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17–19 May 2018, Zadar, Croatia

Road and Rail Infrastructure V

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ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Although Romania joined the European Union in 2007 and adhered to its regulations regarding road safety, until 2016 there was a lack and disparity in the legislation on this field. Romania was one of the fewest countries in EU without an assumed National Road Safety Strategy, and even though a National Law on Road Safety Audit was adopted in 2008, it was hardly applied. Thus, the results of the policy gap can be clearly noticed in road safety statistics. Romania is one of the worst performing countries in EU on road safety, but hopefully, after previous years actions, this will change. The end of 2015 brought Romania a new government, with an intermediary and non-politic status, a technocrat government with specialists from all fields of interests. One of the priorities of this executive was road safety, especially with the two main topics: National Road Safety Strategy, and its Action Plan (which were in a draft status since 2010 and were never adopted by the Romanian Government); Law no. 265/2008 on road infrastructure safety management, which regulates Road Safety Audits and Inspections (a law with many flaws, which needed to be corrected in order to be properly applied).

Keywords: road safety, road safety audit, road safety inspection, auditor, national strategy

1 Introduction

During the last decades, the European Union (EU) has admitted the increasing importance of road safety, forming also an answer through directive 2008/98/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council from November 19th, 2008 [1], regarding the management of this field. Also, the United Nations (UN), through the resolution adopted on March 2nd, 2010, recognizes the gravity of the problem and declares the decade 2011-2020, “Decade of action in road safety”. World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank have estimated an alarming increase of fatalities from traffic accidents by 2020, if the politicians and those who activate in the safety of roads will not take a series of additional measures to improve infrastructure safety. Thereby, it was proposed to consider as a public health issue the fatality/ severe injure from traffic accidents, along with cardiovascular problems, cancer and strokes. As the risk of being involved in a road accident can be diminished through different measures, this means that they can also be prevented by using preventive and corrective measure, educational or engineering ones, reducing this way the number of victims.

The measures previously implemented for increasing the safety of road users didn't have the expected result, and the ambitious objective to reduce to half the number of fatalities from traffic accidents during 2001-2010 in EU wasn't accomplished (objective which was not considered in the public affairs of Romania). The number of fatalities from road accidents in UE decreased with only 35 % by 2010. Thus, the European Commission decided to elaborate new orientations for the period 2011-2020 for a safe European environment, maintaining the main objective, of reducing by 50 % the fatalities compared to previous period of time.

Appreciating the evolution of specific dynamic indicators in the period 2000-2011, we can see that since 2004, especially in 2007 and 2008, Romania recorded increases in the number of

serious road accidents, fatalities or serious injured persons, having a negative contribution to the unfulfillment of the proposed target for 2001 – 2010 by the EU. Romania did not have long-term strategy on road safety, but it took over the European goal of reducing the number of deaths with the accession to the EU in 2007.

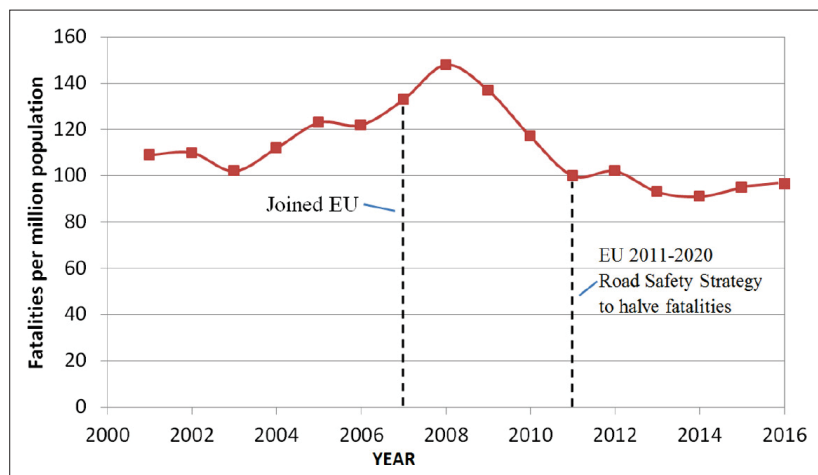


Figure 1 Romania's road fatalities per million population 2001-2016 [2]

