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# Road Safety Newsletter

## ROAD SAFETY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS IN THE EU

*The existence of a national road safety strategy is a clear indicator that the issue is high on the political agenda. A well-crafted plan is a tool for authorities to identify the most relevant road safety actions, to focus their work efficiently and to assign the necessary resources. It also facilitates accountability and transparency, and helps to communicate road safety priorities to citizens.*

Back in 2009, the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility recommended preparing a national road safety strategy and action plan. It stressed that such a strategy must cover safety requirements for all road users and engage stakeholders across government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, the media and the general public.

In its 'Policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020', the European Commission also encouraged Member States to develop national road safety plans. "Such plans should describe the means to achieve the common objective, draw up a timetable and publicise details of the national plan. They could also include specific national objectives in accordance with their particular situation."

### Dialogue and best practice

However, this exercise is not compulsory, and there is no formal recommendation from the Commission to elaborate a plan. The Commission is there to support and facilitate this work, for example, by creating opportunities for dialogue and exchanging best practices.

To date, 24 EU Member States have developed a national plan for road safety. Almost all of these target a reduction in road fatalities while about half have a target for reducing serious injuries, too.

### Guidelines for good planning

In a follow-up to the Policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020, the European Commission started to analyse existing national road safety strategies in the EU. As plenty of good planning practices have been identified, such as applying the Safe System approach, using targets and performance indicators, or reporting successful road safety actions, the Commission has prepared a [discussion paper](#) to share these good practices across the Member States.

Of course, the list of good practices selected by the Commission is not exhaustive. Examples have been chosen to illustrate a broad mix of actions related to different domains: enforcement, education, infrastructure, vehicles, etc. While inspiring Member States to improve their road safety management, the paper stresses that road safety planning is only a tool and the key to achieving better road safety records remains the effective implementation of the planned actions.

Where several documents are used, preparing them in a coordinated way helps to avoid duplication and to ensure that everyone involved is working towards the same main objectives. Preparing the road safety plan as a joint effort should also ensure the effective use of often scarce resources.

As for the content of the plans, Member States must choose and prioritise those road safety actions that best respond to the main problems on their own roads. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to road safety management and each Member State's needs will also change over time.

In itself, the strategy cannot prevent accidents, as the setting of targets does not directly keep road users safe. It is only a roadmap and a format for choosing the most efficient actions to minimise the occurrence of accidents and the severity of their impact. At the same time, the process of developing a national plan is valuable in itself by mobilising all relevant actors, by identifying the main problem areas and by focusing resources and efforts on the actions which will be proven the most effective. Thus, a well-crafted strategy can be a powerful tool for reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries – and very useful for holding actors accountable for non-performance – whereas a poorly developed strategy may become little more than a shelf filler.

More info: [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road\\_safety/useful-links/policy-orientation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/useful-links/policy-orientation_en)

