

Meeting report

Workshop in preparation of a high-level road safety conference in Malta, scheduled on 28 and 29 March 2017

Brussels, 26 October 2016

1. Introduction

This stakeholder workshop was organised in preparation of a High-level Stakeholder and Ministerial Conference, scheduled on 28 and 29 March 2017, in Malta. The objective was two-fold: firstly, to discuss in general what actions and measures in the field of road safety were needed in order to reverse the current trend of stagnation in reducing the number of fatalities and serious injuries on Europe's roads; and secondly, to discuss realistic commitments for safer roads in Europe.

The meeting was chaired by the European Commission services, in the presence of the cabinet of Commissioner Bulc (Alisa Tiganj). Matthew Baldwin, Deputy Director General of DG MOVE, introduced the topic and presented the current state of play of road safety in the European Union and setting out some concrete questions, such as whether we need to continue with our practice of setting ambitious targets (e.g. to halve the number of road deaths by 2020). Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of DG MOVE Road Safety Unit, presented the planned approach of the Maltese high-level event and encouraged participants to take an active role in the preparation process leading up to the high-level conference.

2. Round-table discussions

In order to frame the discussions on the current state of play of road safety in Europe, and in particular on the measures to be taken in the future for better results, five sets of topics were discussed to address in the most effective way the current road safety challenges. These were: road safety objectives; road safety policies and strategies; protection of road users; smart vehicles; cooperation and exchange of experience. Participants were asked to express their views on these key points.

(a) Road safety objectives

Participants agreed that road safety targets, such as the aspirational EU target of halving the number of road fatalities by 2020, are powerful tools for reducing road fatalities. Such aspirational targets, as well as key performance indicators, need to be promoted also at national level. The importance of having an additional EU-wide target for reducing serious road traffic injuries was stressed by several stakeholders.

It was agreed that road safety targets cannot be effective without systematic data collection on road fatalities and serious road traffic injuries, which can help monitor and benchmark progress toward the common goals. Committing Member States to report injury data based on the new, common definition of a MAIS3+ severity should be promoted as well. Data from

crash investigations as well as on patterns of speed, for example, were important tools for policy making.

(b) Road safety strategies and policies

Flowing from these high level objectives, the role of commonly understood road safety strategies, notably the Safe System approach, was clearly agreed to be an important first step towards effective road safety measures, not least because they can also reflect country-specific approaches identifying national challenges and the way to overcome them. This framework enabled a holistic approach (for example integrating socioeconomic elements), and the development of more concrete policies based on key performance indicators. Safety performance indicators were particularly mentioned as tools increasing the awareness of all actors of shared responsibility for safer roads.

The importance of involving all road safety partners, including governments, the industry and the civil society, in effective policy-making was stressed.

Participants highlighted that there is still room for developing the EU road safety acquis, and the Commission was urged to look at ways of strengthening the road safety framework, in new areas such as tackling serious injuries and post-collision care, and alcohol related problems as well as such areas as the cross-border enforcement of traffic offences, training of professional driver, infrastructure safety management, the General Safety Regulation¹ and the Pedestrian Safety Regulation² and the C-ITS Masterplan. But it was agreed that in addition, more coordinating of actions at EU level was needed.

The meeting then turned to a discussion of two specific groups of issues

(c) Protecting road users, particularly vulnerable road users

A number of participants commented on improving the safety of vulnerable road users bearing in mind that the term 'vulnerable' covers groups of road users with different characteristics and needs, such as cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians, young people and the elderly. It was felt that an inclusive approach is required towards vulnerable road users knowing that there are only a few countries in Europe with specific strategies in this field. It was also noted that a stronger focus on safety within integrated urban development and transport policies might also contribute to improve the safety records of vulnerable road users.

The different characteristics and safety profile of urban and interurban roads were also noted. In that context, and particularly the protection of pedestrians and cyclists, reduction of speed was mentioned as crucial, especially in urban and suburban areas, particularly given data on survival rates of collisions at 30k/h compared to 50k/h. A majority of stakeholders represented felt that a default 30km/h speed limit should be promoted in urban areas, particularly as most urban roads did not segregate vulnerable road users, and because of evidence of increased interaction between protected and unprotected road users. Other participants, however, argued that a general 30 km/h speed limit on urban roads was not justified by the evidence, and that it was better to do this case by case, as at present.

