

ETSC's Contribution to the Future of Road Safety in Europe

Perspectives to 2020 and Beyond

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Abstract

This paper will outline ETSC's contribution to the European Union's road safety policy 2011-2020. It will present some of the main recommendations from ETSC's Blueprint for the 4th Road Safety Action Programme and will introduce the response to the European Commission's Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020 (published July 2010). The second framework document presented is the Transport White Paper (published March 2011). The paper will focus on new targets and the new vision set for Europe's Road Safety policy picking out some issues in particular such as traffic law enforcement and the protection of vulnerable road users. It will argue that by reinforcing the current Road Safety Policy Orientations, the EU will be better placed to reach its new ambitious goal of halving road deaths by 2020 and the longer term zero casualty vision.

1.INTRODUCTION

This paper will outline ETSC's contribution to the European Union's road safety policy 2011-2020. It will present ETSC's Blueprint for the 4th Road Safety Action Programmes (10) and the Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020 (published July 2010) (2) and the Transport White Paper (published March 2011) (4).

1.1 ETSC and the Road Safety Performance Index Programme

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 (7). ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 45 national and international organisations concerned with road safety from across Europe. ETSC's flagship programme is the Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) (8). The ETSC's Road Safety Performance Index is a policy instrument to help EU Member States in improving road safety. By comparing Member States' performance, it serves to identify and promote best practice in Europe and bring about the kind of political leadership that is needed to create what citizens deserve - a road transport system that offers a maximum of safety. Started in June 2006, the Index covers all relevant areas of road safety including road user behaviour, infrastructure and vehicles, as well as road safety policymaking more generally.

1.2 Road Safety in the EU, State of Play 2011

Each year in June, the PIN report is launched. It analyses progress of the EU Member States in reducing road deaths and comes up with recommendations for improvements. Comparisons of countries on 16 different areas of road safety have been presented in a series of PIN Flashes, gathered in 6 PIN Reports. The findings from those country rankings have been discussed in 30 PIN Talks gathering road safety policy makers to present them with both the successes and the shortcomings of their road safety policies. The European Union renewed its commitment to improve road safety by setting a target of reducing road deaths by another 50% by 2020, compared to 2010 levels (2). The PIN's most recent ranking shows the

developments in road safety up to 2011, the first annual step toward the 2020 goal (14). 2011 was a year of mixed results, with several countries, including long-standing road safety leaders, seeing an increase in road deaths for the first time after several years of sustained progress (See Figure 1). As many as 30,108 people lost their lives on EU roads in 2011, a mere 3% reduction compared to the corresponding figure for 2010.