Unfortunately, Romania has continued to remain for many years one of the worst performing EU countries regarding key road safety indicators. This trend is worrisome particularly now that the number of fatalities has started to increase over the last few years. While Romania's road fatality rate has improved over the last decade from 130 fatalities per million of population in 2007 to 97 in 2016, unfortunately, the total annual number of road deaths has increased over the last three years from 1,818 fatalities in 2014 to 1,913 fatalities in 2016, making Romania the second worst performing country in the EU in road safety in 2016. [3] The economic cost of fatal road crashes in Romania is estimated to be around 1.2 billion euro (5.4 billion RON), which is a huge burden to Romania's economy and society. [2]

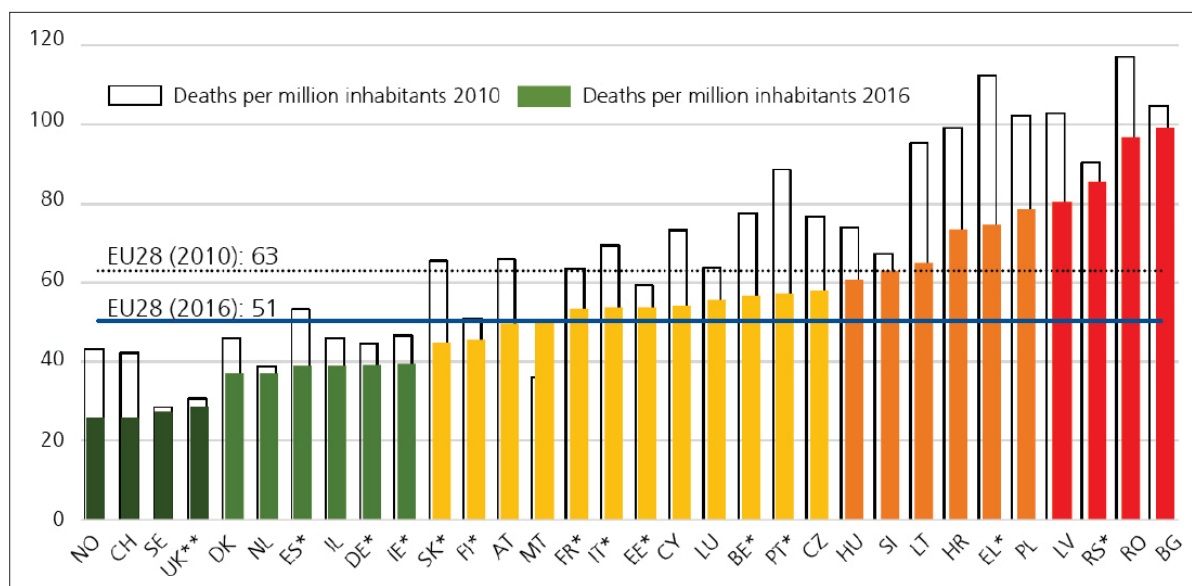


Figure 2 Road deaths per million inhabitants in EU in 2016, compared to 2010 [3]

In this situation, and considering the context of adopting a new Action Programme 2011-2020 by the EU, programme which maintained the reduction goal of 50 % of serious injured and fatalities from road accident in EU, Romania was forced to propose a long-term strategy and to take action to reduce the number of fatalities according to the European objective.

2 Institutional Framework

Currently, Romania has legislation and government institutions in place that are covering almost the entire spectrum of road safety, namely government authorities. The respective government authorities are: the Inter-Ministerial Council for Road Safety (CISR), the Permanent Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Road Safety (DPISR), a Road Safety Directorate within CNAIR, the Romanian Road Authority (ARR), the Romanian Automotive Register (RAR), and the Road Directorate of the Romanian Police (DR), the Directorate for Driving Licensing and Licence Plates (DRPCIV), and the State Inspectorate for Road Transport Control (ISCTR). Despite the various government institutions that have been mentioned, there is an urgent need for a more proactive lead agency to better coordinate such decentralised road safety activity and facilitate more integrated inter-agency co-operation and communication.

The Inter-Ministerial Council for Road Safety (CISR) is a governmental consultative body addressing road safety policy aspects at the national level, providing an institutional framework for legislation and organisation of road safety. This Council was established in 1995, however, it only became active after 2008 when its activities were formalised and legislated by an amendment to the previous governmental decision nr. 473/1995. The members of this CISR are divided into three groups: Ministerial level, local authority level and other associations. The first group is represented by the following Ministries: Ministry of Transport (i), Ministry of Internal Affairs (ii), Ministry of Public Finance (iii), Ministry of Rural Development (iv), Public Administration and European Funds (v), Ministry of Environment (vi), Ministry of Communication and Informational Society (vii), Ministry of Education (viii). The second group consists of the following local authorities: Bucharest local administration (i), Romanian Federation of Local authorities (ii), Romanian association of Cities (iii), Romanian Association of Villages (iv), National Union of Romanian County Councils. The third group is represented by the following associations: Non-Governmental Organisations (i), academia (ii), research institutes (iii), and private companies that are (partially) involved in road safety. The President of CISR is the Prime-Minister of Romania, and the Council is chaired by the Minister of Transport.

