



European Transport Safety Council

BRIEFING | Road Safety Priorities for the EU in 2023

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

January 2023

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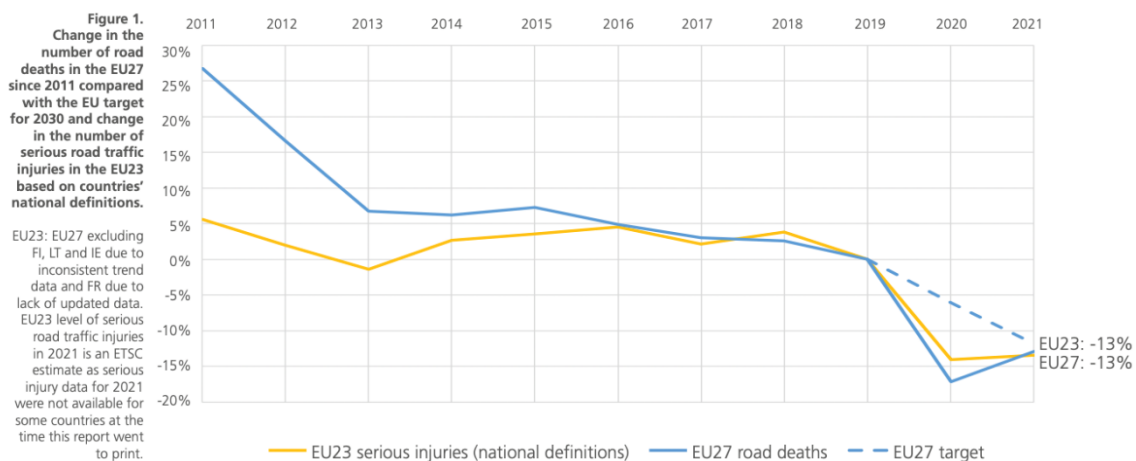
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Introduction

Sweden took over the EU Presidency on 1 January 2023 as the EU continues to grapple with the ongoing war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 crisis. Both bring additional challenges for transport and mobility policies.

There were 19,823 road deaths on EU roads in 2021, 57,095 fewer than there would have been if deaths had continued at the same level as in 2011. ETSC estimates that the total value of the human losses avoided by the reductions in the years 2012-2021 taken together compared with 2011 is about €64 billion.¹

The EU, and its Member States, agreed on a target to cut road deaths by half in the decade to 2020 and again by half by 2030. The overall progress in reducing road deaths on EU roads was positive from 2011 until 2014 with a 16% decrease. But the good start was followed by five consecutive years of stagnation with only a 7% reduction over the 2015-2019 period. In 2020 there was an exceptional drop of 17% compared to 2019. The 2020 result was strongly related to travel restrictions across Europe due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 2021 also saw a consistent drop of 13% with respect to 2019, but the number of road deaths increased by 5% with respect to 2020, influenced by a gradual relaxation of travel restrictions across the EU.²



¹ ETSC (2022), 16th PIN Annual Report, <https://bit.ly/3njgSMF>

² *ibid.*

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

The progress in reducing serious road traffic injuries in the last decade in the EU²³ collectively was poor, especially in comparison with the reduction in road deaths. There was only an 18% reduction over the period 2011-2021 (Fig.1). The number of serious injuries remained almost unchanged until 2019. As with road deaths, there was a substantial drop, though of only 13%, in 2020 compared to 2019 and the number of seriously injured remained stable in 2021 with a 0.5% decrease compared to 2020.⁴ The exceptional 2020 and 2021 results were largely a consequence of Covid-19 lockdowns and associated measures. There is no guarantee that this progress can be maintained under a return to business as usual.

In this briefing, ETSC outlines its recommendations on the key EU road safety policy dossiers to be steered by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2023.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Key Priorities for the Swedish Presidency

Cross Border Enforcement of Traffic Offences

Increased and well-publicised traffic law enforcement targeting the main risks of speeding, drink and drug driving, distraction and non-use of seat belts on the road forms a fundamental part of achieving the new EU 2030 targets.