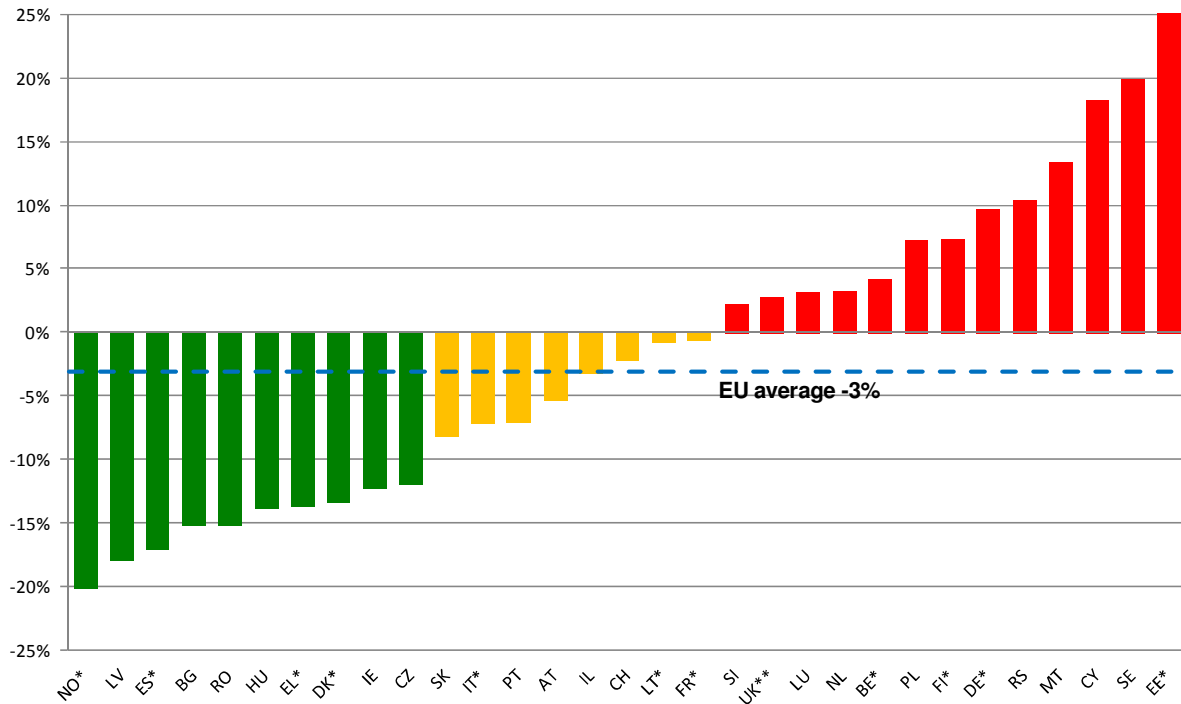


Fig. 1: Percentage change in road deaths between 2010 and 2011

* Provisional estimates used for 2011, as the final figures for 2011 are not yet available at the time of going to print.

** UK estimate based on 3% increase in killed in 2011 Q1-3 compared with 2010 Q1-3.

2. BLUEPRINT FOR THE EU'S 4TH ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME

ETSC launched its “Blueprint for the EU’s 4th Road Safety Action Programme 2010-2020” (10) in 2009 and with it made a valuable contribution to the debate on the EU’s road safety policy. In this document ETSC proposed a shared target of 40% reduction of deaths with a further target to reduce injuries with lasting effects in each Member State by 40%. Alongside these targets a vision was also proposed: “*Road Safety as a right and responsibility for all*” whereby simultaneous mobility and safety should be a fundamental right of EU citizens. The rationale behind the vision is to inspire and motivate all players to work together.

In its Blueprint ETSC recommended that the 4th Road Safety Action Programme should focus its top activities upon the main behavioural causes of deaths and injuries with lasting effect (speeding, drink driving and lack of seat belt and child safety restraint use) as well as badly designed infrastructure and vehicles. Alongside this the Programme should have tackled new emerging trends such as the increasing numbers of motorcyclists among those killed or injured on the roads. It should have worked to reap the rewards of reducing speeds and the resulting reductions in road deaths and injuries with lasting effects, as

well as in emissions of carbon dioxide. The Action Programme needed also to present policy solutions to take on the demographic challenge of an ageing society. The Programme should have ensured that companies and public administrations include road safety into their management parameters when managing their fleets and transport operations. Finally a new institutional set-up was suggested with the aim of linking responsibility for implementing the Action Programme and for reaching the 2020 targets. The next section looks at how some of these recommendations were taken up.

2.1 ETSC's Response: Targets and Structure

ETSC welcomed the “Towards a European Road Safety Area: policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020”(2) and in its response (11) particularly sought to support the new target set to reduce road deaths by a further 50% by 2020. Targets motivate stakeholders to act and help those responsible for the road transport system to be accountable for achieving defined results. A shared target at European level helps each Member State to see that its road safety improvements are contributing to addressing a Europe-wide problem. ETSC and the wider road safety community, however, had hoped for a new EU 10-year strategy providing a detailed road map against which performance could be measured and delivery made accountable.

ETSC also welcomed the new emphasis on serious injuries but regretted that the adoption of a target for serious injuries was delayed until a common definition is adopted. Earlier in 2012 the European Commission launched a public consultation (6) on an EU Strategy to reduce injuries resulting from road traffic accidents. A comprehensive strategy of action concerning road traffic injuries and emergency services is expected to be published at the end of 2012.

