

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe



## Conference on Improving Road Traffic Safety in South-Eastern Europe Setting Regional and National Road Traffic Casualty Reduction Targets

Hosted by Evia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association with the support of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece

25-26 June 2009, Halkida, Greece



### **The Road Safety Conference Halkida, Greece – 25 June, 2009 Eva Molnar**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

I would like to thank the Evia Chamber of Commerce and industry, the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association, and in particular President Simosis and President Spanoudakis and their teams for hosting this conference under such excellent conditions. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece, and particularly Mrs. Tsaga, Director General of the Ministry, and her team for their support. Similarly, I would like to thank the basketball players and Mr. George Vassilakopoulos, President of FIBA Europe and of the Hellenic Basket Ball Federation for their enthusiastic support to changing drivers' behavior and thus improve road safety.

#### **The road safety crisis is severe**

With more than 700 million cars on the roads today and with the perspective that by 2030 there will be 2 billion, we can be sure that motorization level will continue to grow at a high speed all over the world. Consequently traffic will continue to increase, and driving conditions will become more complex. Should we have an excellent road safety situation today, we would need to be worried for its future simply due to the growth of traffic.

However road safety is already in a crisis today and the future is far more appalling.

Each traffic crash represents painful loss, both human and financial. The worldwide annual toll of 1.3 million deaths and 50 million injuries due to road crashes, and the speed of its growth are unacceptably high.

South-East Europe (SEE) is disproportionately suffering from these world epidemics. Among the generic reasons why this region is so hard hit by road safety problems we see the following:

- 80-90% of road crashes are in low- and middle-income countries: SEE has mostly low- and middle-income countries

- Traffic related deaths are forecast to rise by two thirds in low- and middle-income countries by 2020 unless effective action is taken
- By 2015 road crashes may become the main cause of disability among children and youth around the world
- The economic costs of road traffic deaths and injuries in low- and middle-income countries are estimated at \$65 billion per annum
- The global cost of road traffic injuries is predicted to increase by more than 65% by 2020 and, by 2030, road traffic deaths and injuries will be the fourth major cause of loss of healthy years for the general population, and the number two cause of death for men.

In addition, safe roads are also efficient roads which reduce costs to commerce associated with delays and loss. Transportation costs in South-East Europe, at the periphery of the European Union, are higher than in the other European Union countries partly as a result of low investment in efficiency and safety.

Most important, however, is the fact that these cold statistics hide an enormous human tragedy. Behind each of these numbers is a family with lost hope of a better future; children that must fight harder to get access to opportunities because of their disabilities, mothers that will need to work two or three jobs because their husbands are dead or disabled.

### **A Shared Responsibility**

Improving road safety is a shared responsibility. Reducing these numbers requires concerted action by several sectors. Leadership and clear lines of institutional responsibility and accountability are crucial.

Road safety is a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary issue. In this regard we should see to that:

- Roads are better designed to make them safer;
- Only safe vehicles are let into traffic and for that periodic vehicle inspections, as well technological development of vehicles are critical;
- Good traffic laws which protect are enforced and, if need be, road users are sanctioned;
- Information is developed and disseminated to educate road users about safety; and
- The availability and quality of public health surveillance and emergency response systems are improved (see the physical, institutional and operational aspects in table 1).

In addition, there are some common denominators that can enhance the impact of individual sectoral interventions by the traffic police, transport, health and education. Among these common denominators perhaps the most important factor that leads to real changes is the need for a champion, for a leader with charisma, political clout, managerial capacities and commitment to change.

This will not be easy to achieve. It is a challenge, however, to which we must all rise.

Governments must join the private sector, academia, and civil society in forming effective coalitions to help design and implement national programs. There are already many examples of successful programs and partnerships, some of which we will be hearing about in this workshop. Some examples include:

- The introduction and enforcement of seat belts;
- Campaigns against drinking and driving and drug use and driving;
- Improved driver training and vehicle safety, etc.

Many of these programs and partnerships benefit from the assistance provided by international organizations, like the UN Regional Commissions, by NGOs, civil societies, academia etc. that are committed to creating and disseminating road safety best practices.

Changing behaviors is crucial. There are good examples also in this area and I am sure we shall hear presentations about this as well.

### **Role of the Transport Sector**

In the UNECE region, the transport sector is intimately linked to road safety. Improving transport infrastructure not only favors logistics and facilitates trade; it represents a contribution towards improving affordability, efficiency and safety.

The bad news is that investment in land transport is exposed to the consequences of the economic downturn, of the lack of funding. Partly because of this low investment level, transportation costs are significantly higher than in the developed world and in many competing emerging economies.

Expanding physical infrastructure – including footpaths, bikeways, bus routes, and roads - and providing affordable public transport are fundamental to improving the mobility of the poor and their access to economic and social opportunities.

### **Awareness of the road safety issue at a global level**

Apart from in high-income countries, interventions have so far failed to match the severity of the road safety crisis. The growing awareness of safety issues brought about the decision to set up a global consultation mechanism, the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC). The independent Commission for Global Road Safety, chaired by Lord Robertson, further contributes to raising the awareness and the profile of road safety actions.

### **Role of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and the UNECE Transport Division**

The Transport Division of UNECE was set up soon after the Second World War and, consequently, its main responsibilities were to facilitate the free movement of goods and people across borders. This remains our core task even today, though ways and means to serve this goal are different.

