



**European Road Safety Action
Programme 2011-2020
ERF Position Paper**

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1. Road Safety Action Programme 2011-2020 – Priorities and Recommendations

1.1 Need for a “Management Plan” and country specific objectives

While definitely a positive step, the Road Safety Action Programme (RSAP) 2001-2010 had two principal weaknesses. First of all, it set an overarching objective of halving deaths by 2010 that did not take into account the huge differences in current road safety levels between the EU member states. Secondly, it did not foresee any mechanism for monitoring the actions taken and evaluating their impact.

The ERF believes that, in addition to the overarching objectives, the next Road Safety Action Programme should set country specific targets that are based on a careful analysis of each country according to its individual specificities and needs. Furthermore, a ‘Management Plan’ should be established to assess the success of the RSAP at regular intervals and to determine its next steps. This would enable each country to maximise its own contribution towards the final objective.

1.2 Need for reliable and comparable statistics

While certain progress has been achieved over the past years, varying definitions across the Member States essentially hamper efforts to make meaningful comparisons at determining the most appropriate policies at EU level. While the most striking of these examples is the lack of a common definition on serious injuries, other fields which could benefit from harmonisation include a **common definition** of road investment and road maintenance.

Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of availability of **reliable data** concerning Road Safety expenditure. Thus, while significant resources are spent on improving Road Safety, it is often very hard to find such data, either because a Road Safety budget at national level does not exist or because such operations are included under other headings. Knowing what is spent, and where, can be a valuable tool when trying to assess the cost-effectiveness of Road Safety measures.

Last but not least, there is a need of developing additional statistical indicators in a number of areas such as: exposure data, which is a pre-requisite for properly understanding the available absolute figures on deaths and injuries; economic impact indicators, which can shed light on the true cost of road accidents to member state’s GDP. The European

Commission should continue to update and enrich the quantity and quality of its statistical indicators in the pan European databases such as CARE and ERSO. In this task, the European Commission could potentially benefit from exploring other Road Safety statistical systems.

1.3 The role of road infrastructure

The Road Safety equation rests on three pillars: the driver, the vehicle and the infrastructure. Despite the drive for harmonisation of speed limits, blood alcohol levels and – to some extent – enforcement policies as well as converging car fleets, road deaths remain unacceptably high and large disparities in Road Safety levels persist amongst EU Member States. By complementing actions focussed on the two other pillars, road infrastructure can provide a major contribution in reducing fatalities and injuries on the EU's road network.

In a time of economic constraint, acting on the road infrastructure can enhance Road Safety effectively and at a relatively low cost.

1.3.1 Overarching challenges

- i) The challenges posed to infrastructure by an ageing population

By 2060, the median age of the European population is projected to be more than 7 years higher than today and the number of people aged 65 or more is expected to represent 30% of the population as opposed to 17% today.¹ At the same time, older people tend to travel more and this tendency is expected to increase in the coming years. The combination of an older but, at the same time, increasing mobile European population is likely to have a significant impact of road infrastructure within the urban context and beyond.

The ERF encourages the Commission to devote significant research funds that will allow a deeper understanding of the challenge and enable policymakers to identify appropriate solutions.

¹ Commission Communication COM(2009) 279/4 'A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system'

ii) Road Safety in rural roads / secondary network

Despite the fact that more than 50% of road fatalities occur on rural and/or secondary roads, the issue has received little attention at the European level.

While the responsibility of the rural / secondary network lies exclusively with Member States, the European Commission is encouraged to play a more active role as a facilitator and coordinator in order to increase Road Safety levels on these roads. Action could include, for example, encouraging Member States to extend the provisions currently applying to the TERN to the whole road network, as well as facilitating the exchanges of best practices and promoting research on this issue at EU level.

1.3.2 Specific infrastructure measures

i) Road Restraint Systems (RRS)

While the EN 1317 for Vehicle Restraint Systems (Safety Barriers) guarantees common testing methods for RRS across EU Member States, it is up to national governments to decide the level of protection on their road network. As a result, European drivers are confronted with varying levels of RRS protection on the European motorway network despite the fact that speed limits and driving conditions are very similar. In this context, a harmonisation of RRS protection levels on Europe's road network should be examined.

Furthermore, for an optimal efficiency of RRS, it is essential that they are installed properly and that proper maintenance is carried out, which is often not the case. In this respect, and despite the significant challenge of addressing this issue, the ERF believes that the production of common guidelines for the installation and maintenance of the RRS system should be examined in a long-term perspective.

ii) Work Zone Safety

Across Europe, there is very little consensus on how this unavoidable traffic intervention should be shaped whilst work is being carried out. A study published by ADAC in 2007 examining 50 work zone sites in 11 European countries² revealed striking variations on how work zones are set up and consequently on the safety levels offered to drivers and workers on the site. Furthermore, apart from one study carried out at European level more than 10 years ago³, this important issue has not received any attention at the European level.

In this respect, the European Commission is strongly encouraged to promote research into this important issue with a view to establishing state of the art knowledge, which could serve as an input for the development of a European norm on work zone safety.

iii) Road Markings and Road Signs

Previous research (e.g. COST 331⁴) and studies (Improver⁵) have confirmed that the road markings are an essential contributor to driver comfort and Road Safety. For example, profiled road markings can not only alert a fatigued driver but also warn distracted drivers from running off the lane by means of vibration and sound they produce inside the car. Nevertheless, road markings are often neglected and in many cases have even disappeared. In this context, the European Commission is strongly encouraged to consider the road marking solutions that are immediately available, as well as promote further research into how road markings can improve Road Safety conditions. Amongst others, it could consider the development of innovative technologies that can allow road markings to be more durable and visible under **all weather conditions**, as a means of increasing driver security.

