ABSTRACT
The first part of the presentation gives a detailed overview of the Hungarian road safety situation.
Not only the national data and time series will be analysed, but international comparisons will be made, too; and what is more, some road safety performance indicators will be applied in order to reveal the most important problems and trends. After a long deteriorating trend in the number of personal injury accidents and their victims, in 2008 a real „breakthrough” took place in Hungary: for the first time in the history of national statistics, the number of road accident fatalities was below 1000. In the first three quarters of 2009 the improving trend continued, the number of road fatalities was 103 less than in the same period of the previous year. It is very instructive to highlight the „package” of consistent and co-ordinated road safety measures introduced in 2008 to allow the drawing of conclusions on their effect on road safety situation.
The second part of the presentation will report on the main goal, areas and some details of the latest 3-year road safety action program.

1. ROAD SAFETY SITUATION IN HUNGARY

1.1 National data
After a long deteriorating trend in the number of personal injury accidents and their victims, in 2008 a real “breakthrough” took place in Hungary: for the first time since the introduction of the road accident statistics, the number of road fatalities was below 1000. It can be seen clearly in the Figure 1, where the numbers of motor vehicles and those of personal injury accidents and fatalities are illustrated. At the moment of writing this presentation we did not have final statistic data for the whole year of 2009. In the first three quarters of 2009 the improving trend continued. The number of personal injury accidents decreased by 6% in comparison with the same period of 2008. In the first nine months of 2009 the number of people killed in road traffic accidents was 615 which is 103 less than in the same period of the previous year.
1.2 The most important changes in legislation
The number of automatic speed cameras is continuously increasing in Hungary. The most important legal prerequisite of their application was the introduction of the owner’s responsibility. (Holló, Weidinger: 2009.1.) It means that the owner of the vehicle is responsible for the offences “committed” by the vehicle. This rule was introduced as of 1 January 2008, but it entered into force as of 1 May 2008.

As of 20 January 2008, the so-called “zero tolerance” against drinking and driving entered into force. It means that the driving license shall be withdrawn on the spot if someone drives under the influence of alcohol (even in case of a small amount of it). This measure was the reapplication of an earlier successful but abandoned practice.

Due to this measure, the number of personal injury accidents caused under the influence of alcohol decreased by 18% in 2008 in comparison with the previous year.

The point demerit system has been further developed. As of 1 January 2008, the system became stricter, which means that the number of demerit points increased in a differentiated way. So, the relationship between the severity of offences and the sanctions became closer.

From 1 August 2009 some sanctions became stricter (Holló, Weidinger: 2009.2.). Penalties have been significantly increased for the non-wearing of safety belt and the usage of the hand-held mobile phone while driving. For example, the penalty for using hand-held mobile phone while driving is 10,000.- HUF (approx. 40 Euro) inside built-up areas, 15,000.- HUF outside built-up areas (approx. 60 Euro) and 20,000.- HUF (approx. 80 Euro) on motorways. The penalties for non-usage of child restraint system (CRS) are 15,000 HUF/30,000.- HUF/45,000.- HUF, for non-usage of safety belt or crash helmet: 10,000.-/20,000.-/30,000.- HUF depending on road categories.

This change could be effective from the point of view of road safety, but it could be problematic as higher penalties will be imposed without application of the point demerit system. Here we need further research regarding the efficiency of this change in legislation.

1.3 Some performance indicators
The Figure 2 shows the development of safety belt wearing rates in Hungary (Véssey, 2009).
Hungary has reliable performance indicators on the rate of safety belts’ and daytime running lights’ (DRL) users. Time series of these indicators are available from 1992 or 1993, respectively. The trend in safety belt wearing shows almost the same changes on all road types and seat positions: declining rate from 1993 to 1999 and increasing rate from 2000 on until now (Holló, 2009). This positive development confirms that the road safety policy is on the right track regarding safety belt wearing. The increasing rates are the results of the further development of the point demerit system (at least by 1 August 2009), the co-ordinated awareness campaigns, the more intensive police enforcement and more serious consequences of non-wearing. In spite of positive development in recent years, there is a relatively great potential in the further increasing of the safety belt wearing rates. According to estimations based on the results of meta-analysis (Elvik; Vaa; 2004) additional:

- 108 fatalities,
- 369 serious injuries, and
- 478 slight injuries

could have been prevented in case of 95% safety belt wearing rates in Hungary (Holló, 2009). The usage of CRS shows also a great development, the rate of unprotected children decreased from 65% (1994) to 28% (2009), though on the other hand it means, that almost one third of the children travel still unprotected. (Figure 3) In the Figure 3 we have signed the most important changes of the related legislation too.
The rate of DRL users shows a continuously increasing trend in Hungary (Figure 4).

