

## UK road safety and the EU role

The United Kingdom is one of the top performers globally in reducing death and injury in road travel and transport. Its safety record is built on decades of targeting results and capacity building for effective road safety management as well as substantial international collaboration and activity. This short information note considers the European Union role in road safety and how it contributes to the UK's road safety performance.

The EU plays an important role in road safety activities both at home and abroad. Key identified functions, as shown below, range from developing and implementing EU-wide road safety strategy to the funding of road safety research and development and knowledge transfer.

### **The road safety role of the European Union**

The EU shares responsibility for road safety with Member States and carries out a range of road safety functions aimed at adding value to national road safety efforts by:

- Establishing through the 2050 *Vision Zero/Safe System* goal and interim target-setting to 2020 a focus on achieving ambitious road safety results across the EU, supported by EU road safety strategy and action programmes, aligning at the same time with a broad range of related societal objectives.
- Coordinating actions across Commission Directorates at EU level, with other EU institutions and Member States and with the business sector and civil society to achieve desired results.
- Legislating to meet the road safety task in areas of exclusive and shared competence with due consideration to subsidiarity, proportionality, the evidence-base and providing a high level of protection.
- Funding initiatives supporting EU goals, targets and action programmes, twinning and capacity building initiatives and projects, research and development, benchmarking review, best practice guidelines and supporting effective NGO activity and professional networks.
- Promoting shared responsibility for road safety at a high level and creating new demand for road safety.
- Monitoring and evaluation of road traffic crashes, injuries and exposure to risk in transport and health sectors, EU action programmes, objectives and interventions through CARE, other trans-national data collection, surveys and projects, in-depth study and independent review.
- Research and development of road safety interventions and tools and disseminating knowledge e.g. through developing best practice guidance and through the European Road Safety Observatory.

Source:<sup>1</sup>, based on Box 1

Major interventions include vehicle safety standards and vehicle type approval in which the EU has exclusive competence under Article 114 of the EU Treaty. In addition, there is shared responsibility for measures such as safety engineering in EU-funded road infrastructure, driver

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<sup>1</sup> Breen J, *Road safety study for the interim evaluation of Policy Orientations on Road Safety 2011-2020*, 12 February 2015

and rider licensing frameworks, professional road transport, the regulation of the transport of dangerous goods and cross-border enforcement, all of which are subject to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.<sup>2 3 4</sup>

UK research and experience indicates that EU action on transport safety has saved many lives and prevented costly severe injury. A substantial 54% reduction in the number of people killed on the roads in EU countries has been achieved since 2001 by the actions of Member States, assisted by the establishment of EU targets and implementation of planned EU road safety activities. UK professionals and agencies working in collaboration with European colleagues have helped to make the EU the global leading region in road traffic safety. In 2013, the EU achieved the lowest average road death rate of any world region (5.1 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants) and the world's lowest country death rate at 2.8 (Sweden). Particularly notable examples include:

- EU action on vehicle safety: This is one example of focused, collaborative achievement which has made a large and sustained contribution towards road safety outcomes at home and abroad. UK research indicates that the single greatest contribution to the prevention of death and injury in transport crashes in Britain over the last two decades has been improvement to vehicle crash protection for car occupants.<sup>5,6</sup> Since the mid-1990s, substantial improvements in the crash protective design of cars have been made in which the EU has played a major role.<sup>7</sup>

EU research and development funding and international collaboration in the 1980s and 1990s led to the development of world-leading vehicle crash testing standards and protocols. These were translated into legislation within the EU Whole Vehicle Type Approval scheme against the background of lethargic, unambitious UN global action. Strong EU support for the influential European New Car Assessment Programme developed by the UK, Sweden and European consumer and road user organisations facilitated a highly positive response from the European car industry in providing new safety designs and equipment. Research shows that the risk of fatal injury in the event of a crash has been reduced by over two-thirds in the best performing cars.<sup>8</sup> The mixture of regulation, consumer information and industry initiatives over the last two decades has made a large contribution to the substantial progress made in reducing road deaths across the EU.<sup>9</sup>

Periodic assessments by the TRL of casualty outcomes over the last two decades indicate that a sustainable reduction of road deaths in Britain has been achieved as a result of vehicle safety improvements. A study of crash protection in the UK car fleet concluded that, for the accident year 2011, cars manufactured after 2008 typically had a crash

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<sup>2</sup> European Transport Safety Council (2013), *Submission to the UK Balance of Competences Review*, ETSC, Brussels.