### Scientific choice of measures gives legitimacy

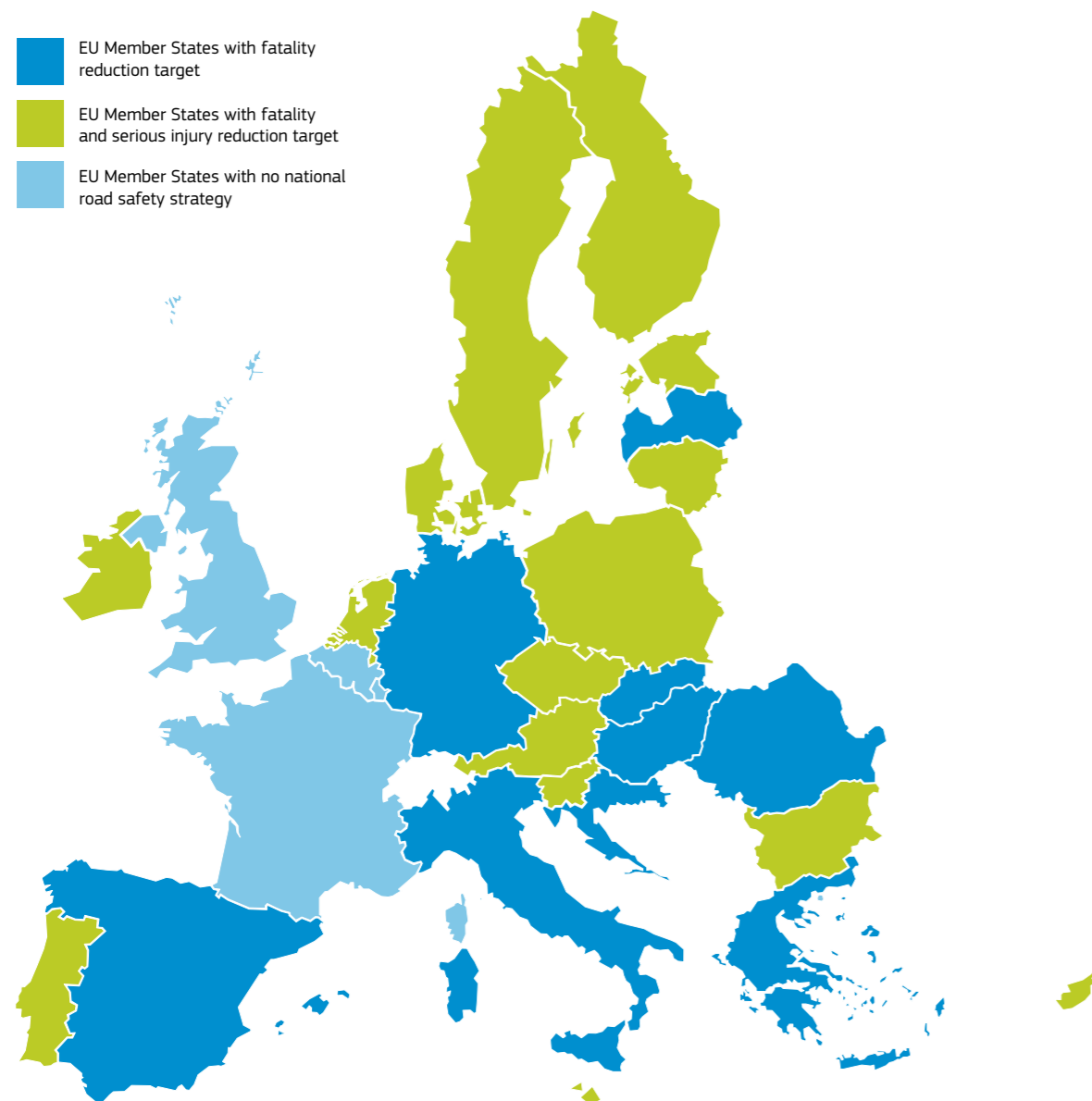
Following the political decision on priority areas, the selection of concrete measures is often, but not always, clearly based on scientific studies and cost-effectiveness considerations. If the set of actions chosen is evidence-based, citizens and politicians are more likely to perceive them as legitimate and relevant. One example of fact-based analysis is the Swedish Management by Objectives which quantifies the life-saving potential of actions to be taken in the next decade, analysing their possible contribution to the national target. The availability of data is a precondition for carrying out a comprehensive analysis.

## Responsibility assignments and clear deadlines facilitate implementation

Some Member States, for example Ireland, have specified the deadlines for the actions proposed in the action plans. Hungary and Croatia are among those countries that have clearly assigned responsibility for implementing each action to a specific entity at local, regional or national level. Such division of labour can be expected to facilitate follow-up and accountability.

