

Road Safety Newsletter



Reducing serious road traffic injuries – a big challenge ahead

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The European Commission has increased efforts to cut the numbers of serious road traffic injuries as part of its 'vision zero' goal of eliminating deaths and serious injuries on Europe's roads. In the past, much Commission work in this area targeted fatalities. Data collection and the creation of a common EU database on road deaths has been a powerful tool facilitating comparison of trends, development of initiatives and more targeted actions.

Against the background of a new focus on serious injuries, Maria-Teresa Sanz-Villegas, who has worked in road safety for the European Commission for over a decade, reflects on progress to date and the challenges still faced in this critical area.

> What drives your work on serious road injuries?

Road accidents cause many serious injuries with lifelong consequences for victims and their families. These injuries have a big impact on society as a whole, and the economic cost is also high. A disproportionate amount of people seriously injured on Europe's roads are vulnerable road users, and they account for an even higher share in towns and cities. Protecting them is a priority.

> What is your main aim in addressing serious injuries?

More people are seriously injured than killed on roads, so injury figures are more likely to be statistically significant. Taking serious injuries into account also allows us to make more accurate projections regarding the future and to see what we need to focus on for increased protection of road users, particularly vulnerable road users.



> *What have been the main challenges?*

First, we had to define what we wanted to measure. For fatalities, this is clear, 'a human casualty who dies within 30 days due to injuries received in a crash'. In addition, fatality figures are normally reliable in industrialised countries as few, if any, go unrecorded. But for serious injuries, before 2013, there was no common definition in the EU and thus no comparable EU-wide data. We examined the issue and, in arriving at our common definition, used medical criteria to ensure objectivity and an existing system – the Maximum Abbreviated Injury Scale or MAIS – so as not to add administrative burden. MAIS is easy to understand, reliable, internationally comparable and can be derived from other common hospital coding systems using a simple algorithm. Unlike other definitions, MAIS is a scale based strictly on criteria reflecting medical severity. The more difficult and time-consuming steps for data providers were getting access to data and complying with confidentiality and privacy requirements. Some countries had to develop new frameworks for cooperation between administrations or adopt data-sharing laws. Most Member States have started the process and some already have data, although in certain cases it is only provisional or estimated.

> *How reliable are the figures?*

The new system gives much more accurate data than was previously available. Aggregate findings on serious injuries are not expected to change substantially following our quality control. Any technical issues will be dealt with in the accident database expert group and in coordination with the Member States in the High Level Group on Road Safety.

> *How big are the changes required and what will it cost to implement the new method?*

There is no need for a new database, it is more a question of changing how data is gathered. More ambitious collection methods might cost money but there is still the option of using only police records, as is already done, and applying an algorithm.

> *How is the data handled?*

EU countries have gathered road accident data using national collection systems for many years. European-level accident data has been available since 1991, albeit in disaggregated form, in the Community Road Accident Database, or CARE. CARE contains detailed data collected by Member States and has a structure which allows for maximum flexibility when analysing information. Under a 1993 Council Decision, Member States must report data on road accidents resulting in death or injury to the Commission. The Commission processes and disseminates the data, with final figures available in the November of the year in which the data is received.



> *What is the current situation?*

A sufficient amount of new serious road injury data is expected to be ready for publication of a first estimate in the coming months. The new data is important in two ways. In the longer term, the Commission will be able to monitor and benchmark Member State performance. And the new data shows that fatal crashes and crashes resulting in serious injury have slightly different characteristics. This helps us to see where more work is needed, such as on safety for vulnerable road users or safety in urban areas. In the meantime, we have launched a study to analyse crashes causing serious injury and identify the most common factors affecting injury severity in these cases. Results should be available by the end of 2016.

> *How will Member States benefit?*

Member States will benefit from opportunities offered by the new system for more rigorous analysis of accident information leading to better targeting of road safety actions. The Commission encourages Member States to commit to ambitious efforts to reduce the numbers of serious road injuries. We will monitor progress and, as with fatality figures, provide Member States with information on their performance.





Commission study to help identify serious injury prevention measures

The European Commission has launched a study to identify the most common road accident scenarios causing serious injury and to assess influences on injury severity. The information collected and analysed will help national and local authorities to make informed decisions and identify priorities for action. It should also make it easier to identify effective injury prevention measures.

