

Road Safety Newsletter



Country visits to kick-start discussion and inspire new thinking

European Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc has launched a series of visits to the EU Member States that are facing the greatest challenges in terms of road safety. She gave us her reflections on the aims of the visits and road safety policy in general.

> You have recently launched a series of visits to Member States where the road safety situation is particularly challenging. What is the aim of these meetings?

There is a big gap between the EU Member States with the lowest road fatality rates and those with the highest rates. We need to bridge this gap. Member States can learn a lot from each other by putting in place effective practices to make progress. We therefore invited a few Member States to try out a round-table meeting with

us and other road safety experts. The idea was to facilitate exchange of experience and networking between Member States. I am happy that the visits have attracted a high level of interest, both from the hosting countries – Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania – and the twinning partners providing the benefit of their experience. Spain, France, the Netherlands and Sweden have been involved in this so far, as well as the European Transport Safety Council representing civil society.



> *What do you expect as an outcome?*

The aim is to bring together experts from different countries, fields and organisations to create networks, kick-start discussion, inspire new thinking and identify opportunities for improvement. It is not to prescribe action so there will be no immediate impact but in the long run, I'm convinced these road safety round-table discussions will bring benefits.

> *The transport portfolio covers many important issues. Why is road safety at the top of your agenda?*

Because it affects everyone every day: car drivers and passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, people in towns and in the countryside. Road transport is by far the most common means of transport in Europe. Deaths and serious injuries should not be considered inevitable and yet some 70 people die on our roads every day and many more are seriously injured.

> *What is your aim as regards reducing that toll and what progress has been made so far?*

In 2010, the European Commission set an ambitious target of halving EU road deaths by 2020. This is a significant incentive to encourage all stakeholders to work towards making roads safer. We managed a 43% reduction in fatalities between 2001 and 2010 and cut them by a further 18% between 2010 and 2014. Europe's roads are the safest in the world and we can all be proud of this. In 2014 however, we fell short of our target. This reminds us that more still needs to be done now. Road safety is a never-ending challenge.

> *What will the Commission do to contribute?*

At EU level, we create the framework for improving safety, while Member States implement and enforce traffic rules. The EU only acts where there is clear European added-value, which is in line with the Better Regulation agenda of this Commission. For example, the EU passed legislation to enforce rules when driving abroad, to introduce minimum roadworthiness requirements, and to harmonise training and qualification requirements for professional drivers. We also monitor Member State strategies, make recommendations, publish best practice guides, and launch initiatives such as these county visits.



Round tables to boost road safety performance in Member States

EU road deaths dropped by just 1% in 2014, well below the 8% reductions in both 2012 and 2013 and the 6.7% annual reduction needed to reach the EU objective of halving fatalities by 2020. In light of this, as mentioned in the interview with her in this edition, Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc launched a series of country visits aimed at helping Member States with the highest death rates to improve performance.

The visits involve round-table meetings at which European and national experts exchange experience and good practice. As Commissioner Bulc explains, the aim is not to prescribe actions, but to foster networks, discussion and new ideas, while pinpointing opportunities for improvement.

The first meeting, on 29 July 2015 in Bucharest, saw partners from France and the Netherlands join Romanian experts to present good national practices and discuss speed management, safe infrastructure for vulnerable road users and innovative evaluation methods for road safety measures. At the round table in Warsaw on 1 September, Dutch and Polish representatives examined how to prevent speeding and drink driving, and improvements to infrastructure design, especially for vulnerable road users.

On 3 September in Sofia, road safety professionals from Bulgaria and Spain considered the challenges of improving speed management and enforcing seatbelt use. The event in Vilnius, on 10 September, brought together Lithuanian and Swedish experts for discussion on safe infrastructure for vulnerable road users and evaluation of road safety measures.

The fifth round table is scheduled for 5 November in Latvia, to be held back to back with a road safety conference organised by the Latvian government and the European Transport Safety Council. Slovenia is invited as twinning partner and proposed topics are speed management and enforcement of seat belt use.





Good practice examples discussed during expert meetings

At the round-table meetings, which have been taking place during the summer and autumn of 2015, a number of good road safety practices have been discussed. Some of these good examples are presented in this section.



Automatic speed enforcement: saving lives and money

Under automatic speed enforcement systems, the registration number of the speeding vehicle is captured by a camera and the licence holder subsequently receives a fine through the post. In places where they have been implemented, such systems have had a considerable impact in terms of reductions of road deaths.

Reports from Member States show that automatic speed enforcement systems are very cost-effective. It is estimated that, for every euro spent on the installation of such systems, at least three euros are recouped.

An important characteristic of speed cameras is their adaptability. They can be a useful means of enforcement on any type of road.

As regards issuing fines, the recommendation is to allow only a short interval between when the offence takes place and when the fine is issued to maximise the educational effect of the sanction. In addition, administrative procedures related to fines should be fair and transparent.