According to the European Commission, non-resident drivers account for approximately 5% of road traffic in the EU, and a foreign-registered car is around three times more likely to commit a traffic offence than a domestically registered one.⁵ The EU adopted a Directive on Cross Border Enforcement 2015/413 (CBE) which covers the main offences causing road death and serious injury in the EU.⁶ The CBE Directive aims to facilitate the enforcement of financial penalties against drivers who commit an offence in a different EU Member State to the one where the vehicle is registered. The CBE Directive is a tool that can help achieve greater compliance with traffic laws, improve road safety and ensure equal treatment of resident and foreign drivers by reducing impunity.

The Cross-Border Enforcement Directive 2015/413 is up for revision with a proposal expected from the EC under the Swedish Presidency. For better implementation of the Directive, improved EU tools are needed to enable cross-border cooperation on road traffic offence investigations and mutual recognition of financial penalties specifically for traffic offences.

ETSC has identified several priorities which need to be addressed in the upcoming revision.⁷ These include the need to update camera specifications and overcome the lack of human resources and political support for manual follow-up.⁸ The revision should also prioritise action to improve and align the enforcement of the main offences at a national level. This includes, for example, guidance on the optimal use of safety cameras to reduce speeds and increase compliance.⁹ ETSC would welcome the Swedish Presidency prioritising first discussions on the revision of this important piece of road safety legislation.

⁵ European Commission MEMO/10/642 (2010) <https://bit.ly/3p3RbYL>

⁶ EU Directive 2015/413 Facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences. <https://bit.ly/3ppicEX>

⁷ ETSC (2022) PIN Flash 31, How Traffic Law Enforcement Can Contribute to Safer Roads, page 42, <https://goo.gl/GVwmf5>

ETSC (2022) Position on Revision of Cross Border Enforcement Directive <https://bit.ly/3IEVvYN>

⁸ ETSC (2016), PIN Flash 31, How Traffic Law Enforcement Can Contribute to Safer Roads, page 42, <https://goo.gl/GVwmf5>

⁹ ETSC (2019), PIN Flash 36, Reducing Speeding in Europe. <https://bit.ly/38ueB1q>

Driving Licence Directive

The European Driving Licence Directive 2006/126 is due for revision with a proposal from the EC expected early this year. Every week in the EU an average of 100 young people die on the roads and hundreds more are seriously injured.¹⁰ Improvements to driver licensing can help prevent many of these deaths and injuries involving young people.¹¹

ETSC would welcome the introduction by EU Member States of a graduated licensing system that encourages young people to gain more experience while limiting certain high-risk activities such as driving at night and with passengers. Common EU minimum standards for driver training should be introduced including hazard perception training. Driver training and testing need to be updated to include the use of new technologies and to prepare for semi and fully automated driving.¹²

Under medical fitness, minimum standards for assessing physical and mental fitness should be updated, in particular on alcohol abuse. The directive should be revised to allow drivers with alcohol dependency to participate in rehabilitation programmes and be issued an alcohol interlock. ETSC calls for the introduction of a screening protocol in order to increase consistency in assessing medical fitness to drive across the EU at all ages. Evidence-based guidelines for family doctors and other medical professionals should be developed to help assess the functional capabilities of someone suspected of being an unfit driver.¹³

ETSC is also calling for action to improve Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) safety under the Driving Licence Directive. A total of 2630 people were killed in collisions involving LGVs in the EU in 2018 alone, representing 11% of all road deaths.¹⁴ LGV use in Europe is likely to continue to rise due to, for instance, the increased demand for home deliveries. ETSC supports extending the provisions set out for Group 2 drivers to apply also to drivers of Category B vehicles using their driving licence for professional purposes: taxis, drivers of vans (N1 vehicles). In a second step, extending the current legislative framework for professional driver training to these groups is recommended.

