

Workshop on enforcement of traffic rules: What opportunities for reduced road fatalities from more or different enforcement work?

Friday 3 June 2016, 15:30-17:30
Centre de Conférences Albert Borschette, Room 4C,
Rue Froissart 36, Brussels

Background paper for discussion

Road safety is a priority topic within the European Commission transport policy. The recent data reports showing that road fatality figures have not substantially decreased the last two years are therefore taken very seriously.

It is well known that dangerous behaviours by road users – intentional or unintentional – are the most common contributing factors to fatal and serious road traffic crashes. The "main killers": speeding, drink-driving and failure to wear the seat belt are commonly estimated to be main factors in around 70% of all road fatalities.

The importance of proper and efficient enforcement of traffic rules is also well agreed. Enforcement measures – especially when combined with information and awareness-raising – is one of the most effective tools to quickly reduce road fatalities. Most enforcement activities are the responsibility of Member States, on national or local level.

In response to the stagnating road fatalities, the Commission is now analysing different aspects of the road safety work to better understand the reasons and to identify ways to improve the situation. Enforcement of traffic rules is one important area for such analysis.

There are indications pointing to changed enforcement priorities as one contributing factor in several Member States: reduced enforcement resources linked to stagnation in some cases and stepped-up enforcement activities linked to significant safety improvement in other cases.

Another possibility is that enforcement work might need to change focus, tools or methods over time. New challenges are arising – e.g. distractions, drug-driving and fatigue – requiring new methods for detection. New tools and techniques are emerging, notably linked to ITS and digitalisation, opening potential new ways of more efficient police work.

- In your view, do we need to do *more* or *different* enforcement activities? If so – what?
- What are the main barriers to doing more/different enforcement and how to overcome them?

The road safety statistics also show the need to refocus efforts more clearly on the inter-urban roads where most fatal crashes occur and on the urban areas where the vulnerable road users are mostly affected and where the majority of serious injury crashes take place. Motorways on the other hand are comparably safe, with only 7% of all fatal crashes in spite of high traffic volume and high speeds. However, fitting speed cameras on the entire road network is in most cases not possible for cost reasons.

Other possible priority considerations are linked to automated versus manual enforcement; focus on pedestrian and cyclist behaviours as well as on drivers of motorised vehicles; severity of sanctions and levels of penalties for optimal effect; focus on high-risk sites and high-risk time/place (e.g. weekend nights) or random sampling; security of system including actions to deter corruption, impunity or inefficient follow-up of offences.

- Taking into account the budget restraints of most Member States, what priorities do you consider most important/efficient for enforcement efforts aimed at reducing road fatalities in the short to medium term?