substantial drop of 14% in 2020 compared to 2019, most likely due to the various measures imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of serious injuries increased by 3% in 2021 compared to 2020 and increased again by 6% in 2022 compared to 2021. 2023 saw a decrease of 7% in serious injuries compared to 2022.

Financial support should also be provided to Member States looking to improve the collection

⁴⁰ ETSC (2018) Briefing: 5th EU Road Safety Action Programme 2020-2030, <https://bit.ly/2LuTDBW>

⁴¹ Baseline project, <https://baseline.vias.be/>

⁴² Trendline project, <https://trendlineproject.eu/>

of MAIS3+ data on serious injuries. In the ECA report,⁴³ the auditors found that a lack of sufficient data comparability between Member States was considered to be hampering the Commission's ability to monitor progress adequately. The auditors found a lack of harmonisation in how Member States classify data on serious injuries, leaving the Commission "unable to obtain an accurate overview of serious injuries at EU level and design well-targeted actions to reduce their number." Thus there is a clear need to fund improving data collection on serious injuries.

ETSC Recommendations:

- Fund a follow-up project to provide technical support on further developing the KPIs in all EU Member States.
- Fund a follow-up project to provide technical support for the development and further improvement of serious injury data collection.

Enforcement

Increased and well-publicised enforcement targeting the main risks of speeding, drinking and drug driving, distraction and non-use of seat belts on the road forms a fundamental part of achieving the new EU 2030 targets. While education and engineering improve safety in the longer term, effective enforcement leads to a rapid reduction in deaths and injuries.

The newly revised Cross Border Enforcement Directive includes a welcome new article: "The Commission shall provide financial support to initiatives that contribute to cross-border cooperation in the enforcement of road-safety-related traffic rules in the Union, in particular the exchange of best practices, the application of smart enforcement methodologies and techniques in the Member States, increasing the capacity building of enforcement authorities and awareness raising campaigns regarding cross-border enforcement actions."⁴⁴

Joint enforcement actions on key priorities, such as the "Speed Marathon"⁴⁵ should be encouraged as they help foster political will and help with exchange of best practice. They could also focus on identified 'high-risk cross-border transit routes'. Moreover, EU funds for infrastructure (Cohesion and Connecting Europe Funds) should also be used more widely to support the EU Member States' use of recognised enforcement best practices.

⁴³ECA (2024) Special report 04/2024: Reaching EU road safety objectives – Time to move up a gear <https://tinyurl.com/58hkcfxd>

⁴⁴ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive (EU) 2015/413 facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences Text of Provisional Agreement 03.2024 <https://tinyurl.com/yckwcz3y>

⁴⁵ Roadpol Speed Marathon <https://tinyurl.com/342hrmtd>

ETSC Recommendations:

- Fund Europe-wide joint enforcement actions (as required by the CBE Directive).
- Fund the EU Member States' use of recognised enforcement best practices.
- Support EU Member States in setting up a transparent system for the allocation of revenues generated by fines and channel revenues from enforcement back into road safety work.

International Cooperation with Neighbourhood Countries and Third Countries

As the world's biggest aid donor, the EU should ensure that EU road safety policy objectives also apply to external programming to create consistency in approach and signal the importance of road safety as a priority for the EU in all relevant policy areas.

The objective of EU development policy is to eradicate poverty in the context of sustainable development and contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Since 2015 these goals have included reducing death and injury on the road.

Globally, each year nearly 1.3 million people die because of road traffic collisions. 90% of road deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, home to less than half the world's registered vehicle fleet. At present road safety is not a policy or programmatic priority for EuropeAid or for the European Investment Bank, despite the overwhelming support of EU Member States for UN resolution A/RES/74/299 on tackling the global road safety crisis.

Mechanisms should be explored to extend the principles of the EU's road safety policy to neighbourhood countries. Capacity building initiatives could include road safety training for community actors and professionals. This will strengthen decision-making and generate synergies among programmes on the ground, which are relevant to road safety. The Western Balkans region has the "Transport Community"⁴⁶ initiative for example. This has already developed a road safety action plan⁴⁷ as well as a Road Safety Observatory.⁴⁸ There have also been EU-funded projects, for example the Interreg 'Risk Assessment on Danube Area Roads – Radar'⁴⁹ project on the need to upgrade infrastructure to improve road safety in the Danube and the Interreg Danube Sabrina project⁵⁰ on road infrastructure safety for cyclists. Road safety should also be included in pre-accession twinning programmes.