Finally, ETSC supports maintaining, and not lowering, the current minimum age for solo driving or riding. The younger a person starts unrestricted solo driving, the more likely it is

¹⁰ ETSC (2021) ETSC PIN Flash Report 41 Reducing Road Deaths Among Young People Aged 15 to 30. <https://etsc.eu/reducing-road-deaths-among-young-people-pin-flash-41/>

¹¹ ETSC (2022) ETSC Position Revision of the Driving Licence Directive. <https://bit.ly/3QKIS1x>

¹² Full Overview in ETSC PIN Flash Report 41 (2021) Reducing Road Deaths Among Young People Aged 15 to 30. <https://etsc.eu/reducing-road-deaths-among-young-people-pin-flash-41/>

¹³ ETSC (2021) PIN Flash Report Are medical fitness to drive procedures fit for purpose? <https://bit.ly/3y9Yqml>

¹⁴ ETSC (2020) How to improve the safety of goods vehicles in the EU? PIN Flash Report 39 <https://bit.ly/3pFCEj6>

that they will have a fatal collision, particularly below the age of 18.¹⁵ Thus, as a first step, it is extremely important to set an appropriate age for first unrestricted solo driving. Raising, or not lowering, the minimum age for solo driving will save lives by virtue of the fact that it prevents young and inexperienced drivers from solo driving until they are older.¹⁶

The Swedish Presidency should launch discussions and call for further improvement of the current quality of licensing and training systems, with a focus on young novice drivers and riders.

TEN-T Guidelines Regulation Review

In December 2022, European transport ministers adopted a common position on the newly proposed rules governing the Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) networks.¹⁷ The most important safety related update of the proposal is to ensure so-called TEN-T roads meet the standards set out in the 2019/1936 road infrastructure safety management directive. The Council supports the proposal of the EC to upgrade the 'core network' to separate carriageways for the two directions of traffic by 2040. ETSC regrets that the Council did not support the decision to extend this upgrade to the entire network by 2050. The exemption for low capacity roads should give EU Member States enough flexibility to reach this requirement, and the safety gains make these upgrades worthwhile.

ETSC supports the original EC proposal for putting rest areas at a maximum of 60 km apart, secure parking every 100 km and weight monitoring stations every 300 km to tackle dangerously overweight freight vehicles.

Another change is that 424 major cities that are located on major European roads ('urban nodes') will be required to produce Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) by 2025 – which should result in improved road safety provisions in those cities that haven't yet put such plans in place. Low speed management should be a key part of the SUMPs and duly

¹⁵de Craen (2010) The X-factor: A longitudinal study of calibration in young novice drivers <https://bit.ly/3yITR63> or more recent SWOV (2014) Brain development and crash risk of young novice drivers; A literature study <https://bit.ly/3yZrZ8W> In ETSC PIN Flash Report 41 (2021) Reducing Road Deaths Among Young People Aged 15 to 30. <https://etsc.eu/reducing-road-deaths-among-young-people-pin-flash-41/>

¹⁶ OECD (2015), Improving Safety for Motorcycle, Scooter and Moped Riders, <https://goo.gl/kAawsjq>

¹⁷ European Commission (2021) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network. (COM(2021) 812) <https://bit.ly/3raivUT>

referenced in the TEN-T Regulation.

Member States will also have to submit urban mobility data for urban nodes by 2025 and annually after this, including collisions, injuries and modal share. The TEN-T Guidelines Regulation proposal complements the 'urban policy initiative'.¹⁸

Improving the protection of vulnerable road users in line with the new requirements of the road infrastructure safety management directive requires that their needs are taken into account in the implementation of all the procedures. The TEN-T proposal also calls for their needs to be 'taken into account', whereas ETSC would like more precise requirements for VRU safety such as the building of adequate infrastructure. When building or upgrading road and (railway) infrastructure, infrastructure managers should avoid the barrier effect and ensure the safe use of pedestrian and cycling paths in order to promote active modes of transport. ETSC also welcomes the upcoming EC guidance in the framework of the infrastructure safety management directive on quality requirements regarding vulnerable road user safety.

Active road users also need special protection in the 'urban nodes' governed by the TEN-T Regulation and the new SUMP obligation and a specific aim to promote an increase in active modes in the proposal will support this. ETSC would also welcome the use of EU funds for urban mobility to support increasing the safety of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure and thus encouraging greater physical activity benefiting health and the environment as well as accessing other public transport modes.¹⁹ The TEN-T regulation should promote the construction of safe cycling infrastructure, by including the EuroVelo cycle network as part of the TEN-T.