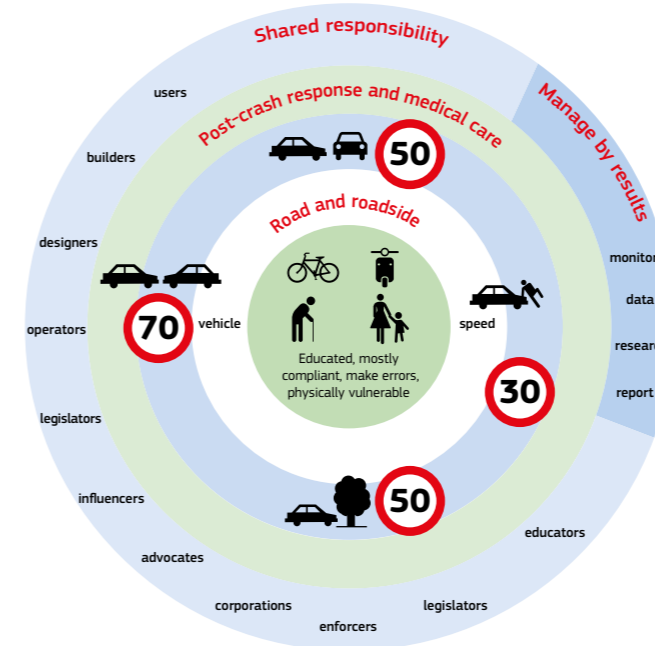
### A successful road safety strategy:

- Is based on a consistent vision or philosophy
- Makes use of lessons learnt in the past
- Identifies the main problems and addresses them
- Sets specific, relevant and realistic objectives
- Selects concrete, well-defined actions
- Defines resources and responsibilities for each action
- Uses follow-up mechanisms, i.e. clear performance indicators.



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### SAFE SYSTEM



Source: International Transport Forum, *Zero Road Deaths and Serious Injuries, Leading a Paradigm Shift to a Safe System*, 2016

### Vision Zero and the Safe System approach

*The Safe System approach to road safety should be a way to work towards Vision Zero. The two concepts are usually presented together.*

Originally, the Vision Zero concept referred to a societal commitment to work towards the objective of zero fatalities (or even zero serious injuries) on the road.

The Transport White Paper (Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – towards a competitive and resource-efficient transport system) set the goal of moving close to zero fatalities in road transport by 2050. As an intermediate goal, the EU aims to halve road casualties by 2020, underlying its role as world leader in safety and security for all modes of transport.

First and foremost, the Safe System approach should be seen as a vision based on an ethical foundation, creating and supporting a totally new perspective, a paradigm shift, on the road safety problem and how to solve it.

The aim is to develop a more forgiving road system that takes human fallibility and vulnerability into account. Under a Safe System, the entire transport system is designed to protect people from death and serious injury.

The Safe System approach accepts that people make mistakes and are vulnerable. It also stresses that those designing road systems and those using them must share the responsibility for creating a system whereby accidents do not result in death or serious injury.

Therefore, all parts of the system must become safer – roads and roadsides, speed, vehicles and road use – so that if one part fails, other parts are still able to protect those involved.

For more background: <http://visionzeroinitiative.com>

### An EU target for reducing the number of serious road traffic injuries

*Aspirational yet attainable targets are important political tools for improving road safety performance, a fact also acknowledged by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Such targets communicate the importance of road safety, motivate stakeholders to act and help to hold road transport system managers accountable for achieving defined results.*

Road safety statistics traditionally focus on road fatalities. Yet, deaths are only the tip of the iceberg: for every person killed in a traffic accident, many more suffer serious, life-changing injuries. Serious injuries are not only more common but are often more costly, too, for society because of the resulting long-term rehabilitation and healthcare needs.

EU targets for road deaths have been an important driver for the dramatic reductions noted in many EU countries. A European target for reducing serious road injuries is a simple, cheap and necessary step. Moreover, there is a strong economic case for this. Estimates show that, if all serious injuries recorded in 2010 could have been prevented, the benefits to society would have exceeded EUR 50 billion in that year.

Today, a common definition and improved data-collection methods are in place. In 2016, the latest injury data was received from 16 Member States which will enable country comparisons and the benchmarking of Member States' development over time.