1.4 International comparison
The number of road fatalities decreased in the 27 EU member countries by 28% between 2001 and 2008 (from 54,000 to 39,000). In Hungary the amount of the decrease is only 20% (from 1,239 to 996), but is mainly due to the efforts made in 2008.

In the Figure 5 the change in the number of road fatalities between 2001 and 2008 can be compared.
If we investigate the short-term change (2007-2008) in the number of road fatalities, we can observe that Hungary was really successful in the field of road safety in the recent years (IRTAD, 2009) (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Short-term change (2007-2008) in the number of road fatalities

2. THE ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAM FOR 2008-2010
The Road Safety Action Program for 2008-2010 is a three-year project for road safety improvement. On the basis of the Action Program a yearly action plan has to be elaborated for the content and the schedule of the road safety work of the respective year. The program has been prepared in accordance with relevant community directives and strategic documents, as well as with national concepts and sector strategies approved or under implementation.
The Commission of the European Union in its White Paper on European Transport Policy sets the target that the number of road accident fatalities is necessary to reduce by 50% by 2010 as compared to 2001. Taking into account Hungarian circumstances, the objective of Hungarian Transport Policy for 2003-2015 is more modest, but at the same time it is more realistic: by 2010, the number of accidents with personal injuries and that of accident fatalities of the year 2001 shall be reduced by 30% and at least by 30%, respectively. Whereas the same figures by 2015 shall be mitigated by 50%, in compliance with the requirement of the EU White Paper. The strategy drawn up in the Action Program has also set the target laid down in the Hungarian Transport Policy.

![Diagram of Road Safety Action Program](image)

**Figure 7: The elaboration of the Road Safety Action Program 2008-2010**

This objective is the initial condition of Hungary’s road safety program determining its basic tasks. In 2007, Government Decision No. 2261/2007 (XII. 29.) was entailed on public duties relating to road safety improvement. Accordingly, relevant strategic trends for 2008-2010 needed to be laid down in the form of an action program. Government Decision No. 409/2007 (XII. 29.) provides for the financial resources required for the implementation of certain road safety tasks of the state as well as for the methods of utilization. The ministers responsible for the Ministry of Transport, Telecommunication and Energy (KHEM) and IRI (Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement) are authorized to exploit the resource.

By Governmental Resolution No. 2261/2007. (XII. 29.) the National Road Safety Program accepted in 1993 and being in force as a framework of the road safety activity lost its mandate. The Government charged the Minister of transport, telecommunication and energy with the co-ordination of public duties relating to road safety.

Basically, it is the unanimous opinion of professional circles that a single ministry is unable to treat the comprehensive problems of road safety; for the purpose of effective measures the co-ordinated collaboration of ministries and professional fields is indispensably necessary. Significant and constant reduction of the number of road traffic accidents and victims is only possible if there is a political will, and the high-level decision makers also accept the necessity to improve the situation of road safety.
In addition, the need arises for the following: analyses of the state of affairs, skilled experts, appropriate work-plans, well considered strategy, professional evaluation of interventions, independent steering/coordinating organisation and last but not least fair-sized funds available for road safety purposes.

2.1 Present situation
Road safety enjoys priority in the European Union since the turn of the millennium. As a result of large-scale measures related to highest political bodies of the community, between 2001 and 2008 the number of road accident fatalities dropped by about 28 %. However, this rate is not enough yet for the achievement of community targets. There are significant discrepancies among the member states, because the road safety situation in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is more unfavourable than the tendencies perceivable in the older members. Of course, it’s no wonder, since on the one hand their level of motorization is lower, and on the other hand they were confronted with the problem of road safety later.