At present, EU comparisons for serious injury are hampered because both the levels of injury reporting and national definitions vary greatly among countries. The magnitude of underreporting undermines proper allocation of resources to preventive measures. Improving the quality of data about seriously injured survivors of road collisions is key to designing more effective safety policies. ETSC believes the new EC injury strategy should include challenging targets for the reduction of seriously injured people. ETSC proposed a dual track approach. Each country should aim to reduce serious injuries, according to its own definition, at the same pace as deaths. At the same time, the EU should work towards the adoption of a common definition of serious injuries to foster EU comparison. In parallel, Member States should improve the recording of serious injuries by making use of both police and hospital data (14).

While priorities are defined in the EC Communication through an encompassing set of objectives, the bold statement that “with over a dozen legislative instruments on road safety, the EU acquis are essentially in place” (2) revealed a complacency about the legislative foundation for action for the next decade. In its conclusion, the Communication stated that “the role of the Commission will be to make proposals on matters where the EU is competent” (2). ETSC argues that there is a great deal that must still be done in the next decade in the field of EU legislation to improve road safety. Although it is important to stress that the subsidiarity principle can be used as a tool for facilitating co-operation with Member States to develop EU legislation. However, subsidiarity should not be viewed as a reason for legislative inaction at EU level. ETSC reiterated what it had already stated in 2003 in response to the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme (9), namely that, gross inequalities between European regions and Member States in terms of road safety persist. And local, regional and national governments alone are not able to provide for a policy framework that ensures both the highest practicable level of safety and a fair distribution of safety across the European Union.

A further weakness of the programme, as with the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme (1), is that the Policy Orientations failed to introduce a time scale for actions and milestones to measure progress and

show the road to a successful implementation. A mid-term review is not foreseen. This forges the bridge to one of ETSC's most important recommendations namely that the Commission needs to create a monitoring framework that includes a set of sub-targets and indicators (11). A common set of performance indicators would be essential, together with a well-functioning Road Safety Observatory. Safety Performance Indicators allow actions to be targeted in key areas systematically and implementation of measures to be monitored. This is also why ETSC has been running the Road Safety PIN which helps to identify best practice and create positive competition between countries to deliver a safer road transport system. It helps to build up the kind of political leadership that is needed to achieve lasting improvement in road safety.

In terms of measures, ETSC felt that the Policy Orientations' seven strategic objectives had missed some easy wins linked to the three main killers on the roads. These include extending existing legislation on mandating Seat Belt Reminders to every seat. Developing harmonised standards for Intelligent Speed Assistance systems would also help to both curb speeds and reduce harmful CO2 emissions. Thirdly, whilst alcohol interlocks are included as an action for professional drivers and recidivists, the EC should also have proposed to adopt a 0.2g/l BAC limit for novice and commercial drivers. Finally, there is a package of measures to improve the safety of motorcyclists, however little is proposed to protect pedestrians and cyclists. These next two sections will look at two of the seven objectives of the Policy Orientations in more detail.

2.2 Objective 2 Enforcement

One of the strongest objectives of the Policy Orientations, enforcement of road rules, detailed some specific actions. Other Member States can benefit from the experience of fast progressing countries that have proved that effective enforcement leads to a rapid reduction in deaths and injuries. One of the proposed measures has since been adopted, namely the Cross Border Enforcement Directive (3). The Commission also called for increased co-ordination and sharing of best practices in the field of enforcement, building on the EC Recommendation of 2004 on enforcement of traffic law. A new expert group on enforcement, set up in the framework of the Cross Border Directive, is hoped to bring new impetus to the work in this area. The European Commission has also proposed the setting of national enforcement plans, building on the EC Recommendation and this has recently received a boost by a letter sent from Vice President Kallas to all Member States on the topic (5).

