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**COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

**GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION ON IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY, 18 JANUARY 2001**

Transmitted by Finland

In 1993 and 1997, the government adopted resolutions on improving road safety. In the resolution of 1997, it set a target for 2005 to constantly improve road safety so that the number of fatalities and the most serious injuries will decrease as rapidly as in the 1990s and that Finland will approach the safety level of Sweden and Norway. By 2005, the annual number of traffic fatalities would be lower than 250.

From 1990 until 1996 road safety improved more rapidly than expected. This was a result of a systematic traffic safety work and economic recession that brought traffic growth to a standstill, after which it did not continue as rapidly as forecast. In 1997, traffic fatalities amounted to 438, the following year to 400 and in 1999 the number was 431. On the basis of preliminary data, 2000 appears to be a better year in that respect than 1999. However, the favourable trend has stopped and the target set for last decade to halve the number of fatalities will not be achieved.

On international standards, the safety level in the Nordic countries is high. In comparison between the Nordic countries, Finland is on a lower level than Sweden and Norway but somewhat higher than Denmark. If the target of less than 250 annual traffic fatalities by 2005 was achieved, Finland would reach a safety level that Sweden and Norway have not yet obtained.

Due to the stagnant safety trend of recent years, the action plan of the Road Safety Programme for 2001-2005 should be able to reduce, numerically, the number of traffic fatalities by 150 in order to ensure that the target set for 2005 can be reached. Even the total effect of the final plan, which will, numerically, reduce the number of traffic fatalities by 120, will require a considerable additional input to road safety work.

The government will re-estimate its road safety target set in 1997 so that in 2010 the number of traffic fatalities must be below 250. This new target would mean that in 2005, Finland would be on the same safety level that Sweden and Norway were at the end of the 1990s.

In the long term, the government will adopt a road safety vision for Finland, according to which the road transport system must be designed so that nobody should die or be seriously injured on roads. The aim of the Road Safety Programme is to create the right conditions for a continuous improvement of the transport system, with the target of no more than 100 traffic fatalities per year by around 2025.

After a preliminary reading in the Cabinet Finance Committee, the government has adopted a resolution, which requires that the following measures be prepared and taken in 2001-2005 in order to achieve the objectives set for road safety:

### **Curbing traffic growth**

1. In order to curb the traffic growth, land-use planning and vacant land policies will favour integrated construction and urban structures adapted to public transport, walking and cycling. Competitiveness of public transport will be improved particularly in areas where it is a genuine alternative for a private car. Walking and cycling will be promoted with a special view to their safety. Road safety aspects will be considered in provincial, municipality and city plans. New instructions will be prepared on how to consider these aspects.

2. The selection of investment projects will focus more closely on funding for projects that promote public transport, walking and cycling, as such schemes usually rely on government funding. In impact evaluation of the projects, more attention will be paid to examining the targets of transport policy.

### **Utilising technology effectively**

3. It will be ensured that new technical systems and equipment do not increase the risk of traffic accidents and that the safety requirements are met in all respects before they are taken into general use. This calls for research input as well as development of legislation and other legislative measures and standards.

### **Appreciation of road safety issues**

4. The long-term road safety vision requires that road safety will be the primary goal of road transport policy. The authorities will commit themselves to common goals and prepare their action plans accordingly. Systematic training of the decision-makers, designers and persons carrying out and involved in the safety work will ensure that ideas about safety will be put into practice. More resources will be reserved for traffic safety work in both state and municipal administrations.

5. Transport operators and other actors in business life will be provided with means to incorporate road safety into quality systems. Public administration will be a pioneer demanding safety from passenger and freight transport.
6. The role of traffic safety work will be strengthened by incorporating it into design and quality systems in land-use and transport and by training designers to specialise in different fields. Road safety audit will be introduced on various levels of planning and in implementation in both planning and road and transport design.
7. Coverage and representativeness of traffic accident statistics and their availability for the needs of road traffic safety will be improved.
8. Lifelong traffic safety education for everyone will ensure that road users have sufficient information and ability to travel safely. The status of road safety education will be ensured at schools.
9. The Contribution of the police to traffic control will be gradually increased so that it will be on the same level as in the beginning of the 1990s. Speed control will be enhanced so that minor speeding will be dealt with as well.

### **Improving road safety in built-up areas**

10. Children and especially elderly people, who get around as much on foot and by bicycle or moped as by car, will be given primary consideration in design of the traffic environment. A traffic environment designed on the basis of knowledge and abilities of the most vulnerable road users will enable safe travel by everyone.
11. In order to improve safety for non-motorized traffic in built up-areas, more progressive speed restrictions will be adopted. In order to support the limits, they will be accompanied by road design modifications, which will first be introduced at crossing locations popular with children and the elderly. On existing and planned roads with a speed limit of 50 or 60 km/h, places where non-motorized and motorized traffic routes cross will be built to be safe. More routes for non-motorized traffic in built-up areas will be constructed. At the same time, the number of crossing points with motorized traffic as well as dangerous situations with the non-motorized traffic will be minimised. Non-motorized traffic will be made safer by reducing the speed limit on public roads, if there are villages or roadside settlements.
12. Regulations on the use of reflectors will be amended to also include built-up areas and illuminated streets.
13. Opportunities to introduce municipal speed surveillance to complement the surveillance carried out by the police will be looked into.