<sup>3</sup> Avenoso, A. (2016), *Technical Standards are where the EU adds value*, FT Letter, 16.3.016

<sup>4</sup> Allsop, R. E. (2002) *Road Safety. Britain in Europe. 12th Westminster Lecture on Transport Safety*, 2001. PACTS, London.

<sup>5</sup> Broughton, J. (2009) *Post 2010 Casualty forecasting*. Road Safety Web Publication No. 8, TRL, DfT, London.

<sup>6</sup> Broughton, J., Allsop, R. E., Lynam, D. A. and McMahon, C. M. (2000). *The numerical context for setting national casualty reduction targets*. TRL Report TRL382. Crowthorne: Transport Research Laboratory.

<sup>7</sup> Breen J, *Road safety study for the interim evaluation of Policy Orientations on Road Safety 2011-2020*, 12 February 2015

<sup>8</sup> Kullgren A, Lie A, Tingvall C (2010). *Comparison between Euro NCAP test results and real-world crash data*. Traffic Injury Prevention. 2010 Dec 11(6):587-93.

<sup>9</sup> Global NCAP (2015) *Democratising Car Safety: Road Map for Safer Cars 2020*, London.

involvement rate that was 36% below that of cars manufactured in 2000.<sup>10</sup> TRL estimated that between 2002 and 2020 the effectiveness of improvements in secondary safety since 2001 registered vehicles is an 11% reduction in car driver deaths with a predicted cumulative saving of 1,632 fatalities in Britain.<sup>11</sup>

Future cost-effective vehicle safety improvements and technologies have been identified which avoid as well as mitigate crash outcomes.<sup>12 13</sup> Further large reductions in fatal and serious casualties from vehicle safety improvements are forecast between 2010 and 2030 in Britain.<sup>5</sup>

In global harmonisation, the EU ‘coordinated position’ provides a majority contribution and an influential means of ensuring a high level of protection in standardisation in line with Treaty obligations for consumer protection. Continued progress into the future requires the UK to take every opportunity for influencing and ensuring the high safety quality and competitiveness of the UK’s growing vehicle industry.

- Regulation of professional road transport: Besides vehicle safety aspects, the EU is active in other areas of work-related road travel, the single lead cause of work-related death. One example is EU regulation of professional road transport. Amongst other aspects, this addresses driver fatigue, a factor in around 20% of road transport crashes, and recognises the disproportionate involvement of heavy goods vehicle transport in fatal road crashes across EU Member States. The occasional media-reported tag of such EU action as expensive ‘red tape’ or another ‘health and safety’ inconvenience could not be less appropriate.
- Cross-border enforcement: Directive 2015/413 aims to facilitate the cross-border exchange of information between enforcement agencies on road safety related traffic offences in one scheme as opposed to multiple bilateral agreements. The objective is to improve compliance with key safety rules known to reduce death and serious injury. Besides the safety challenges for UK residents at home, nearly three-quarters of all travel abroad by UK residents was to EU countries (73%), amounting to over 43.8 million visits (2014). In the same year, some 23 million visits to the UK were made by residents of other EU countries, accounting for two-thirds of all visitors from abroad.<sup>14</sup>

Cross-border action on road safety is critical to efforts to prevent loss of life and permanent impairment from road traffic injury for UK and other EU citizens, both at home and abroad. EU action contributes daily to the safety of UK citizens in traffic, most notably in vehicle safety. Continuing progress in improving the safety quality of our transport system requires strong, active UK involvement across borders.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, P.D (2013) *Developments in the Risk of Crash Involvement and Injury to Car Occupants by Model Year Using Vehicle Specific Exposure Data*, VSRC, Loughborough.