The first data based on the new common EU definition of 'serious road traffic injury' will not include details of the circumstances of all injuries. The study is intended to fill this knowledge gap. It will provide information on the most common circumstances of crashes causing serious injuries among pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and car occupants, broken down by gender and age group. It should also make estimates of the share of serious crashes per scenario.

Data will be gathered from the CARE database, and national and regional accident investigation databases. Identification of scenarios will take account of the type of vehicle, road (urban, inter-urban, motorway), place (junction, pedestrian crossing, roundabout), crash (head-on, run-off, side-impact, collision with a pedestrian or cyclist) and injury, as well as aspects such as speed and safety equipment.

The most common crash types will be assessed in depth and, for each one, the main factors influencing the severity of injuries will be pinpointed.

The study is to be performed by a consortium consisting of the SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research, the German Federal Highway Research Institute (BAST) and Loughborough University. It will run for 12 months. The study plan was presented and discussed in a dedicated stakeholder workshop in Brussels at the end of November.



Road traffic victims remembered on 15 November



Just prior to the Global High-level Conference in Brasilia was the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, on 15 November (the third Sunday in November each year). It commemorates everyone killed or injured on roads and calls to mind the suffering of their families, friends and others affected. It is also an opportunity to thank emergency services for their work, and to reflect on ways to prevent road injuries and deaths.

In view of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, Violeta Bulc, the EU's Transport Commissioner made the following statement:

Seventy people still die every day on European roads. But this is not about statistics. Behind this number, there are grieving families, a lot of sadness and lost futures. In many countries, memorials for road victims have been established. I find this initiative particularly touching.

There is a lot of work for us to do in the future; on an operational, strategic level – and on a day-to-day basis. We need to pay special attention to those most vulnerable... pedestrians and cyclists. I am sure that zero fatality on European roads is still the right goal. I am convinced that if we work together hand in hand, every day, in every Member State, we can achieve it during our lifetime."

The Day of Remembrance was initiated by RoadPeace in 1993. It first took place in 1995 on the initiative of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims and was adopted by the UN in 2005. This year thus marks the 20th anniversary of the first World Day and the 10th anniversary of its adoption by the UN. The occasion is observed on all continents, with events organised by NGOs, governments and other stakeholders.

The theme for 2015, 'Say No to Road Crime!', is linked to the Decade of Action pillar on safer road use. The action aims to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding, drink-driving and other risk factors, and to increase seat belt and helmet use, while supporting stronger enforcement of laws and standards.

<http://worlddayofremembrance.org/>



Global High-level Conference on Road Safety held in Brasilia

The second United Nations (UN) Global High-level Conference on Road Safety took place in Brasilia on 18-19 November. The event brought together around 2 200 participants including ministers, UN officials, civil society representatives and business leaders from more than 110 countries. It culminated in the adoption of the Brasilia Declaration in which participants renewed their commitment to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and its goal of saving 5 million lives.



The Conference followed on from the first Global Road Safety Conference in Russia in 2009, which urged the UN to launch the Decade of Action. Marking the halfway point of the 'Decade', the Brasilia event was aimed at identifying strategies for the next five years, against the background of negotiations on the post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is a 50% reduction in road deaths.

Participants reviewed the achievements of the Decade of Action so far and looked at the next steps towards its goal. They examined the setting of national and global targets and strategies for cutting road deaths by 50% by 2030. Parallel sessions focused

on the pillars of the Decade of Action Global Plan and emerging road safety issues. Side events were organised by governments, NGOs and international organisations.

Commission support for the Brasilia Declaration

Welcoming the Brasilia Declaration, European Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc stressed the Commission's long-standing commitment to improving road safety and full support for all initiatives aimed at reaching the Decade of Action goal. She underlined the EU's readiness to share experience and best practices with other regions to help save lives beyond its own borders.

With roads that are both the safest in the world and safer than ever, the EU has an important role to play. In 2014, the EU fatality rate was 51 deaths per million inhabitants, compared to 93 in the entire European region and 159 in the Americas. Globally, some 1.2 million people are killed on roads each year and another 30-50 million are injured, primarily children and young people.

Contributing factors to the EU's success include making road safety a priority, cross-border cooperation and legislation in areas such as seat belt and child seat use, infrastructure safety, and vehicle type approval and inspections. Furthermore, crash data collection provides a solid basis for developing better safety measures.

www.roadsafetybrazil.com.br/en



We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Watch the film:

Where will you party for New Year's Eve?

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