### **Influencing drivers**

14. In order to reduce the use of intoxicating substances by all drivers, the possibility to reduce the drunken driving limit from 0.5 to 0.2 will be investigated. Possibilities to introduce a zero limit for drugs will also be considered.

15. The use of safety equipment will be increased through educational and surveillance methods. The compulsory use of safety equipment will be extended to cover all vehicle types and taxi drivers. A regulation, which will be formulated as a recommendation, will be prepared on the use of cycle helmets.

16. Opportunities will be improved for society to intervene in cases where a car driver endangers his or her own safety or that of other road users. Health checks will be made more effective by creating a system for monitoring health and driving ability. The opportunity to improve the flow of information from general practitioners to driving licence authorities regarding diseases that affect driving ability will be explored. A system in which general practitioners specialise in driving-related matters will be developed for problematic cases of assessing driving ability.

17. An approval procedure for telematics systems, equipment and services installed and used in vehicles will be created. Legislation that bans drivers from using mobile phones without a hands-free facility will be prepared and the use of other telematic equipment while driving will also be regulated.

18. The system of dealing with high-risk drivers will be further improved. Legislation on driving bans will be amended: the point when a driving ban is discussed will be reconsidered, driving bans will be sufficiently prolonged and they will apply to professional drivers in the same way as other drivers.

19. Elderly drivers will be provided with tailor-made information and training. It will be ensured that those elderly people who are no longer able or willing to drive will have a choice of other mobility opportunities.

20. A comprehensive target-oriented programme aimed at lowering the accident risk of young drivers will be prepared. It will involve driver training for the driving test, driver examination, subsequent driver training, and the use of any guiding and restrictive measures concerning the granting of a new driving licence.

21. A health care system for professional drivers to monitor their health and driving ability will be created. Opportunities to prepare legislation under which repeated disconnection of tachographs and speed limiters could carry a punishment for both the driver and the registered vehicle user and result in cancellation of the transport licence will be considered.

### **Reducing running off the road accidents and head-on collisions and minimizing their consequences**

22. The system of speed limits will be reviewed in accordance with road safety considerations. The need to extend road-specific speed limits to cover roads outside the main road network will be examined. On the basis of that examination a decision will be made on general speed limits. At the same time, the regulatory framework for speed limits on public roads will be reviewed. As safety at wintertime has not adequately improved, extension of winter speed limits will be considered. Opportunities to introduce adjusted speed limits on busy main roads will be looked into in order to decrease driving speeds so that they meet road conditions.

23. Safety on main roads will be significantly improved. Efforts will be made to regulate land uses, which cause safety problems along main roads, through cooperation between municipalities and provinces. Emphasis will be given to improving safety on single-carriageway main roads by structural means. New solutions such as roads with median barriers will be tested.

24. Automatic speed surveillance will be expanded to cover at least 800 kilometres of main roads. In order to make the surveillance more effective and comprehensive, opportunities to amend the current legislation so that penalties for minor speeding are imposed on registered vehicle users will be explored.

### **Regional and local road safety work**

25. Adequate resources will be allocated to regional and local road safety work in order to support municipal road safety work and to respond to cooperation needs. Opportunities to include road safety work in the legislative duties of state provincial offices will be considered.

26. State provincial offices will review their road safety plans and intensify their implementation on the basis of this resolution particularly for those measures that may be applied to regional and local work. An important duty is to motivate and support the work in municipalities. State provincial offices will monitor the implementation of the resolution within their province and report on it to the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

27. Measures proposed for regional and local levels call for appreciation for road safety among municipal decision-makers and planners. Road safety must be a primary aim in transport planning and should be incorporated into municipal quality and planning systems. The municipalities will set a target to prepare an up-to-date traffic safety plan and implement it in cooperation with various sectors. Citizens will be encouraged to take part in traffic safety work and municipalities will enhance cooperation with civic organisations and residents.

### **Implementing the safety measures, requirements for implementation and monitoring**

28. The Road Safety Programme for 2001-2005 presents the measures recommended by the Consultative Committee on Road Safety, and the total costs and impacts of the programme. The government considers it important that the authorities, organisations and municipalities will implement the Programme as extensively as possible taking into account the considerations of this resolution and that they will, for their part, organise the monitoring of safety measures.

29. The government considers it important to devote resources within the administrative sector to measures set forth in this resolution. Furthermore, it considers it important that all contributors to road safety work will appreciate the work more.

30. The Consultative Committee on Road Safety subject to the Ministry of Transport and Communications will coordinate the implementation of the Road Safety Programme. The Ministry will report to the government, when necessary, on the proceedings of the programme and achievement of road safety objectives.

For further information: [www.mintc.fi](http://www.mintc.fi) (Traffic Safety/ Road Safety Programme 2001-2005)

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