European Transport Safety Council

Road safety priorities for the EU in 2016

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

June 2016

Summary

2015 was the second consecutive poor year for road safety: 26,300 people lost their lives on EU roads in 2015 compared to 25,970 in 2014, representing an increase of 1%. A 9.7% annual reduction is now needed every year between 2015 and 2020 in order to reach the EU target for 2020 to halve the number of road deaths. The drastic slowdown in progress puts at risk the region's target of halving road deaths by 2020. As well as the unbearable human cost, road casualties cost 2% of European GDP.

In this briefing, ETSC outlines its recommendations on the key EU road safety policy dossiers to be steered by the Slovak Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2016. These include preparing for the new EU roads package, including the safety aspects.

ETSC welcomes the Slovak initiative to put traffic safety education on their Presidency agenda with an autumn conference looking at gradual and continuous training and lifelong learning.

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

Context

The annual socio-economic cost of road traffic deaths and injuries was estimated to be equivalent to around 2% of GDP or EUR 250 billion in 2012[1]. Alongside legal and moral obligations there is also a strong economic case to include the prevention of road traffic deaths and serious injuries in EU health policy as well as transport policy.

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

Given the financial difficulties that many EU countries face due to the economic slowdown, the value to society of improving road safety should be taken into account in the policy and budgetary planning process, expressing in monetary terms the moral imperative of reducing road risk. The high value of societal costs avoided during 2011-2015 shows once more that the saving potential offered by sustained road safety improvements is considerable, making clear to policy-makers the potential for road safety policies to provide a sound investment.

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

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

Key priorities for the Slovak presidency

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

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

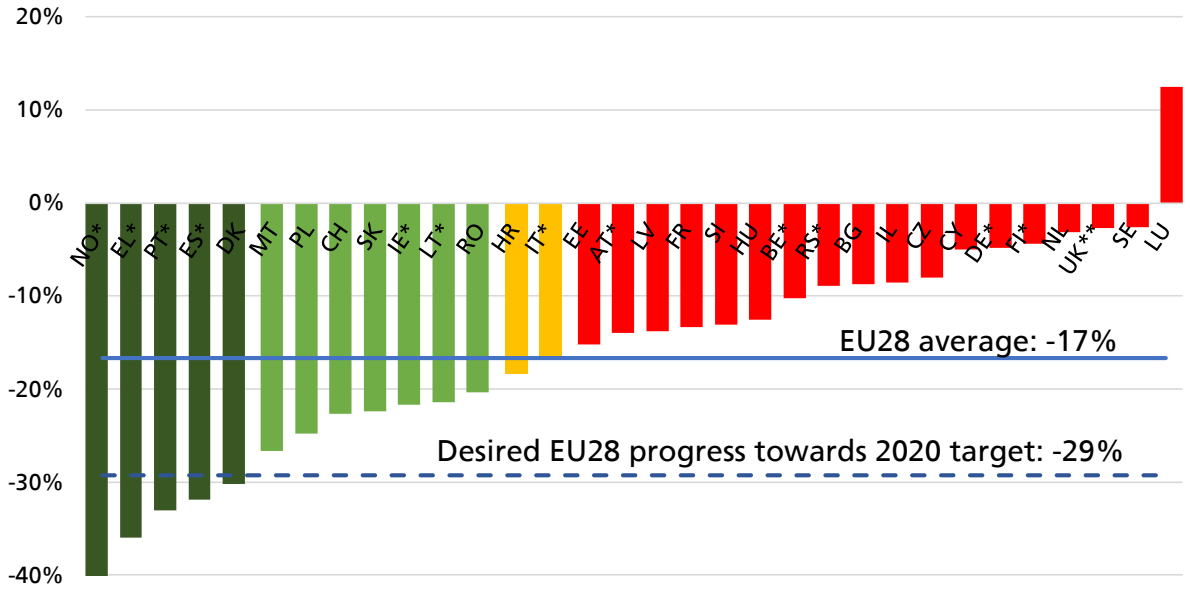

Fig.1: Relative change in road deaths between 2010 and 2015. *National provisional estimates used for 2015, as the final figures for 2015 are not yet available at the time of going to print. **UK data for 2015 are GB provisional total for year ending September 2015 and Northern Ireland total for the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

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

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

Earlier this year, the European Commission, for the first time, published an estimate for the number of people seriously injured on Europe's roads: 135,000 in 2014.[2] This move required the adoption by all EU member states of a common definition of what constitutes a serious road injury, i.e. an in-patient with an injury level of MAIS 3 or more.