Road signs are also an essential part of the global Road Safety system. They convey the most important information to the road users (directions, limitations, warnings...) so they must be visible, conspicuous and understandable, and provide road users with the required information, day and night, especially in adverse weather conditions.

² EUROTTEST, Quality Safety Mobility – Countries analysed: Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy Croatia, Great Britain, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, France, the Netherlands

³ "ARROWS" (Advanced Research on Road Work Zone Safety Standards in Europe)

⁴ <http://cordis.europa.eu/cost-transport/src/cost-331.htm>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety_library/publications/improver_final_report_sp1_060405.pdf

Considering also the ageing of the European population, it is important to assess the impact of high performance solutions for road markings and road signs and promote their use throughout the EU.

- iv) Adapting urban infrastructure to the needs of vulnerable and unprotected road users

Most cities offer a rather unattractive and unsafe environment for motorcyclists and cyclists, thus discouraging the use of more environmentally friendly means of travelling within the city. Given that urban traffic accounts for approximately 40% of CO₂ emissions and 70% of emissions of other pollutants⁶, infrastructure in urban areas should be adapted in order to promote the wider use of motorcycles and bicycles in the city. This could be achieved by creating dedicated lanes for motorcyclists and cyclists, which are clearly separated from the rest of the traffic.

The safety of pedestrians and the necessary infrastructure changes should also be examined, especially in view of the rapid ageing of Europe's population. As mentioned during the DG TREN workshop, there is an over representation of fatalities among pedestrians over 65 years, i.e. due to greater fragility and slower mobility. The next European Safety Action Programme should examine how the urban infrastructure should be adapted to the needs of **all vulnerable users**, e.g. elderly, children, disabled people...

- v) Introduction of heavier vehicles on Europe's motorways and its impact on Road Safety

Current road infrastructure has been designed in such a way as to reflect the realities on the ground. For example, road restraint systems are designed and tested based on the maximum allowed weight on the European network, which is currently forty tonnes.

The introduction of heavier vehicles on the road without modifying accordingly the road infrastructure would clearly have serious consequences for safety levels. In this sense, the ERF believes that any discussion on the introduction of heavier vehicles **must** be evaluated in a holistic way that takes into consideration all three pillars of the transport system.

⁶ European Commission Green Paper, 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility', COM(2007) 551

1.4 The role of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

GALILEO and ICT will play a key role for the development of several EU areas in the next decade through the implementation of Intelligent Transport Systems which could increase Road Safety levels in different ways.

a) Traffic management: there are inherent risks when a large, slow-moving vehicle travels along the network. From a traffic flow point of view, it is possible to compare such a vehicle to a mobile road works site, giving rise to problems of visibility and signalling with potential risk of accidents and traffic bottlenecks. ITS are able to provide solutions for a smoother traffic flow (dynamic traffic management), thus reducing congestion levels and increasing Road Safety.

b) Transport of sensitive goods: heavy good vehicles carrying, for example, chemicals and hydrocarbons on European principal road corridors can represent a significant safety risk if not properly monitored. With the advent of EGNOS and GALILEO, many new applications providing accurate information on the position and status of these sensitive goods are expected to rapidly develop. In this context, the next European Road Safety Action Programme should support the further deployment of 'tracking and tracing' related services as a means to monitor and control the position of objects for safety, efficiency and traceability purposes.

c) Road user charging (RUC) and investment in road infrastructure: the principle of pay-as-you-drive, enabled through ICT and satellite technology, is gradually gaining ground in various Member States and at EU level. The ERF believes that a sensible use of RUC can represent an opportunity for improving Road Safety levels in the EU, upon the express condition that funds collected are fully re-invested into the road infrastructure sector.

A prompt adoption and implementation of the guidelines for interoperability of ITS, as defined in the forthcoming ITS Directive COM(2008) 887, should help increase safety levels on our roads.

1.5 European Road Safety Agency

The ERF strongly supports the European Commission's intention to examine the possibility of setting up a dedicated Agency on Road Safety. One of the core mandates of the Agency should be to monitor and follow-up the implementation of the Road Safety Action Programme, thus remedying one of the principal weaknesses of its predecessor.

Furthermore, given that Member States often face different challenges and therefore require tailor-made solutions, it would be advisable to establish a Committee of Member State representatives on Road Safety. The Committee's principal mandate would be to oversee and advise the Agency on the implementation of the RSAP as a means of ensuring a greater level of coordination between Member State's policies and the Agency and to foster the exchange of best practices.

The ERF confirms its willingness to help the Commission in these tasks.

Conclusion

When it comes to Road Safety, the ERF believes that road infrastructure represents a major 'untapped' resource that remained underexploited during the previous Road Safety Action Programme.

In this context, it hopes that the current contribution can prove to be a useful input for the European Commission in defining its future priorities with respect to Road Safety and infrastructure.

About the Authors

The European Union Road Federation (ERF) is a non-profit European association representing public and private entities linked to road infrastructure. It acts as a European platform for dialogue, expressing the road sector's ideas and opinions on mobility issues and promotes research into viable, efficient and sustainable transport.

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