The Permanent Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Road Safety is the permanent body of experts within CISR, represented by a working group of various road safety experts. This group was set up to ensure the continuation and implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS). Together with CISR, DPISR is responsible for shaping the priorities of the national action programmes regarding road safety. DPISR is responsible for raising awareness on Road Safety in Romania. The Delegation also supports the initiation of a national Lead Agency for Road Safety, enforced by corresponding legislation. It is proposed that the members of this lead agency would consist of CISR members and associates who would lead and coordinate institutional road safety actions. Regarding the above-mentioned roles of both CISR and DPISR, it has been identified that the coordination of road safety in Romania is currently conducted at two levels:

- CISR (The inter-ministerial Council for Road Safety) at the highest Ministerial political level. As mentioned above, CISR was created by government decision 473/1995, [4]. CISR is made up of representatives from eight Ministries. Decision 901/2008 governs the procedures and activities of CISR. CISR develops and submits the national road safety strategies through the Ministry of Transport for Government approval. The current 2016-2020 National Road Safety Strategy was developed by this procedure [5].
- The Permanent Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Road Safety, as mentioned above, is composed from experts coming from public authorities represented in CISR. DPISR tasks are coordinated by the Secretary of State for Road Transport. The role of secretariat is carried out by ARR.

Institutions under CISR must be represented in the Council by: (i) The Minister and (ii) State Secretary or General Secretary for the respective Ministries; for local Council or Community

administration by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor; and by the President and Deputy President of associations. This procedure is in place to ensure that any decisions made by the Council will include all representatives of the government with a responsibility in road transport and road safety. Development of Romania’s national priority action program for road safety and any amendments to this program requires all these entities within CISR to approve any decision. The Secretariat of CISR (SCISR), located in the Ministry of Transport, consists of two employees who manage the secretarial activities of CSIR and publishes all decisions made on their website. Unfortunately, reality showed that CISR does not meet as regularly as desired. There are eight working groups each with an elected president and a secretary from the Secretariat of CSIR (SCISR). However, DPISR now meets regularly and has conducted monthly meetings since July 2015, despite there being no meetings held from around 2012 to 2014. Different issues are discussed at these expert meetings, e.g. tasks that can be performed, deciding which government entity would specifically carry out any task and a general follow up on the action plans specified in Romania’s National Road Safety Strategy.[5] Specialists and experts from universities or research institutes, experts from NGOs, public and private companies who are interested in road safety issues, are invited to attend meetings within the working groups, although they do not have any voting rights.

3 Main actions to improve road safety country-wide

The end of 2015 brought in a new Romanian government, with an intermediary and non-politically aligned mandate, essentially a technocratic government with specialists from all fields of interests. One of the priorities of this non-politically aligned intermediary government was to address road safety, particularly the main issues regarding Romania’s National Road Safety Strategy and its Road Safety Action Plan, and correcting Law 265/2008 regarding RSAs and road safety inspections, all of which were in a draft status from 2010 to 2016, including Romania’s General Transport Master Plan (2015).

3.1 National Road Safety Strategy

Romania’s National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 (NRSS) and Decision No 755/2016 adopted by Romanian government and supported by the Ministries, which are members of the Inter-Ministerial Council for Road Safety (CISR), indicates that the Safe System approach underpins their strategy. Figure 3 shows diagrams of the strategy based on the Safe System approach adopted by Australia and New Zealand and which was also presented in Romania’s National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020, [6, 7].

