ESCAPE

Traffic enforcement in Europe: effects, measures, needs and future

Project details	
Domain	Rules and enforcement
Duration	from 01/01/1999 until 01/06/2000
Website	
Other sources	Final Report (1,14 MB)

The objectives of the project were to identify important issues of traffic law enforcement in the EU, examine traditional and innovative enforcement approaches and tools, and assess their potential to improve compliance for increased safety on roads. The following main issues were addressed: the extent of non-compliance with traffic laws and its contribution to accidents; how enforcement is organised and carried out in practice in EU countries; traffic law enforcement needs, issues and constraints, old and new; the potential for new approaches, technologies and tools to improve compliance through more efficient enforcement.

Emphasis was put on speeding, drink driving, non-use of personal safety devices and "aggressive" driving. The project focused more on the policing function as compared to legal functions. The analysis was largely qualitative because of the complexity of the systems, their intricate social context, and lack of reliable quantitative data in many countries. Attention was also given to organisational and legal issues of the system and not only to policing tactics and the behaviours targeted for enforcement. Other foci were anticipated enforcement issues in a larger, more integrated and even more motorised EU, and the special needs of CEE countries.

In examining new approaches and tools, the following were specifically considered: the potential of automated camera systems for enforcement of speeding and other violations the possible role of non-police organisations in enforcement, the necessity for monitoring tools, the application of a cost benefit analysis tool to enforcement, and the extent of professional and public support to various traffic enforcement practices and initiatives. One of the leading guidelines of the project was to address traffic law enforcement issues at a practical level and to propose potential solutions with a good chance of being accepted by enforcement professionals.

There is clear public support for existing traffic legislation in the four focus areas of speeding, alcohol, belts, and young drivers as well as effectively enforcing them. Considering the traffic system as a whole, including the role and resources of the police, it is clear that enforcement based on very high subjective detection probabilities only, will not be able to achieve even on a satisfactory level the compliance of all traffic rules. There are currently available systems that can be used directly preventively without the fear of punishment such as speed limiters. Moreover, the use of such "directly preventive" systems can be realised with much lower costs than extensive monitoring systems requiring manpower even when fully automated.

Only by realising that traffic enforcement is a part of integrated traffic safety work, where the whole system must be developed, can unnecessary pressures and unrealistic expectations concerning the impacts of enforcement be avoided. The use of new

technologies in traffic safety work in both assisting and controlling road user behaviour also serve this purpose well.

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