In our country, the number of road traffic accidents and that of persons killed during the past 30 years, presents a diversified picture; at the same time certain trends can be demonstrated explicitly. After the successes of the nineties, subsequent to millennium, as a whole, road safety situation took an unfavourable turn, however in 2007 this negative tendency changed.

During the year 2007, the government developed the institutional system of road safety by the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee of specialised under-secretary of state level. In the field of countermeasures, there was no comprehensive collaboration until now among the competent governmental and non-governmental organisations. Today the Inter-ministerial Committee is competent to call this collaboration into existence.

2.2 Presentation of the so-called ”pillars”
In the course of actions addressed to road safety improvement, on the basis of situation analysis and international experience, this strategic document has been elaborated according to well-defined development strategy, using the so-called „pillars”.
A great majority of road traffic accidents has to do with the human factor. In addition to general enforcement of traffic rules, in order to moderate the occurrence of certain outstanding risk factors – i.e. inappropriate speed, non-usage of safety belts, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs – and to improve the safety of vulnerable road users, there is a requirement for appropriate revision of regulations, enhancement of controls, as well as for permanent and effective improvement of road users’ awareness as a result of which the positive change in their traffic behaviour can be achieved.

When speaking about road traffic and its related safety questions, one has to mention the problem of the infrastructure as well: the carriageway and its environment, as well as the vehicles and the traffic characteristics. These factors both in themselves and in their interaction have a road safety impact. In Hungary, the bearing capacity of the pavement structure is largely appropriate; however, it has to be improved for traffic safety reasons, too. The number of accident fatalities on public roads must be decreased by elimination of the high risk sites (so-called „black spots”), or by implementation of an infrastructure with „forgiving” road environment. However, the surplus in traffic volume due to continuous increase of the level of motorization enhances the probability of road accidents’ occurrence.

Legislation is the basis of all measures and the government’s main tool to address the situation. Legislation in road transport needs revision. This means: its simplification, development of a transparent structure for road users, elimination of internal and mutual contradictions and annulment of outdated rules, as well as making regular deregulation possible and compulsory. In the process of regulation, the development of the new system of road traffic rules and the reform of drivers’ education should be given priority. Regulation relating to shaping of the traffic order is also necessary to revise, and if appropriate, it shall be simplified and updated. Financial regulation according to demands of the safety-related activities would also be necessary, allocating the necessary resources to the implementation of actions and measures. Appropriate utilization of the available resources is required to be facilitated by the alteration of regulation. In order to enhance safety, regulation is also needed in some other areas: i.e. the system of regulations concerning the visibility conditions of road users, admitting that some public information has been transmitted in this issue, nevertheless the means of legislation could be even more efficient.

Using the means of enforcement, some accident causes, which can be related to human factors or to some technical reasons, can be prevented more efficiently. Besides the enforcement of general traffic rules, the number of fatal road traffic accidents can be reduced further under the effect of systematic controls dedicated outstandingly to the measuring of speed, to safety belt use, to the identification of drivers under the influence of alcohol or drugs, as well as to the enhancement of the safety of vulnerable road users or as a result of the deterrent effect of harmonized control actions of emphasized intensity.

When control methods are selected, the best European practices (best practices) and new technical achievements shall be taken into consideration.

Support provided to accident prevention activities needs also a change. Improvement of the method of accident data collection which could promote a more detailed exploration of the causes of road accidents, and a better understanding of the circumstances leading to them, is important from the aspect of basic data underlying the road safety related decisions, and for continuous enlargement of professional knowledge. Evaluation of previous programs, which have been prepared and introduced in the same subject, and the knowledge of those programs, which already proved successful abroad also facilitate increasing the efficiency of further design work. During the implementation of the Road Safety Action Program it is also necessary to create the new direction system of accident prevention.
3. CONCLUSIONS
In Hungary a new Road Safety Action Program has been elaborated for the years 2008-2010. A lot of legislative changes were introduced in 2008 and as a result of these a real “breakthrough” took place in Hungary: the number of road fatalities decreased by more than 19% within one year. The number of road fatalities was not under 1000 since the introduction of the road accident statistics in Hungary. Although the improvement is maybe too late in order to reach the quantitative goal of the EU, the results are promising and give a solid basis for further steps. Good news that the improvement can be observed in 2009 too: in the first three quarters of the year the number of road fatalities was 103 less than in the previous year.

REFERENCES
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