One omission in the new TEN-T proposal is any specific commitment on preparing roads for automated systems in transport. ETSC had called for provisions on ensuring that road markings, signs and infrastructure take into account the specific needs of, e.g., traffic sign recognition and automated lane keeping systems. A fail-safe/fault tolerant design is required to guarantee that automated vehicles operate in a safe state in any event or under adverse conditions.

¹⁸ European Commission (2021) New EU Urban Mobility Framework. <https://bit.ly/3raivUT>

¹⁹ ETSC PIN Flash 38, How Safe is Walking and Cycling in Europe (2020) <https://bit.ly/2LJDpJu>
ETSC PIN Flash 37 Safer Roads Safer Cities. How to Improve Urban Road Safety in the EU <https://bit.ly/3q6oXu2>

ETSC calls upon the Swedish Presidency to work to finalise discussions on the TEN-T Regulation with the European Parliament and improve road safety in line with the aforementioned ETSC recommendations.

Managing of Work-Related Road Risk of Digital Platform Workers

The EC has proposed a new labour law whereby workers for online ‘digital platforms’ are assumed to be employees and are not ‘falsely misclassified’ as self-employed.²⁰ This could result in millions of workers for so-called gig economy platforms, such as Uber and Deliveroo, receiving the same guarantees as employees on health and safety, sick pay and working hours. ETSC supports this proposal and calls for it to be improved to maximise the safety benefits by explicitly addressing the specific risks faced by platform workers in the transport sector. This includes risk-assessing riders and drivers and taking action including, for example, setting maximum working hours to tackle fatigue, adopting compulsory training covering speeding and distraction and setting safety standards for protective equipment and fleet safety.²¹

Research has found that gig economy workers face a ‘perfect storm’ of risk factors on the road including inadequate training, a payment model that pressurises drivers to speed and to work while sick, no oversight of vehicle safety or condition and a lack of protective equipment.²²

There are some requirements for ‘human monitoring’ of ‘automated decision making’ in order to ‘evaluate’ risks in the EC proposal as well. ETSC recommends specific rules to ban payment models that for example encourage speeding and reckless driving in the case of delivery drivers and riders.

ETSC calls on the Swedish Presidency to strengthen the work-related road safety of employees in this new law and prioritise reaching a general approach during their term.

Vehicle safety

The EU has the exclusive competence to set minimum safety standards for all new vehicles

²⁰ European Commission (2021) Proposal for a Directive on improving working conditions in platform work <https://bit.ly/3r9JBf0>

²¹ ETSC PRAISE Resources on Work Related Road Safety <https://etsc.eu/projects/praise/>

²² Survey of Gig Economy Drivers, Riders and Their Managers <https://bit.ly/3nS5dvM>

sold on the EU market. These standards were updated in 2019.²³ They represent the most direct and effective measures the EU has to further reduce road deaths and injuries. TRL, the UK transport research laboratory, estimated in a study for the European Commission that the package of proposed vehicle safety measures could prevent around 25,000 deaths and 140,000 people seriously injured across all vehicle categories within 15 years.²⁴

Following the adoption of the 2019 General Safety Regulation, discussions on the detailed technical standards for several technology and safety measure are still ongoing. In order to deliver on the estimated number of deaths and seriously injured to be prevented, strong secondary legislation is needed.

The Swedish Presidency should support the highest level of standards for the specifications that remain to be delivered, in particular Direct Vision for trucks, given their critical and long-lasting importance for improving road safety in Europe.

They should also ensure that the Council calls on the European Commission to increase the level of ambition for the forthcoming technical specifications on advanced driver distraction warning (ADDW) systems. The current draft standards would reflect the technological capabilities of years ago, as they would only have to warn drivers when looking for prolonged periods of time at legs or feet. Distraction from dangerous activities such as prolonged interaction with the infotainment system or smartphones held at that height would not need to be detected, nor would warnings need to be provided to drivers that turn towards the back of the vehicle while driving.