Over the past 60 years UNECE has serviced debates leading to over 50 international legal instruments, conventions, agreements, resolutions, and recommendations in different fields of transport. Several of these agreements have been endorsed by countries outside the UNECE region. The Conventions on Road Traffic, 1949 and 1968, and the Conventions on Road Signs and Signals, 1968, are applied on nearly all continents. 68 countries have joined the TIR Convention. The rules for dangerous goods transport, as well as the vehicle construction regulations, have already become global. We can safely say that the endeavours of UNECE to create the international regulatory architecture for surface transport have been fruitful not just within, but also beyond our region.

UNECE legal instruments are regional and global public goods for the benefit of all countries. Similar to any asset, they require proper management - updating, improving, modifying - which is part of our daily life. The intensive regulatory work has been supplemented by serving as a gateway for information sharing about best practices in all these areas. The wealth of information about national and local solutions offers a strong platform for technical assistance to countries in transition. And with the fast economic, social and technological changes in the world of today, demand for timely and efficient information sharing is growing.

UNECE Working Parties have developed legal instruments and programs related to all areas of road safety. Legal instruments and programs address the three main road safety aspects:

- infrastructure
- vehicles
- human aspects.

The UNECE Road Safety Forum (WP.1) has introduced a reform program to enhance its capacity to help solve the road safety crisis. As a result e.g. this September the first international meeting of the representatives of the National Road Safety Councils will take place in Geneva. During the next session of the “UNECE Road Safety Forum” (WP.1) that will be on 22-25 September, there will not only be the traditional working party meeting, but also a roundtable for policy leaders and technical experts to discuss specific topics in depth.

Dear Participants,

You are cordially invited to both the working party meeting and to the round table. I hope to see you there again!

Coming back to the road safety work of UNECE, you also need to know that UNECE has added other – often forgotten topics – to its road safety agenda; e.g. the provisions for the transport of special cargo, like dangerous goods. In addition, with intensive support to transport network development we contribute to better value for money from transport assets that will be developed according to expectations for sustainable development; for sustainable development that requires improvements in road safety and environment protection. We should not forget that often one measure, one intervention, can serve two purposes, particularly when they are well designed. Well maintained roads and efficient operation of traffic police are crucial for road safety, as well as for facilitation of international transport and trade.

### **UNDA Road safety project**

One of the **flagship programs** in this area is the road casualty target setting project. This is a global project with the five regional commissions’ (RC) involvement and cooperation. In this respect I would like to draw your attention to the benefits of the increased cooperation among the RCs, the main benefit being access to worldwide best practices.

Finally, with regard to the UNECE work I would like to draw your attention to a new series of publication; the UNECE Transport Review, the first edition of which was dedicated to road safety. Thus if you have not read it, I would like to invite you to visit our website and download the articles that are most interesting for you.

**In closing**, I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to a very interesting and stimulating discussion over the next two days on how to improve safety on our region's roads.

Thank you

and

see you also in September, in Geneva at the next session of the UNECE Road Safety Forum!

Table 1. The Road Safety Matrix: Key aspects of road safety (Eva Molnar)

	<b>Physical aspects</b>	<b>Institutional and operational aspects (incl. the check of the relevant regulatory framework and its enforcement)</b>
<b>All factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ National road safety strategy with clearing safety improvement targets</li> <li>➤ Regulations</li> <li>➤ Road Safety statistics published at national and international levels</li> <li>➤ ITS applications</li> <li>➤ Communications and PR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>National Traffic Safety Council</b></li> <li>➤ <b>NGOs dedicated and enabled to address safety issues and ready to be the “watch dog”</b></li> <li>➤ <b>National Statistics Office supports road safety statistics and follows international methodology</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Government level champion for ITS deployment for road safety improvement</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Information channels in place between the media and key organizations (e.g. Road Inform)</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Proper regulatory framework based on accession to International Legal Instruments and national laws in place</b></li> </ul>
<b>Human behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Drivers training courses and conditions for a driver’s license</li> <li>➤ Speed limits</li> <li>➤ Drink and drive habits</li> <li>➤ Emergency and post-crash care</li> <li>➤ Damage mitigation</li> <li>➤ security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Good Governance at the police (how to convert a corrupt police into traffic facilitator?)</li> <li>➤ Accreditation system for drivers’ schools</li> <li>➤ Data bank for traffic accidents</li> <li>➤ Rules and practices for traffic accident investigation</li> <li>➤ Public health</li> <li>➤ Education at schools on participation in traffic</li> <li>➤ Overall motorization culture</li> <li>➤ The insurance system (incl. third party liability, green card system)</li> <li>➤ Well-functioning judiciary system</li> <li>➤ Information on stolen vehicles (incl. international information sharing)</li> </ul>
<b>Vehicle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Vehicle construction</li> <li>➤ Quality of vehicles – roadworthiness tests, green card etc.</li> <li>➤ Co-existence or separation of motorized and non-motorized vehicles (e.g. donkey/horse driven carts from cars and trucks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The role and capacity of and good governance at the transport technical inspectorate (incl. Standards)</li> <li>➤ Market access conditions in the car repair stations industry with liabilities</li> <li>➤ Accreditation of garages licensed to carry out periodical technical inspections</li> <li>➤ Relationship between the annual road registration fee and the technical inspection</li> <li>➤ Admission to profession and market access rules for commercial road freight and passenger operators</li> </ul>
<b>Road and other infrastructure related factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Roads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Black spots</li> <li>- Road surface</li> <li>- Road markings</li> <li>- Traffic signs</li> <li>- Extra lanes for slower vehicles, barriers in mountainous areas, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Emergency call system</li> <li>➤ hospitals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Capacity of and good governance at the road administration (data bank, budget)</li> <li>➤ Traffic rules</li> </ul>