### Operational objectives help to focus the work

Some Member States, for instance, Latvia and Spain, have adopted quantitative operational objectives. It could be, for example, an objective on the outcome for a specific target group such as "25% less drivers between the ages of 18 and 24 killed or seriously injured at the weekend" or a target for increased average seat-belt use. Targets should be "specific and measurable wherever practicable". Operational objectives can also be used as performance indicators in view of upcoming monitoring and evaluation.





Early in 2017, under the EU's Maltese Presidency, the Commission coordinated Member States' efforts to adopt the 'Valletta Declaration on Road Safety'.

The Valletta Declaration is a landmark achievement for road safety, with agreement on some very important topics, in particular concerning serious injuries. It states: *"The transport ministers will undertake to set a target of halving the number of serious injuries in the EU by 2030 from the 2020 baseline using this common definition and in the framework of an overall road safety strategy for this period."* Indeed, the Commission's next strategic framework for 2020-2030 will address serious road traffic injuries by setting a reduction target of 50%.

## New performance targets for better global road safety records

In November 2017, a road safety forum led by the World Health Organization agreed on 12 new performance targets to be used worldwide. The performance targets are aligned with the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020: road safety management, safer roads and mobility, safer vehicles, safer road users, and post-crash response.

In 2015, UN Member States included two specific targets on road safety in the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) launched the same year. One seeks to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% by 2020, while the other aims to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport by 2030.

## Performance indicators for road safety

*Road safety can be assessed in terms of the social costs of accidents and injuries. However, simply counting crashes or injuries is not the most accurate way to assess the level of road safety. An accident provides the 'worst-case scenario' of insecure operational conditions for road traffic.*

A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for road safety is any variable which is used in addition to statistics on accidents or injuries to measure changes in operational conditions. KPIs can give a more complete picture of the level of road safety and can detect the emergence of problems at an early stage, before they result in accidents. KPIs can also help broaden our knowledge on road safety and in particular on the reasons why accidents happen. They use qualitative and quantitative information to help determine how well a road safety programme achieves its objectives.

## Raising standards

The use of KPIs makes it possible to target actions in key areas systematically and to monitor their implementation. These may concern particular groups of road users, such as children, new drivers or professional drivers, compliance with important safety rules, such as wearing seat belts (for example, *the rate of unbelted front-seat car occupants*), or may cover specific areas like the urban road network, country roads or the Trans-European Network.

KPIs for speed (for example, the average speed in km/h of free-flowing traffic), drinking and driving (for example, *the prevalence of drink driving (> .5g/l) among car drivers*), the use of restraint systems and safety devices (*share of moped riders using a helmet correctly*), and the number of roadside checks, are already used in some Member States.

A second step is foreseen in developing indicators in areas relating to the management of road network standards (*percentage of high-speed roads with a median barrier*), the characteristics of vehicles on the roads (*percentage of vehicle mileage with vehicles that receive a EuroNCAP rating of five stars*) and the performance of emergency services (*average time for emergency services to arrive at the crash site*).

Safety performance indicators are used in many countries to monitor progress, although only a few countries, such as Sweden, have a comprehensive set of indicators able to monitor the quality of the entire system.

The European Commission will also introduce KPIs in its new strategic framework for the period 2020-2030 with the aim of better understanding road safety trends and better targeting actions at European and national levels.

The success of KPIs lies in the fact that they translate road safety goals into measurable units. The commitment and political will to actually direct road safety work towards the safety goals can be further improved by linking KPIs to objectives in other areas of transport policy, such as environmental goals.

A recent webinar by the European Road Safety Charter presents the topic in more detail: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxddrAuAidQ>

## Find out more...

If these subjects have revved up your interest, then check out the Road Safety website at: [ec.europa.eu/roadsafety](http://ec.europa.eu/roadsafety)

Please visit [@Transport\\_EU](#) twitter account for regular updates on #roadsafety" and #EUtransport

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