

An EU Target to reduce Seriously Injured on the Roads

Briefing – January 2017

Background

Since 2010, the European Commission has been committed to introducing an EU-wide strategic target to reduce serious road traffic injuries.¹ In 2013, the crucial common definition of serious injuries to be recorded and tracked was approved. A target was finally expected to be set in the first half of 2015, having been promised ‘shortly’ in a Commission press release of 24 March 2015² and by Commissioner Bulc’s presentation of the EC Work Programme at the Transport Committee of the European Parliament on 6 May 2015.

On 10 June 2015 the European Commission published a mid-term review of its road safety policy. Expectations were for an announcement on an adoption of a serious injury reduction target. The accompanying staff working document says the Commission will “work on serious injuries including monitoring of progress...and by further activities aimed at supporting Member States and local communities” – but makes no mention of the strategic target³. The full interim evaluation report on EU road safety policy 2011-2020, published alongside the staff working paper, says the “definition and methodology on serious road injuries is in place: prerequisites for setting a strategic target are fulfilled.”⁴

The interim evaluation recognises, under the category “what remains to be done”, that a target on reducing the number of people seriously injured remains to be set, that “possible actions” still have to be identified and that a study is being prepared to identify those targeted measures.⁵ The Transport White Paper, which is also up for mid-term-review this winter also identified the possibility of setting a serious injury target.

Concerns over the apparent dropping of the target were expressed in a letter to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker from more than 70 road safety experts and organisations and 12 MEPs.⁶ Since then ETSC has been to meet with President Juncker.⁷

¹ See 2010 Road Safety Policy Orientations:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/com_20072010_en.pdf and 2011 European Commission Transport White Paper: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0144&from=EN>

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4656_en.htm

³ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9791-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/interim_eval_2011_2020/interim_eval.pdf

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ http://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015-06-12-letter-juncker-final_for_website.pdf

⁷ ETSC (5 February 2016) Press Release Road safety campaigners meet Juncker to ask for EU serious injury reduction target <http://etsc.eu/road-safety-campaigners-meet-juncker-to-ask-for-eu-serious-injury-reduction-target/>

In March 2016, the European Commission, for the first time, published a figure for the number of people seriously injured on Europe's roads: 135,000 in 2014⁸. Now that the data are available, there is no reason to delay further.

This briefing assesses the current state of play, and re-examines the case for the EU to urgently introduce the long-promised target.

Reductions in serious injuries lag behind reductions in deaths

Since 2010 the number of people seriously injured⁹ in the EU was reduced by just 1.6%, compared to an 18% decrease in the number of road deaths in the same group of countries.¹⁰ The majority of countries have reduced road deaths at a faster pace than seriously injured since 2001.

Why is target setting important?

The role of road safety targets in the current progress in reducing road deaths is known to be effective, as is confirmed both by the OECD¹¹ and scientists¹².

The EU targets for road deaths were an important driver for the dramatic reductions achieved in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia and Estonia: all of which have cut deaths by more than 60% since 2001.

At the EU level, a quantitative serious road injury target would provide a stimulus for EU actions in areas where it has exclusive responsibilities for road safety such as vehicle safety standards. An EU target would also inspire competition and knowledge sharing between member states, as it has done for the prevention of deaths.

At least 14 EU Member States have adopted national targets to reduce the number of people seriously injured.¹³

At what level should the target be set?

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.

⁸ European Commission (2016) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-863_en.htm

⁹ Using current national definitions of people seriously injured. See data and national definitions of people seriously injured in ETSC (2015) 9th PIN Annual Report, Tables 7 and 8. The new data published by the European Commission uses the MAIS 3+ definition.

¹⁰In the 23 countries distinguishing between seriously and slightly injured in their data.

¹¹ OECD (2008), Towards zero: achieving ambitious road safety targets and the safe system approach.

¹² Elvik (1993), "Quantified road safety targets: a useful tool for policy making", Accident analysis and prevention.

¹³ Source: PIN Panellists. In Finland, since no distinction is made between "serious" and "slight" injuries in the data, the target is to reduce by 25% the number of people injured on the roads between 2010 and 2020. Norway, Scotland and Northern Ireland have also adopted targets to reduce the number of people seriously injured. Wales has a target to reduce Killed and Seriously Injured by 50% by 2020.

How does data quality affect the setting of the target?

In 2013, the European Union agreed on a common EU definition of seriously injured casualties as in-patients with an injury level of MAIS 3 or more.¹⁴ In March 2016, the European Commission, for the first time, published a figure for the number of people seriously injured on Europe's roads: 135,000 in 2014¹⁵.

Any target for serious injuries set in this decade can only be aspirational – because setting a target based on historic standardised figures would require at least 5 years of MAIS3+ data and experience of effects of safety policies and measures on MAIS3+ numbers.

But road safety experts agree that this need not act as a roadblock to an aspirational target. ETSC says that now the data are available, there is no reason to delay setting a target further. Both the 2001 and 2010 targets for reducing deaths were aspirational and have proven to be effective policy interventions.

How can member states overcome the challenge of matching police and hospital data?