Moreover, the systems would only need to warn drivers within six seconds when driving at speeds common in urban areas. This while research has long shown that glances away from the windscreen that last longer than two seconds are linked to doubling the risk of a collision.²⁵ It is therefore incomprehensible that the draft rules differentiate based on vehicle speeds that allow drivers to be distracted for longer in urban areas, where the traffic situation is more dynamic and where vulnerable road users are likely to be present.

²³ Regulation (EU) 2019/2144 <https://bit.ly/3nxMpil>

²⁴ See page 13 of TRL on behalf of the European Commission (2018), Cost-effectiveness analysis of policy options for the mandatory implementation of different sets of vehicle safety measures - Review of the General Safety and Pedestrian Safety Regulations <https://bit.ly/39sMkHo>

²⁵ Liang, Y., Lee, J.D., & Yekhshatyan, L. (2012). How Dangerous Is Looking Away From the Road? Algorithms Predict Crash Risk From Glance Patterns in Naturalistic Driving. *Human Factors*, 54(6), pp. 1104-1116. <http://bit.ly/3lFc2fl>

ETSC has repeatedly expressed its disappointment about the lack of ambition in the current draft technical specifications and has called on the European Commission to ensure the rules are strengthened significantly prior to adoption so that they match the gravity and urgency of the problems proposed by distracted driving.

Assisted and Automated Driving

ETSC calls on the Swedish Presidency to advance on the possibilities for ensuring the safety of automated driving presented by the possible EU agency mentioned in the EC Mobility Strategy, and urges that the type-approval and market surveillance of automated vehicles should be one of the agency's key tasks. An agency should also collect data on, and conduct and/or oversee investigations of collisions, incidents and near misses involving automated vehicles and vehicles where the assisted driving systems were active. The findings of the investigations should be published in order for the EU and UNECE rules to be improved based on the lessons learned.

Meanwhile, the current rules for hands-on lane keeping assistance systems should be revised, as human factor problems such as driver overestimation and misunderstanding have been identified.²⁶ The Swedish Presidency should ensure that hands-off lane-keeping assistance systems are not permitted due to concerns regarding their risks for road safety.²⁷

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

In December 2021, the European Commission presented a legislative proposal to update EU rules on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).²⁸

Under the proposed rules, EU Member States would have to provide certain road (safety) data types as well as ITS services on road safety related events. ETSC welcomes these requirements, given their potential to improve road safety, notably the provision to provide both static and dynamic data on speed limits.

These data will then be available for use by in-vehicle safety systems such as Intelligent Speed

²⁶ Dutch Safety Board (2019), Who is in control? Road safety and automation in road traffic. <http://bit.ly/2LESsV2>

²⁷ For more information, see the second half of the following news article: ETSC (2020), Euro NCAP launches ratings for advanced driver assistance systems. <http://bit.ly/3i3Xlmo>

²⁸ European Commission (2021), Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2010/40/EU on the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems. (COM(2021)813) <https://bit.ly/3KyecM4>

Assistance. By requiring Member States to make data on speed limits for their entire road network available, map makers gain trusted sources – the national road authorities – to ensure the accuracy of their own data on speed limits. This in turn should ensure that drivers are correctly assisted by their ISA systems to keep to the applicable speed limit, and should furthermore minimise driver annoyance from incorrect information, both of which are vital for ISA systems to achieve their potential to improve road safety in the EU.

Regrettably, the Council's common position adopted in June 2022, proposes to delay deadlines for providing data and to reduce the geographical scope for crucial road safety data such as speed limits, excluding urban roads, where respecting speed limits is even more crucial to protect vulnerable road users.²⁹

ETSC welcomes the European Parliament's Transport Committee report³⁰ and the achievements of the rapporteur Rovana Plumb. ETSC calls upon the Swedish Presidency to work to finalise discussions on the TEN-T Regulation and improve road safety in line with the aforementioned ETSC recommendations.

²⁹ Council of the EU Press Release 2 June 2022, <https://bit.ly/3IF8Pwc>

³⁰ Transport Committee report of October 2022, <https://bit.ly/3W3OTWY>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based, independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe.