road traffic
road safety
Cenral Europe

Miroslava MIKUSOVA[1]

ROAD SAFETY ISSUES IN THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The paper describes the current situation in the area of European road safety and draws attention to the adverse developments in several Central European countries. It contains recommendations for networking and building multi-stakeholder partnerships for road safety at regional, national and international level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Each year around one million people are killed and 50 million people injured on roads around the world and more than 40,000 people lose their lives on Europe's roads.

There is universal recognition of the tremendous global burden resulting from road traffic crashes, and that road traffic injuries constitute a major but neglected public health problem that has significant consequences in terms of mortality and morbidity and considerable social and economic costs. According to the WHO and the World Bank [1], a multi-sectoral approach is required to successfully address this problem. While the number of deaths and seriously injured people is falling, studies have shown that faster progress is possible if alleffective means are applied (ETSC, PIN 2010).

Road crashes and road crash injury are no longer seen as "an inevitable outcome of road transport" but rather as "largely preventable and predictable". A core component of this "new paradigm" is the recognition that road safety is a multisectoral issue and a public health issue – all sectors need to be fully engaged in responsibility, activity and advocacy for road crash injury prevention. Good infrastructure and vehicles must be complemented with commonsense everyday human behaviours and effective trauma care services.

2. ROAD SAFETY IN EUROPE

Some 80% of Europeans live in cities. European cities are suffering heavily from congestion high levels of pollution, noise, and road crashes, largely caused by excessive use of the private car. Road strategy depends greatly on how communities choose to manage their transport systems in relation to their overall health and safety objectives and how they are balanced with economic, social and environmental considerations. The growing trend away from public transport, walking and cycling towards motorized transport has marked a move towards modes and means of transport that pose comparatively higher costs to society economically, environmentally, and in health terms.

[1] *Ing. Miroslava Mikušová, PhD., University of Zilina, Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications, Univerzitna 8215/1, 01026 Žilina, Slovakia, Tel.: +421 41 513 3554, mikusova@fpedas.uniza.sk*

In 2007, for the first time since 2001, the number of people killed on European roads has not decreased in comparison with the previous year [4]. Situation differs between countires.

In Western Europe the number of road traffic fatalities declined in 2007 by 1.2%. However this decrease was accompanied by a rise in both the number of casualties (+1.4%) and the number of accidents (+5.6%). These data are strongly influenced by the performance of Turkey which has shown significant increases in all three indicators. In 2007, only the United Kingdom and Greece recorded drops in the number of fatalities, casualties and injury accidents. At the same time Denmark, Finland and Sweden have seen their road fatalities increase by 32.7%, 13.1% and 5.8% respectively.

Tab. 1. Road fatalities in Western Europe (2007)

Western Europe	**Number of fatalities**	**2007/2006 (%)**
Austria	691	-5.3
Belgium	1 067	-0.2
Denmark	406	32.7
Finland	380	13.1
France	4 620	-1.9
Germany	4 949	-2.8
Greece	1 578	-4.8
Iceland	15	-51.6
Luxembourg	43	19.4
Malta	12	9.1
Netherlands	791	-2.5
Norway	233	-3.7
Portugal	854	0.5
Spain	3 823	-6.8
Sweden	471	5.8
Switzerland	384	3.8
Turkey	5 004	8.0
United Kingdom	3 059	-7.2
TOTAL	**28 380**	**-1.2**

Source [3]

In Central and Eastern Europe the number of road fatalities increased by 6.4% in 2007. This result is all the more disappointing since the region recorded at the same time strong increases in the number of casualties (+6.4%) and number of accidents (+6.7%). With the exception of Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania, which show a drop in road fatalities, casualties and injury accidents, all other countries have been confronted with a rise in the number of fatalities on their roads.