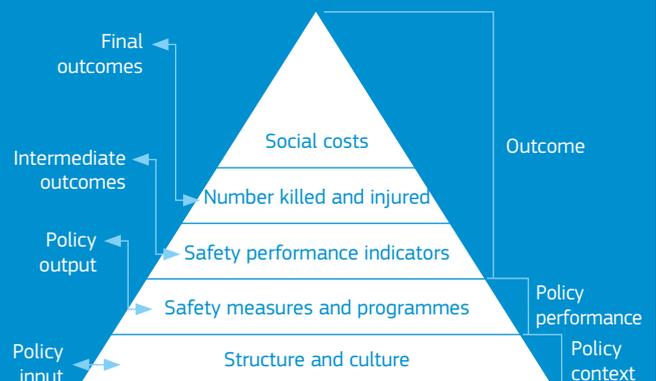
Performance indicators to complement strategic targets

The setting of strategic targets, such as the EU's aim of halving fatalities on Europe's roads by 2020, is an internationally recognised best practice. At the same time, intermediate operational targets can complement overall strategic targets by helping to gauge the amount of progress made.

Such targets are used as a good practice by many Member States. They could be output targets, such as the number of breathalyser tests for alcohol or drugs to be carried out per year, or safety performance indicators.

Safety performance indicators are any variables used in addition to numbers of crashes, injuries or fatalities to measure conditions which influence road safety and any changes to those conditions. They could include percentages of car occupants wearing seatbelts or cyclists wearing helmets.

All such targets and indicators must be challenging and coherent, both with one another and with strategic targets. In this way, they can drive up safety standards and ensure that any problems in traffic systems are detected and rectified at an early stage.



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Speed humps to protect pedestrians

There is a clear relationship between the speed of a collision and the risk of fatal or serious injury, particularly to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. At speeds of 30 km/h and below, collisions between motorised vehicles and pedestrians do not usually lead to fatalities.

Traffic signs alone are often not sufficient to get drivers to reduce their speed. Installation of speed bumps and other traffic-calming infrastructure thus plays a vital role in reducing speed and saving the lives of unprotected road users.

The risk of death or serious injury on roads has been shown to drop by some 70-80% following the installation of speed bumps. In order to ensure that traffic-calming infrastructure reaches its full safety potential, appropriate design is of the essence.

Different kinds of speed bump are required for different speed limits. Technical guidelines have been developed in order to create bumps which are specifically adapted to the speed limits of the roads on which they are placed.



Use of analogies to promote seatbelt use

Seatbelts are the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of avoiding death or injury on the road. However, it can be difficult to get people to understand just how important it is to wear them.

As people often find it easier to imagine the force of a fall than the force of a crash, in their awareness-raising efforts, some Member States have used the analogy of falling from a great height to illustrate the kind of force involved in road crashes. The impact of a crash at 50 km/h is equivalent to hitting the ground after a fall from the third floor of a building, while crashing at 100 km/h has a similar impact to falling from the 13th floor!

The lesson from this comparison is that, by wearing a seatbelt, anyone involved in a crash will be spared the full force of the impact.



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Alcohol interlocks for drink-drivers

Drink-driving contributes to around 25% of road deaths in Europe. Habitual offenders or those exceeding alcohol consumption limits by a large margin are a major part of the problem.

The introduction of alcohol interlock rehabilitation programmes for drink-driving offenders, particularly repeat offenders, could be one solution to this. Alcohol interlocks are automatic control systems which are fitted in vehicles to stop people who have drunk too much from driving.

The driver has to blow into an in-car breathalyser before turning on the ignition. The alcohol interlock can be set at different limits and if the limit is exceeded, the vehicle will not start.

More and more Member States are adopting alcohol interlocks as part of their programme of sanctions for drink-driving. Furthermore, the EU has taken steps to harmonise requirements for national programmes restricting offenders to the use of vehicles equipped with interlock devices. National-level evaluations have shown that alcohol interlock programmes cut the risk of repeat offending substantially.

Gaining public acceptance of traffic rule enforcement

Ensuring public acceptance of traffic rules and their enforcement is a major challenge in many Member States. Although backing for enforcement is generally high and dangerous driving is seen as a serious problem, scepticism concerning the way in which money from fines is used can be quite common. Moreover, people are sometimes reluctant to pay fines when they are caught breaking traffic rules.

It has been found useful to earmark money acquired from fines for investment in road safety work and other infrastructural upgrades. In addition, ensuring transparency and clear communication on this point will help to make enforcement more credible and increase public support for it.



Find out more...

If these subjects have revved up your interest, then check out the **Road Safety website** at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/roadsafety>

Upcoming events:

World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, Sunday 15 November:
<http://worlddayofremembrance.org>

2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety,
18-19 November, Brazil:
<http://www.roadsafetybrazil.com.br/en>

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