ETSC recommends that the EU should adopt a 35% reduction target between 2014 and 2020 in the number of people seriously injured.[3] A 35% reduction over the period 2014-2020 would be similarly ambitious and numerically comparable for Member States to the target to halve road deaths between 2010 and 2020. In addition, the EU should adopt a joint strategy including measures against which delivery can be made accountable. In 2016, ETSC published a proposal for an EU strategy to reduce the number of people seriously injured on EU roads.[4]

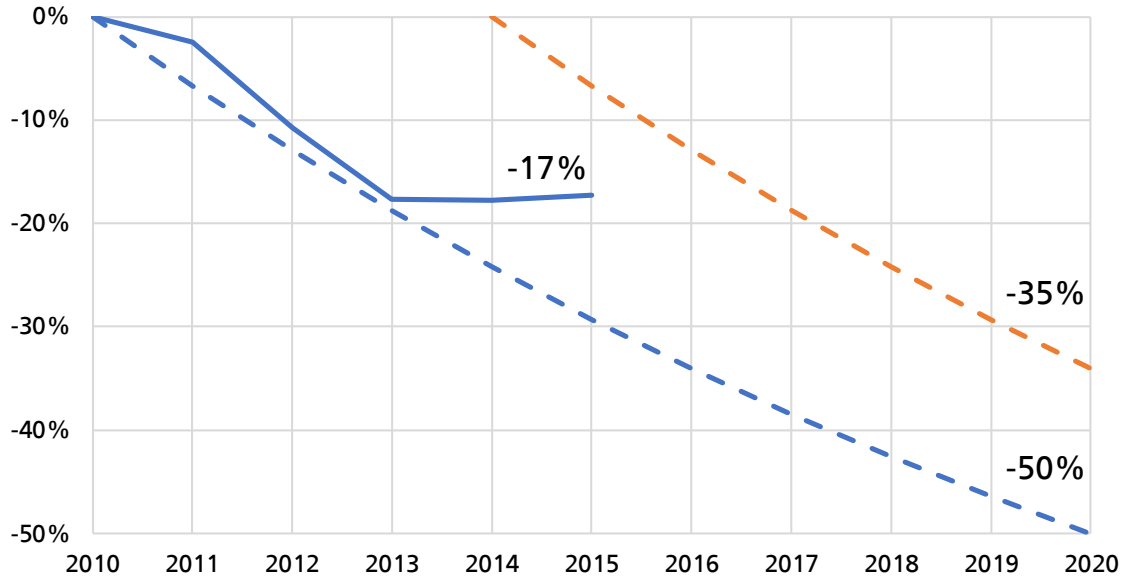

Fig.2: Reduction in the number of road deaths since 2010 (dark blue line) plotted against the EU target for 2020 (light blue dotted line), with ETSC's recommended target for reduction in the number seriously injured (orange dotted line) – in each case an annual reduction of 6.7%.

It is, however, too early to use only data based on MAIS 3+ for country comparisons. Fig.4 therefore shows the relative change in the number of seriously injured over the period 2010-2015 using current national definitions of serious injury. Collectively the number of serious injuries in the EU24 has decreased by 1% since 2010 compared to 17% decrease in the number of road deaths.