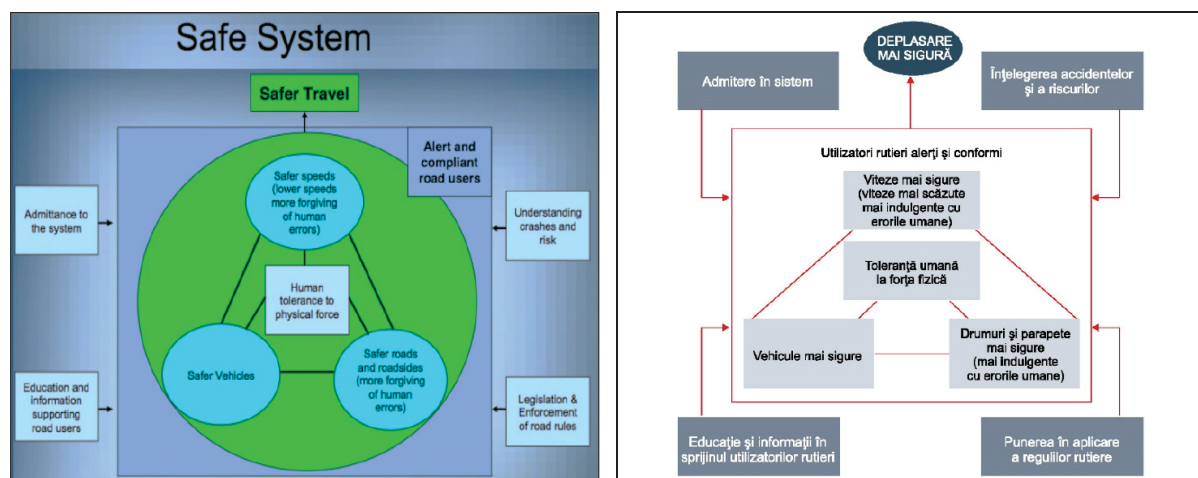


Figure 3 Safe System Approach diagram extracted from Romania’s Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 that was sourced from Australia and New Zealand’s road safety strategies

The Strategy does not only raise awareness on road safety issues in Romania, but also provides a long-term national vision for improved road safety performance and has as a final outcome target of halving the road fatalities by 2020, compared to the 2010 baseline. While the implementation of this Strategy is mandated by the Inter-Ministerial Council for Road Safety, each line Ministry is responsible for implementing their respective actions on road safety. In addition, the NRSS provides the opportunity for the private sector and communities to collaborate on the thematic of road safety. An action plan is proposed in order to ensure adequate implementation, based on the 10 main directions (Figure 4).