Tab.2. Road fatalities in Central and Eastern Europe (2007)

Central and Eastern Europe	Number of fatalities	2007/2006 (%)
Albania	384	38.6
Bulgaria	1 006	-3.5
Croatia	619	0.8
Czech Republic	1 222	15.0
Estonia	196	-3.9
Hungary	1 232	-5.4
Latvia	419	2.9
Lithuania	740	-2.6
Poland	5 583	6.5
Romania	2 794	12.8
Serbia	962	6.9
Slovakia	661	8.7
Slovenia	293	11.8
TOTAL	**16 284**	**6.4**

Source [3]

While many western European countries are making continuous progress in reducing the number of lives lost, fatality rates in many Central Europe countires remain high and in some they are even increasing. In Central Europe space the number of road fatalities increased by 6% in 2007. With the exception Hungary, which shows a drop in road fatalities, casualties and injury accidents, all other countries have been confronted with a rise in the number of fatalities on their roads. Countries like the Czech Republic and Ukraine saw their fatalities increase by 15% and 38.1% respectively.

According to the International Transport Forum (OECD, 2008) "Central and Eastern Europe both show significant increases in fatalities. Rapid motorisation is a factor in the region but the figures show the lack of continuous and determined political effort in these countries".

Central Europe clearly shows a higher number of road fatalities per million inhabitants than Western Europe. Within Central Europe, the highest value is observed in Poland (143 road fatalities per million inhabitants), followed by Slovenia (129), Hungary (128) and the Czech Republic (126) compared to Italy (96), Austria (88), and Germany (62).

In Central Europe the road safety challenge has reached a magnitude that even puts the overall competitiveness, the attractiveness as location for working and investments as well as the quality of life in the most seriously affected parts of the cooperation area at considerable risk. Road crashes have a severe negative impact on the social and economic situation in these countries, costing up to 2% or more of the GDP.

3. IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

It is important aim to improve the quality of life for citizens and communities by preventing road crash, road trauma and economic loss. One of possible aproaches is

generate a continuous cooperation among different levels of administration on the one hand, and different local entities on the other, to build up a Network made of vertical and horizontal connections.

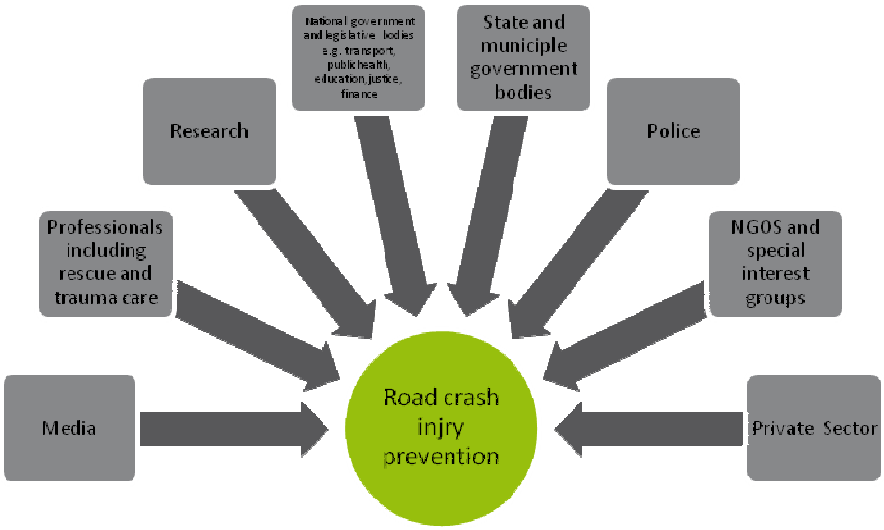

Figure 1 Types of stakeholders that can support road crash injury prevent efforts

Multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together different sectors and disciplines within the framework of a targeted "safe system approach" offer the greatest possibility of innovative, comprehensive and sustainable solutions to road crash injury prevention. This partnership can unite working teams around the main risk factors in road crashes and road crash injury— from the highest levels of government to local schools and villages — toward sustainable, locally- owned and managed solutions.

3.1 Roles, benefits and responsibilities

The benefits and opportunities generated by collaboration could be numerous, including

- building synergies and reducing overlap in activities and expenditure,
- ensuring programmes are in the public interest as the opinions of many stakeholders are incorporated,
- stronger more comprehensive programmes that have a broader geographical scope and increased chance of impact,
- improved stakeholder relations and improved stakeholder knowledge that provide long-term benefits for them
- community increasing sustainability as different partners share responsibilities for implementation and funding.