⁴⁶ Transport Community <https://www.transport-community.org/>

⁴⁷ Road Safety Action Plan <https://tinyurl.com/4uez5aje>

⁴⁸ Western Balkans Road Safety Observatory <https://tinyurl.com/fkv3numc>

⁴⁹ Radar Project <https://tinyurl.com/2trxcvvz>

⁵⁰ Sabrina <https://tinyurl.com/yc2dunsu>

ETSC Recommendation:

- Ensure that EU road safety policy objectives apply to external aid programming including EuropeAid and for the European Investment Bank and funds for co-operation with near neighbourhood countries.

Mainstreaming Road Safety in other EU Budget Areas

Health and Safety - Work Related Road Safety - European Social Funds

European Social Funds should be used to train and educate employers and employees to improve road safety at work and implement the EU's Health and Safety at Work Strategy and reach the new targets of reducing road deaths at work. Up to 40% of all road deaths in the EU are work-related.⁵¹ Duty of care, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and road safety compliance are legal necessities for employers in all EU Member States.

Education and Culture Funds

DG Education and Culture supports Youth programmes. Traffic collisions are the single largest killer of 15-24 year olds. The highest risk circumstances of young drivers – in particular male drivers – are associated with speeding, drink-driving, distracted driving, non-wearing of seat belts and drug driving. The European Commission's budget should support programmes targeting road safety and young people.

Public Health

Road injuries and deaths should be treated by DG SANCO as a public health problem. The EU's Health programme could also support road safety projects that improve conditions from a health perspective. Topics for research under health could include the effects of dietary habits, sleep and stress management on driving and road safety.

Environment and Sustainable Development

A comprehensive approach to road injuries and deaths should also be integrated into the EU's environmental policy, recognising it as a critical issue related to sustainable mobility.

Sustainable mobility is a key factor in the development plans for the cities of the future.

⁵¹ ETSC (2017), PIN Flash 33, Tapping the Potential for reducing work-related road deaths and serious injuries.

ETSC Key Recommendations

The EU should:

- Through EU funds, implement the road safety measures that are known, cost effective and science based.
- Reverse the trend of cuts to the EU budget for road safety measures.
- Create a European Road Safety Agency.
- Adopt measures to reduce the road safety gap between the best and worst performing EU Member States.
- Set up a mechanism to track and trace EU funds invested in road safety and evaluate the impact.
- Include road safety in the EC's country-specific recommendations, under the European Semester Process.
- Ensure that any EU funds used for road infrastructure comply with the EU's infrastructure safety legislation and that funds are used for maintenance over the entire life cycle of the road infrastructure.
- Earmark a percentage of the funds invested on infrastructure projects specifically for safety including, for example, investments in public transport, cycle lanes and pedestrian infrastructure in urban and rural areas.
- Create an EU fund to support priority measures such as for cities to introduce 30 km/h zones (particularly in residential areas and where there are a high number of VRUs) and to invest in high-risk roads that carry a high percentage of traffic.
- Fund a follow-up project to provide technical support on further developing the KPIs in all EU Member States.
- Fund Europe-wide joint enforcement actions (as required by the CBE Directive).
- Fund EU Member States' use of recognised enforcement best practices.
- Support EU Member States in setting up a transparent system for the allocation of revenues generated by fines and channel revenues from enforcement back into road safety work.
- Earmark funds for road safety research for the next EU research budget line.
- Channel funds for urban and rural mobility to support increasing the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Provide core funding for both EU umbrella NGOs and for the extension of networks of NGOs active in the field of road safety within EU Member States.
- Set up a permanent funding mechanism for capacity building and exchange of best practice for EU Member States.
- Support a Member State level action to explore sustainable funding opportunities for road victims associations and their core activities: for instance through personalised

license plate fees, revenue from specific traffic fines and traffic-related fees.

- Ensure that EU road safety policy objectives apply to external aid programming including EuropeAid and for the European Investment Bank.
- Mainstream road safety in EU funds and thus contribute to joint road safety objectives in other related policy areas such as employment and environment.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Ellen Townsend, Policy Director

ellen.townsend@etsc.eu

+32 2 230 41 06

European Transport Safety Council

20 Avenue des Celtes

B-1040 Brussels

Tel: +32 2 230 4106

information@etsc.eu

www.etsc.eu

Follow us on X: [@etsc_eu](https://twitter.com/etsc_eu)

The European Transport Safety Council is the independent voice for road safety in Europe. We are a non-profit international organisation, with members from across Europe, dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries in transport. Founded in 1993 in Brussels, we provide an impartial source of expert advice on transport safety matters to the European Commission, the European Parliament, international organisations, and national governments.