¹ Regulation 661/2009/EC concerning type-approval requirements for the general safety of motor vehicles, their trailers and systems, components and separate technical units intended therefor

² Regulation 78/2009/EC on the type-approval of motor vehicles with regard to the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users

Further education and effective training of road users, including professional drivers, was noted as of primary importance, as well as information and awareness-raising on road safety risks. Closer involvement of police forces was also essential – better enforcement of traffic rules that punished unsafe behaviour (such as speeding, drink driving, failure to use seat belts, child restraints and motorcycle helmets as well as driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or distraction) was mentioned as a prerequisite for safer roads.

It was commonly shared that infrastructure developments have a key role in protecting road users. Several participants strongly recommended that we promote the extension of infrastructure safety principles beyond the TEN-T network. Appropriate funding was mentioned as a key element of any infrastructure improvement, starting with the basic maintenance of roads – it was felt that any investment in safety infrastructure is proven to be cost-efficient on longer term. Participants stressed the importance of harmonising speed management with infrastructure, and of appropriate design of infrastructure, to prevent fatalities and serious injuries among vulnerable road users in particular.

(d) Smart vehicles

Stakeholders agreed that C-ITS and vehicle automation have an enormous potential in improving road safety. However, there were also risks that new technologies could mean increasingly mixed traffic with differently equipped road users, particularly in view of emerging trends, such as distraction.

Some participants noted that European legislation on vehicles did not sufficiently address real life situations or find the right balance between market needs and road safety.

It was argued that any revision of the General Safety Regulation should also promote new technologies such as driver assistance systems (ex. intelligent speed assistance, automatic emergency braking) in favour of vulnerable road users. Promoting safer vehicles, government vehicle fleets, buses and trucks, by public procurement was also to be encouraged.

(e) Further cooperation and exchange of experience

The European Commission was urged to continue to play a major role in promoting cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience between the EU Member States and not to limit its activities to areas of competence – for example, it was suggested that more should be done to create road safety platforms at EU level. Continued dialogue with – and between – stakeholders was mentioned as a must.

Similarly, it was felt that the Commission could help national, regional and local authorities to share best practices, exchange knowledge and experience, and build trust. Greater public awareness of statistics showing which countries were performing best had a powerful effect in improving road safety across the European Union.

Conclusion

It was felt that the workshop had been very useful in identifying priorities for further work in each of the areas identified.

It was agreed that we need to work clear objectives, ambitious but realistic road safety targets and clear safety performance indicators. One strong theme which emerged was to address the

hitherto lower profile problem of serious road traffic injuries: to achieve this, both harmonised data collection and the development of dedicated strategies and effective countermeasures was stressed. It was commonly agreed that the safe system approach needs to be promoted when developing road safety policies and objectives across Europe. At the workshop, a special emphasis was put on infrastructure safety, on measures targeting vulnerable road users (and in particular urban speed limits) as well as on education and enforcement in achieving better road safety records.

While formulating realistic measures and actions for the EU as a whole and whilst recognising the need for strong member state and local action, the European Commission was urged to continue to reflect on how we could strengthen the common legislative framework for safer roads in Europe. Finally, it was agreed that we should always be ready to go beyond legislation and to promote exchanges of knowledge, experience and best practice between all road safety partners.

It was agreed to stay in close touch in the run-up to the Malta road safety conference next year.

List of organisations represented at the workshop

ETSC - European Transport Safety Council
FIA – Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile
EuroRAP – European Road Assessment Programme
ASECAP – European Association of Toll Road Infrastructure
ACEM – European Association of Motorcycle Manufacturers
CEDR – Conference of European Directors of Roads
ERF – European Road Federation
FEVR – European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
ECF – European Cyclists' Federation
IFP- International Federation of Pedestrians
CLEPA – European Association of Automobile Suppliers
FERSI – Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes
European Commission