[2] European Commission Press release (March 2016), http://goo.gl/w0lQkv
[3] ETSC (2016), A Proposal for a strategy to reduce the number of people seriously injured on EU roads, http://goo.gl/J0HUrj
[4] ETSC (2016), A Proposal for a strategy to reduce the number of people seriously injured on EU roads http://etsc.eu/JtVp3

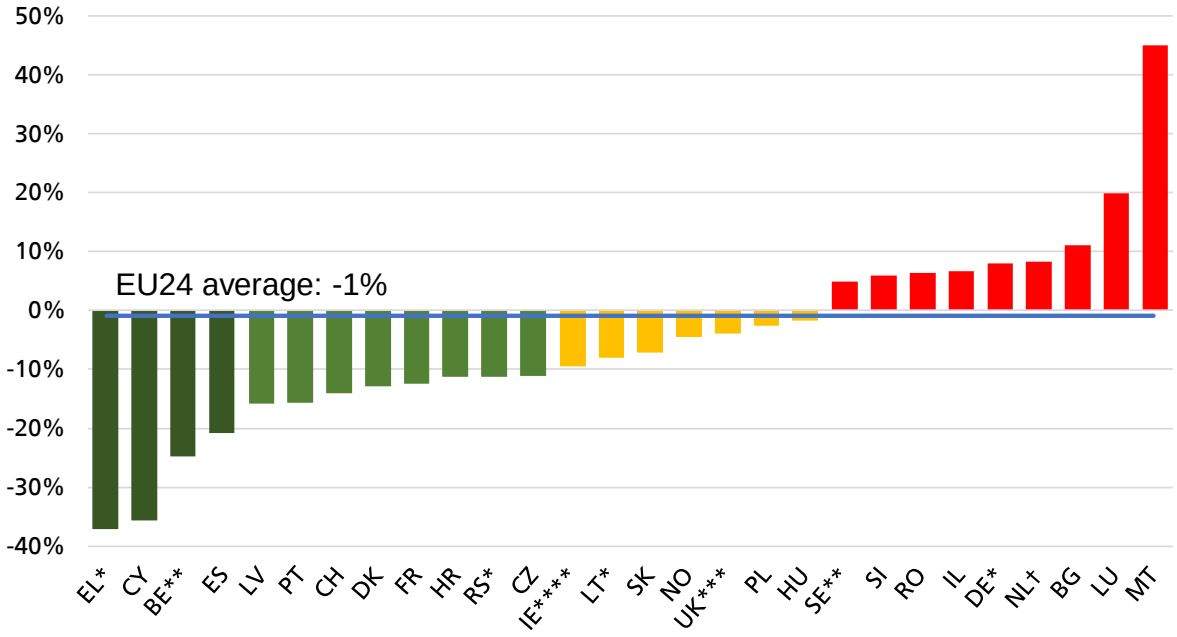

Fig.3: Relative change in recorded serious injuries (national definitions) between 2010 and 2015. *2015 data is provisional. **2010-2014. ***UK data for 2015 is GB provisional total for year ending September 2015 and Northern Ireland total for the calendar year 2015. ****2010-2013. †National definition is MAIS2+, linked police and hospital records. AT is excluded from the figure due to substantial changes in the police reporting system in 2012 but its number of serious injuries is included in the EU average.
EU countries using a definition of seriously injured similar to having injuries requiring at least 24 hours as an in-patient: BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, EL, IE, LV, LU, PT, UK, CH, IL.

New road safety initiatives from the European Commission in 2016

Vehicle Safety

The European Commission is currently preparing a review of the General Safety Regulation 661/2009, a piece of legislation regulating vehicle safety and in-vehicle technology in the EU[5]. A major study for the European Commission has identified a range of new vehicle safety technologies that are suitable for mandatory fitting as part of a review of EU vehicle safety legislation. The report, carried out by consultants TRL, names technologies including Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) and seat belt reminder systems in passenger seats as 'feasible in terms of the technology required', already available on the market and offering a positive benefit-cost ratio[6]. These represent the high priorities for ETSC as they are mature technologies that are ready for deployment. ETSC would also