Multi- stakeholder partnerships for road safety can have diverse objectives. They can bring stakeholders together to develop and implement a comprehensive intervention on a

single issue, such as seat-belts and child restraints. They can also bring stakeholders together to plan, monitor and evaluate a comprehensive multi-issue road safety programme. They can function for a limited time – such as for a single project – or longer term – such as to coordinate a multi-year single issue intervention or programme. They can be formed at different levels of government – national, regional and municipal. In all cases, they should be guided by a lead government agency in charge of overseeing road safety that will have the ultimate authority to act on recommendations of the group.

At the national level, a multi-stakeholder partnership may have the primary role of discussing and advising on policy issues and providing guidance, resources and networks to assist projects at the regional and or municipal level.

Regional and especially municipal level partnerships may be more operational. They can bring stakeholders together to design targeted multi-stakeholder programmes that are in line with national policy objectives and monitor and evaluate progress.

3.2 Networking as one of the most important aims of the project SOL

SOL is a project co financed by the European Programme of Territorial Cooperation "Central Europe". It represents a significant regional road safety programme and it will contribute to the global road safety with critical knowledge, experience and tools This project involves 8 countries of Central Europe area: Germany, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. The project aims at giving professional qualities, experiences and tools to local public administrations to increase the road safety in their competence areas.

SOL is linked to global work - it seeks to assist communities in CEUS implementing the main recommendations of the World report on road crash injury prevention (World Bank), including an overall increase of political commitment towards road safety, developing activities based on evidence rather than "ad hoc", developing strategies and action plans, allocating resources to the main road safety risks, implementing projects, monitoring and evaluating impacts.

Materials and tools produced within SOL will help benefit road safety in the region and can inform and contribute to similar action in other regions of the world.

SOL also brings significant and needed funding towards an increasingly deadly and common public health issue in the CEUS region and world.

The Work Programme is designed to generate a continuous cooperation among different levels of administration on the one hand, and different local entities from different CEE Countries on the other, to build up a NetWork made of vertical and horizontal connections.

Firstly, a top-down input is required, as the SOL experts team must reach the local communities, recognize and choose the most active ones, in order to supply them with the necessary professional skills and tools to get the awareness of the focal issues concerning their own community.

Secondly, the local communities, once endowed with the above described skills and tools, will be fostered to get started a stable connection with the upper level in order to communicate the main discovered needs (also thanks to the skills built in the top-down stage) and get an active role in building an AP and a consequent pilot action, with a bottom-up input. This cross of top-down and bottom-up inputs is going to create a vertical network

made of interconnected realities, in permanent cooperation, sharing useful data and knowledge.

On the other side, local communities and the technical team, are going to networking from an horizontal point of view, with local communities from different CEE countries, implementing a real transnational cooperation in the field of road safety, sharing data and successful practices in order to reduce the number of fatalities on the CEE roads.

4. CONCLUSION

Global, European and regional examples show that road crash and road trauma prevention can be sustainable. It is need build on good practice experiences and facilitate long term measurable improvement in the Central European Space by empowering local communities and local citizens with the knowledge, skills and networks they need to work to make their roads safer.

Many countries show similar weaknesses in dealing with road safety issues on the political and technical levels. Political commitment, professional capacity and institutional structures are not robust enough to stem the growing number of deaths and injuries from road crashes. Therefore a transnational working approach is favored in order to facilitate mutual learning processes that envisage a higher level of professionalism in dealing with this crucial issue.

Government, business and civil society need to collaboratively and actively participate in programmes for the prevention of road traffic injury through injury surveillance and data collection, research on risk factors of road traffic injuries, implementation and evaluation of interventions for reducing road traffic injuries, provision of pre-hospital and trauma care and mental-health support for traffic-injury victims, and advocacy for prevention of road traffic injuries. The role of networking and building multi-stakeholder partnerships actually seems to be crucial.

LITERATURE

[1] *Project SOL – Save our lives A Comprehensive Road Safety Strategy for Central Europe*
[2] *EUROPEAN ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME:* Halving the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010: A shared responsibility
[3] *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2004.
[4] *Towards Zero - Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach.* Transport research Centre, OECD/ITF 2008.
[5] *The Latest News on Road Crasehes is Depressing* [online]. <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Press/PDFs/2008-11-20.pdf>
[6] *3rd Road Safety Action Programme* [online]. <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/observatory/policy/action_programme.htm>
[7] www.erscharter.eu
[8] www.internationaltransportforum.org
[9] www.grsproadsafety.org