The EC High Level Group on Road Safety identified three main ways Member States can choose to collect serious injury data: continue to use police data but apply a correction coefficient; report the number of injured based on data from hospitals; or create a link between police and hospital data. ETSC recommends the third option but, as matching police and hospital data takes time, Member States that have not yet starting this process should make use of option 1 or 2 in order to provide 2014 data this year. Member States should also continue collecting data based on their previous definitions so as to be able to monitor rates of progress prior to 2014.

Can we set a target whilst data are being improved?

Yes, as we will be monitoring countries' rates of progress in reducing the number of people seriously injured. The comparison would therefore take as a starting point the changes in the number of people seriously injured since 2015.

What is the support for setting a target from the European Parliament?

In 2011 the European Parliament called on the European Commission to '*quickly*' come up with a target of a 40% reduction in the number of seriously injured on the roads and called on the Commission to establish a common definition of seriously injured in road traffic accidents¹⁶. This was followed up in 2013 with a European Parliament Resolution "*urging*

¹⁴ The Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS) is a globally accepted trauma classification of injuries, which ranges from 1 (minor injuries) to 6 (non-treatable injuries) and is used by medical professionals to describe the severity of injury for each of the nine regions of the body (Head, Face, Neck, Thorax, Abdomen, Spine, Upper Extremity, Lower Extremity, External and other). As one person can have more than one injury, the Maximum Abbreviated Injury Score (MAIS) is the maximum AIS of all injury diagnoses for a person.

¹⁵ European Commission (2016) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-863_en.htm

¹⁶ European Parliament Resolution of 27 September 2011: European road safety 2011-2020, 2010/2235(INI).

the Commission, on the basis of the data collected, to set an ambitious target of reducing road injuries."¹⁷

The EP report on the Mid Term Review of the Transport White Paper supports *"the adoption of a 2020 target of a 35% reduction in the number of people seriously injured, accompanied by a fully-fledged EU strategy."*

More recently in spring this year, 275 MEPs from across the political spectrum have signed a written declaration of the European Parliament calling for a serious injury target to be adopted by the European Commission¹⁸.

What is the support for setting a target from EU Member States?

There is strong political support to take action on serious injury from EU Member States. A total of seven Ministers have supported ETSC's Let's Go Campaign. During a debate in the Transport Council in October 2015 under the Luxembourg Presidency there was broad support for the setting of a serious injury target. In May of this year, the transport Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have added to calls for the European Union to come forward with a target by signing a declaration at a meeting of the Visegrad group of countries¹⁹. In 2010 the Council underlined the *'urgent need to address serious injuries, supporting the development of a common definition and agreeing to the principle of a specific quantitative target'*²⁰. In 2013 the common definition of serious injuries was confirmed by the High Level Group on Road Safety representing all EU Member States.

ETSC's key recommendations to EU Institutions

- Adopt a target this year to reduce by 50% between 2015 and 2025 the number of people seriously injured based on MAIS3+.
- Adopt a fully-fledged strategy to tackle serious injuries including measures against which delivery can be made accountable.
- Support the exchange of best practice between Member States on how to report seriously injured road casualties.
- Continue to review the procedures used by Member States to estimate the number of people seriously injured with a view to achieving comparability even though a variety of methods will be used in practice to implement the common definition.

¹⁷ European Parliament Resolution (2013) Road safety 2011-2020 – First milestones towards an injury strategy. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B7-2013-0318+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

¹⁸ European Parliament (2016) Written Declaration <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONSGML%2bWDECL%2bP8-DCL-2016-0004%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN>

¹⁹ ETSC Press Release May 2016 Five Transport Ministers Say its Time for Europe to Tackle Serious Road Injuries <http://etsc.eu/five-transport-ministers-say-its-time-for-europe-to-tackle-serious-road-injuries/>

Prague Declaration on Road Safety May 2016 <http://goo.gl/s6baf7>

²⁰ Council conclusions on road safety, 3052th Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council meeting, Brussels, 2–3 December 2010.

For further information

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Annex : Countries that have adopted a target to reduce seriously injured

Already at least 14 EU countries have adopted a target to reduce the number of people seriously injured, as well as Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Norway

	Target to reduce the number of people seriously injured by	Target Period
Austria	40%	2010 - 2020
Bulgaria	20%	2010 - 2020
Cyprus	50%	2010 - 2020
Czech Republic	40%	2010 - 2020
Denmark	50%	2013 - 2020
<i>Finland</i>	<i>25% of all road traffic injuries²¹</i>	<i>2010-2020</i>
Ireland	30%	2014-2023
Latvia	50%	2010-2020
The Netherlands	25% (max. 10,600 casualties of MAIS 2+ severity)	2007-2020
Poland	40%	2010-2020
Slovenia	50%	2013-2022
Spain	35%	2009-2020
Sweden	25%	2007-2020
Scotland	55%	2010-2020
Northern Ireland	45%	By 2020 compared to 2004-2008 average figures
<i>Wales</i>	<i>40% (in reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured together)</i>	<i>By 2020</i>
<i>Norway</i>	<i>50% (in reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured together)</i>	<i>2014-2024 compared to the average rates for 2008-2011</i>

²¹ In Finland, since no distinction is made between "serious" and "slight" injuries in the data,

Countries without a serious injury target (yet)

Croatia
Estonia
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Italy
Lithuania
Luxembourg (but have endorsed Vision Zero)
Malta
Portugal
Romania
Slovakia
GB

Source: PIN Panellists. Last update summer 2015.