Although the Commission states that it "will work towards developing a common road safety enforcement strategy"(2), it only detailed speed limiters in light vans, alcohol interlocks and the establishment of national implementation plans under this broader plan for concrete action. There seems to be scope for reanalysis of what the objectives of the enforcement strategy will be and which measures the Commission can take to reach them.

2.3 Objective 7: Protecting Vulnerable Road Users

In contrast, Objective 7 is one of the weaker ones. At least 15,300 pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycle riders were killed in the EU in 2009, and 169,000 since 2001: See Figure 2 (13).

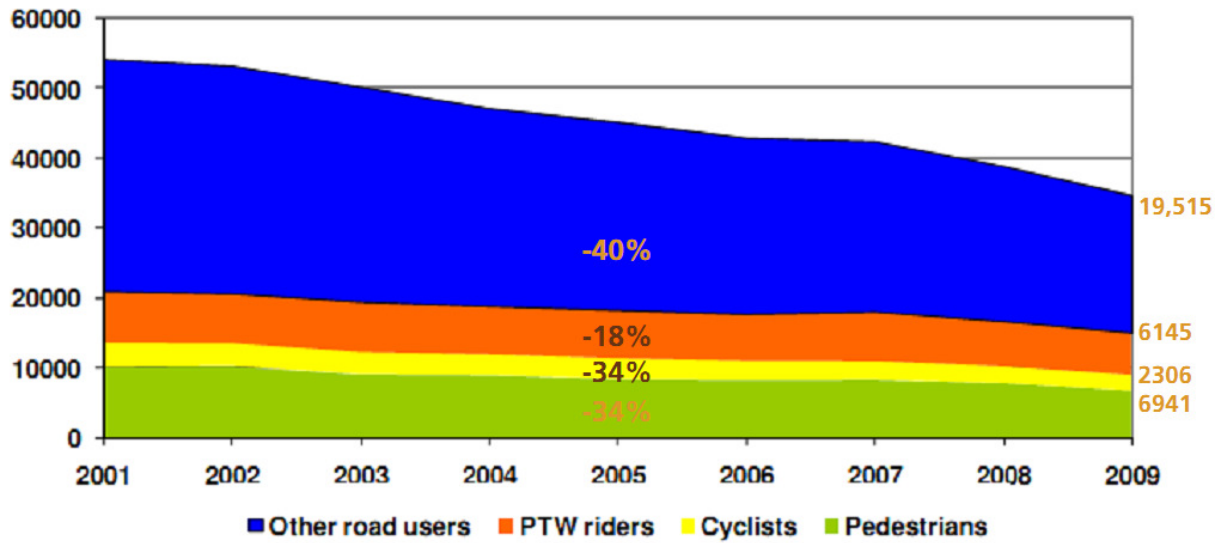


Fig. 2: Reduction in road deaths since 2001 for pedestrians, cyclists, PTW riders and other road users. (13)

Deaths among pedestrians and cyclists decreased by 34% between 2001 and 2009 and those among PTW riders by only 18%, compared with 39% for car drivers (13). While the number of road deaths has declined considerably in the past decade in Europe, the number of PTW riders killed rose in 13 out of 26 countries (See Figure 3). According to ETSC’s most recent figures, 6,145 riders were killed in the EU in 2009 (14).