[5] ETSC (2015) ETSC Position on the GSR Revision.
http://etsc.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2015_03_gsr_review_pp.pdf
[6] http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/benefit-and-feasibility-of-a-range-of-new-technologies-and-unregulated-measures-in-the-field-of-vehicle-occupant-safety-and-protection-of-vulnerable-road-users-pbNB0714108/;pgid=Iq1Ekni0.1lSR0OOK4MycO9B0000U5evn6Lv;sid=si2VJU9NoR-VBhpX6xQLgi1oEO7pde2Ozn0=?CatalogCategoryID=frMKABstzjYAAAEjvZAY4e5L

like to see uniform standards for alcohol interlocks in Europe which ensure that vehicle interfaces make it possible to easily fit an alcohol interlock. With this addition, the three high-risk behaviours that cause many deaths can be addressed: speeding, drink driving and non-use of seat belts. To mitigate pedestrian and cyclist deaths, ETSC also recommends mandating Advanced Emergency Braking (AEB) for all new vehicles. The General Safety Regulation includes the opportunity to mandate safety improvements to HGV fronts and their underrun protection, measures that ETSC fully supports for swift introduction and uptake and also received a green light in the report. A European Commission communication on the review of the 'General Safety Regulation' (GSR) is expected during the Slovak Presidency, with a legislative proposal to follow in 2017.

The Slovak Presidency should take the initiative to promote the safety benefits of these in-vehicle technologies and promote their uptake in the EU with the context of the Review of the General Safety Regulation.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Protection

The European Commission is currently reviewing the Pedestrian Safety Regulation adopted in 2009. In the European Union, some 21% of all road deaths are pedestrians. The largest share of these are 65 years or over[7]. The current Regulation 78/2009 lays down type approval requirements with respect to the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. It provides for the mandatory installation of Brake Assist Systems on N1 and M1 vehicles in an attempt to compensate for the relaxation of certain parameters on passive safety performance tests. ETSC fought hard against the relaxation of the tests arguing that the benefits accident avoidance technologies offer should have been additional rather than substitutive[8]. There is now scope for further improving the current tests covering pedestrian upper leg and pelvis to bonnet leading edge tests and the adult head to windscreen test. The aforementioned European Commission communication on the review of the 'General Safety Regulation' (GSR) will also cover Pedestrian Protection and is also expected during the Slovak Presidency, with a legislative proposal to follow in 2017.

Infrastructure safety

The European Commission is reviewing the Infrastructure Safety Directive adopted in 2008. A study commissioned by the European Commission has found that the impact has been positive for road safety in a number of key areas[9].

ETSC supports the European Commission's recognition and findings of the study that much more benefit could be achieved by extending the principles of Directive 2008/96 to other parts of the road network, in particular rural roads, where many more road users are killed. Almost half of EU countries already apply the rules on some other parts of

[7] http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/users/pedestrians/index_en.htm
[8] ETSC, 2013, CARS2020 Position http://etsc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CARS_2020_ETSC-Contribution_May_2013.pdf
[9] http://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/evaluations/doc/2014-12-ex-post-evaluation-study-road-infra-safety-mgmnt.pdf

their national road networks[10]. The application of the infrastructure safety Directive to the TEN-T roads has been calculated to potentially save 600 lives and prevent 7000 serious injuries: if applied to all motorways and main roads, this rises to 1300 lives[11]. In the EC Policy Orientations 2011-2020, the EC recommended to EU Member States to extend these requirements to the secondary road network (i.e. beyond the main motorways). This has become even more of a priority given the new objective to reduce serious injuries. Investment should also be continued to be made in road maintenance, even in times of financial hardship.

Within the context of the EU Refit[12] programme to cut red tape, the tunnel safety Directive 2004/54 on minimum safety requirements for tunnels in the trans-European road network will be evaluated with a possible view to revise or repeal it. ETSC strongly supports the upholding of this important piece of EU road safety legislation and is looking forward to inputting its expert knowledge to this review process.

Ahead of the adoption of a new proposal the Slovak Presidency should support and accelerate these important developments in infrastructure safety.

Further Reading

ETSC (2016) 10th Road Safety Performance Index Report http://etsc.eu/pin10

For further information

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[10] ETSC (2015) Ranking EU Progress on Improving Motorway Safety (PIN Flash 28).
[11] Rosebud Project (2005).
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/rosebud.pdf
[12] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/refit/index_en.htm