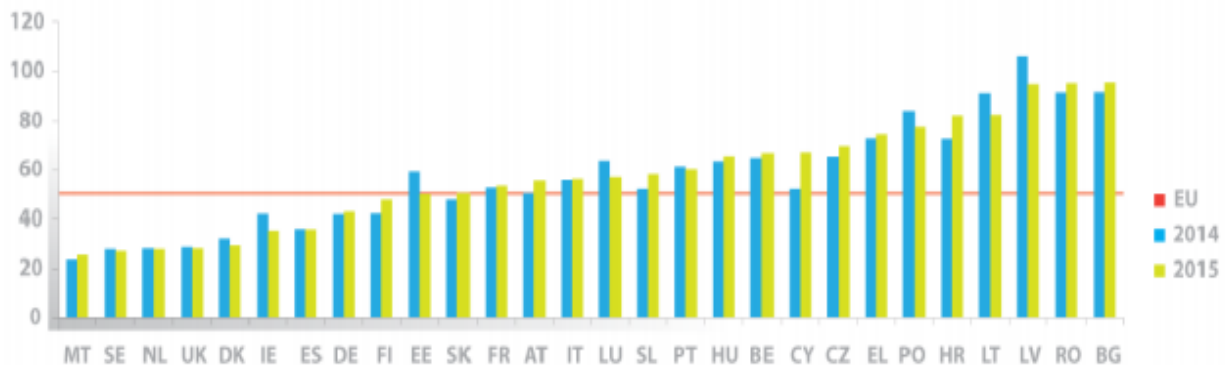
<sup>11</sup> Cuerden, R, Lloyd L, Wallbank, C, Seidl M (2015). *The potential for vehicle safety standards to prevent road deaths and injuries in Brazil*, PPR 766, Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne.

<sup>12</sup> Hynd, D; McCarthy, M; Carroll; JA; Seidl, S; Edwards M, Visvikis C, Reed R and A Stevens (2014), *Benefit and Feasibility of a Range of New Technologies and Unregulated Measures in the fields of Vehicle Occupant Safety and Protection of Vulnerable Road Users: Final Report*, TRL, Crowthorne.

<sup>13</sup> ETSC (2016). *How safe are new cars sold in the EU? An analysis of the market penetration of Euro-NCAP-rated cars*, Pin flash report 30, Brussels. March 2016

<sup>14</sup> Office of National Statistics (2015) *Travel Trends 2014*. International Passenger Survey, ONS, London.

## Fatalities per million inhabitants by country - 2014 and 2015



The above graph shows road fatalities per million people by individual European Union countries. The country-specific statistics reveal that the number of road fatalities still varies greatly across the EU.

In 2015, the UK featured in the set of countries with the lowest fatality rate per million inhabitants behind Sweden (27), the Netherlands (28) and Malta (26).

### FACTS

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) is an All-Party Parliamentary Group and a registered charity.

Its charitable objective is “To protect human life through the promotion of transport safety for the public benefit”. Its aim is to advise and inform members of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords on air, rail and road safety issues. It brings together safety professionals and legislators to identify research-based solutions to transport safety problems having regard to cost, effectiveness, achievability and acceptability. In recent years it has paid increasing attention to the links between transport safety, sustainability and public health.

For further information or to become a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group please contact [katy.harrison@pacts.org.uk](mailto:katy.harrison@pacts.org.uk) or visit the PACTS website at [www.pacts.org.uk](http://www.pacts.org.uk).

### ETSC

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe. Founded in 1993, ETSC provides an impartial source of expert advice on transport safety matters to the European Commission, the European Parliament, and Member States.

For further information, visit the ETSC website at <http://etsc.eu/>.