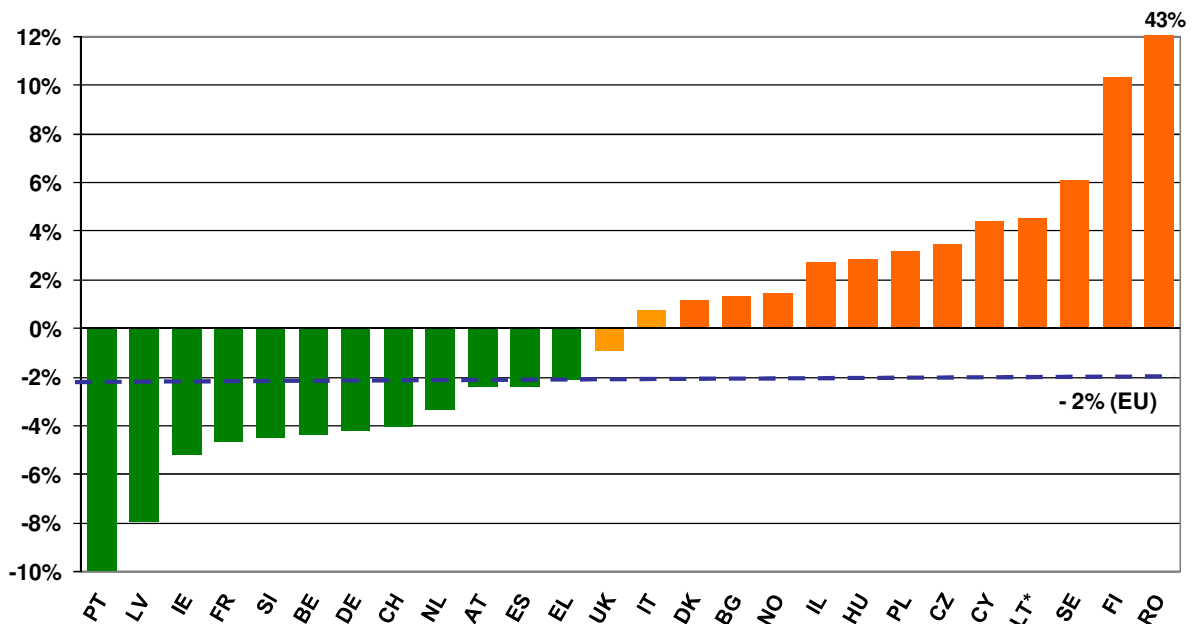


Fig.3: Average annual percentage change in **PTW rider deaths** over the period 2001-2009.

**LT: 2006-2009. Notes: LU, MT, EE, SK excluded (countries having <10 deaths in more than 2 years)
(13)*

ETSC welcomed the emphasis placed by the European Commission on PTWs in its Policy Orientations. Many of the recommendations presented by ETSC in its Blueprint have been taken up by the EC Communication. This includes for example proposals on introducing the mandatory fitment of advanced braking systems to PTWs currently on the agenda.

Yet ETSC expressed its disappointment that so little was proposed by the European Commission to protect pedestrians and cyclists (10). Non-motorised means of transport, such as cycling and walking, account for only a small share of distance travelled by road. But they account for much larger proportions of journeys made and time spent using the roads.

With increasing congestion in urban areas and the drive for sustainability, more people are opting to travel on foot or by bike, public transport, motorcycle or scooter or combinations of these. Walking and cycling have the potential to improve fitness, diminish obesity, and reduce noise, air pollution and greenhouse gases associated with travel. These benefits are also picked up in the Transport White Paper mentioned below. However, pedestrians and cyclists, together with motorcyclists, have a higher risk of death and injury requiring hospitalisation than motor vehicle occupants. Therefore, strategies to improve safety of these modes of transport are particularly needed (13). Walking and cycling should be encouraged as travel modes for citizens across the EU, and safety of walking and cycling should be one of the objectives of safety management. Other measures also include looking at the design and equipment of HGVs including improved cabin design, installation of cameras and active warning systems and underrun protection.

3. TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER

3.1 A New Vision for 2050

The new White Paper ‘Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system’ (4) published in March 2011 came at a crucial time for European Transport, and in particular road safety. The White Paper recognised progress made in the past decade to reduce road deaths. One of the ten goals for achieving a competitive and resource efficient transport system is:

“By 2050, move close to zero fatalities in road transport. In line with this goal, the EU aims at halving road casualties by 2020 (4).”

Including a ‘Vision Zero’ for road safety is a new and potentially ground-breaking goal for 2050 and complements the renewed target of halving road deaths by 2020 (4). For the future, “initiatives in the area of technology, enforcement, education and particular attention to vulnerable road users will be important to drastically reduce these losses of lives even further (4).”

Moreover the European Commission proposes to: “make sure that the EU is a world leader in safety and security of transport in all modes of transport.” Every year 1.2 million people are killed and 20 to 50 million injured in road collisions around the world. In the WHO European Region alone, 120,000 people are killed and 2.4 million injured in road collisions each year (15). The European Region is home to three countries with the safest roads in the world (Sweden, UK and the Netherlands). The EU has one of the

best records on road safety. With this comes a responsibility to take a leadership role. ETSC welcomed that the ambition to achieve this is included in the White Paper (12).

3.2 Emerging Concerns for Road Safety

In its White Paper the European Commission recognises what it calls “emerging challenges and concerns” under the chapter on road safety. The Commission has also included some points that ETSC had asked to be considered for future inclusion following the earlier publication of the European Commission’s “Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020”. Among them are action on ageing, driving under the influence of illegal drugs and medicine.

3.3 Soft Modes: Walking and Cycling

One of the main overall objectives of the Transport White Paper was tackling climate change and reducing green house gases. One area of obvious overlap with road safety is looking at the implications of walking and cycling, this dimension was largely missed out and ETSC has since tried to raise this issue. The White Paper recognised that: “in urban areas, walking and cycling, together with public transport, often provide better alternatives not only in terms of emissions, but also of speed: they could readily substitute the large share of trips which cover less than 5km (4).” Also that “in addition to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, they bring major benefits in terms of better health, lower air pollution and noise emissions, less need for road space and lower energy use (4)”. They stress that “accordingly, facilitating walking and cycling should become an integral part of urban mobility and infrastructure design”.

However they should have included more measures looking at the safety aspects of that design. Specifically within the context of urban transport in the Transport White Paper, safety should be integrated in the development of Urban Mobility Plans and also into proposed Urban Mobility Audits and Guidelines and be reflected in common targets. ETSC proposed that such plans should adopt a clear hierarchy of transport users, with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of the hierarchy (12). As a general principle, these users should have their safety and convenience needs considered first. It is most important that the hierarchy is applied where a large share of travel is (or could be) made by walking, cycling and public transport.

One of the highly relevant areas for the protection of vulnerable road users picked up for action by the European Commission was speed. The White Paper recognises that “reducing speed is an extremely effective way to reduce not only the risk of collisions but also fuel consumption”. Concretely the Commission proposes to promote eco-driving and in-vehicle systems that ‘provide real-time information on prevailing speed limits’.

Other measures of relevance to reducing deaths amongst the VRU target group include the harmonisation and deployment of road safety technologies. Within the context of training and education for PTWs the Commission aims to promote riders’ education on the need and advantages of using personal protective equipment, airbags, eCall and advanced braking systems, and will foresee appropriate anti-tampering measures. The White Paper also looks to examine the possibility of extending pedestrian recognition systems to the existing fleet. Finally, a very important point within the wider mobility debate, the White Paper recognises that public transport is more widely available, and that the option of walking and cycling has also increased.

4. CONCLUSION

ETSC's Blueprint provided valuable input to the European Commission's framework document "Towards a European Road Safety Area: policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020". This includes some important priorities for action such as on traffic law enforcement and Powered Two Wheeler safety feature. The new 50% reduction target for 2020 alongside the promise of a new strategy to tackle injury are also crucial to motivate all stakeholders for the upcoming decade. However, much more is needed to strengthen the foreseen EU actions under the seven identified objectives of the Policy Orientations. This is especially the case when it comes to fulfilling the EU's clear competency to develop new legislation. A timetable, including a mid-term review, should also be added to structure and prioritise better the main measures for adoption and implementation. The Transport White Paper added an additional longer term vision encompassing "moving towards zero casualties". It also added some of the topics missed out by the Policy Orientations such as drug driving and distraction. By reinforcing the current Road Safety Policy Orientations with ETSC's recommendations the EU will be better placed to reach its new ambitious goal of halving road deaths by 2020 and the longer term zero casualty vision.

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