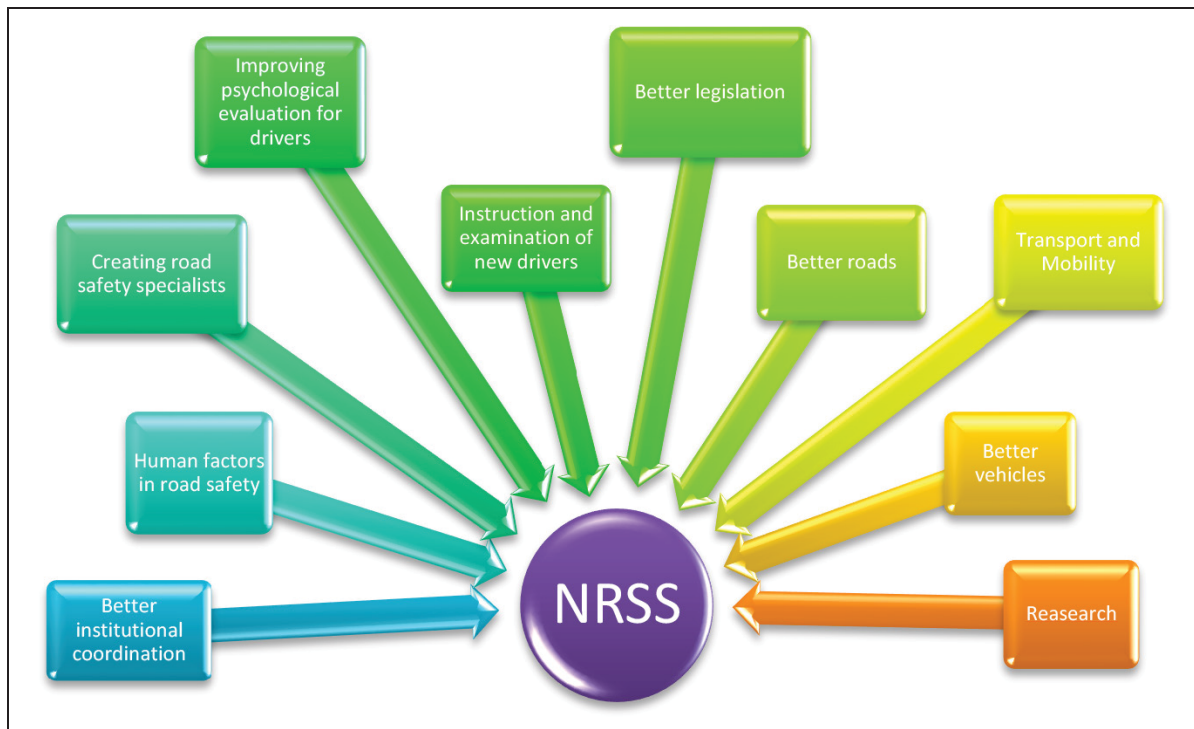


Figure 4 Main directions of the Romanian National Road Safety Strategy, 2016-2020

The NRSS’s aims are to:

- Improve institutional coordination and, in particular, integrate specialised emergency interventions and build-up institutional capacity;
- Integrate human factors into road safety by addressing road safety education including awareness campaigns;
- Institute a Road Safety Curriculum including: curriculum for universities, post-graduate programs dedicated to road safety;
- Introduce specialised defensive training for drivers;
- Require investigation of road traffic crashes by trained magistrates;
- Improve medical and psychological examination of novice drivers, examiners, instructors and trainers by developing better training and examination. This training will improve the training in driving schools such as instructors, trainers and examiners;
- Improve national legislation of road safety laws;
- Improve the driver licence examination;
- Improve of law enforcement by instituting better road safety legislation and better usage of safety network speed cameras;
- Improve the system for collecting speeding fines and reducing the operational costs of fines processing;
- Provide for a safer road infrastructure by improving Road Infrastructure Safety Management, creation of safer infrastructure through the usage of ITS, design and implementation of facilities for vulnerable road users;

- Improve mobility by assuring a safer passenger transport, and initiating new legislation and implementation in the domain of urban development;
- Assure the usage of safer vehicles by establishing improved technical conditions for cars and vehicle fleets. Introduce the requirement of supplementary technical expertise for vehicles involved in car crashes;
- Initiating research, including estimations of the social costs of road accidents, improving crash data collection and dissemination, creating and implementing a monitoring and evaluation system for road user behaviour and safety performance.

3.2 Road safety audits and inspections

The EU Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety came into law in Romania in 2008 as set out in Law 265/2008, but it was not sufficiently harmonised with the EU Directive, and its transpositions were too restrictive compared with the Directive. Moreover, there was little documentation on good practices used by other EU countries regarding implementing road safety policy. This in turn led to Romania as an EU Member State risking an infringement procedure that came into effect in January 2016.

Law 265/2008 was most recently largely modified by Emergency Ordinance 22 of June 16th, 2016 [8, 9, 10]. The amendments are mostly regarding road safety audits and inspections, and freeing up Romania's capacity regarding certification of road safety auditors and inspectors. What needs to be highlighted is that emergency ordinance 22/2016 addressed the fact that under the initial provisions of Law 265/2008, it was not possible to train new road safety auditors due to this regulation being too restrictive regarding newly certified auditors being used for any new projects. Also, the fees charged by existing Auditors were highly inflated compared to other good practice countries, e.g. the cost for an RSA became 50,000 euro per km. This led to a deficiency in road safety audit operations, which in turn prevented the construction and modernisation of road infrastructure. This also led to the forfeiting of any available European funds that could be allocated for such projects. The scope of the law exceeded the provisions as set out in the respective EU Directive.



Figure 5 First group trained as Road Safety Auditors in October 2016

Changes in the legislation brought by Emergency Ordinance 22 made possible the start of a fruitful collaboration between Romanian Road Authority (ARR) and Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest, to prepare specialists in the field of road safety. A 3-weeks train-the-trainer course took place in October 2016 – January 2017, delivered by a team of international specialists. Up to this moment, more than 100 specialists have been trained and certified as Road Safety Auditors, either independents, or working for ARR and delivering Road Safety Inspections for existing roads. Also, corrections and clarifications in terms for Law 265/2008 made possible that since June 2016 and up to this day, hundreds of road projects were assessed using a Road Safety Audit or a Road Safety Impact Assessment.

4 Conclusions

The actions undertaken in 2016 to improve road safety in Romania will definitely have a high impact in reducing the number of crashes nation-wide. Modification of Law 265/2008 had a great success, and the results are tangible.

What is also important, is that the National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 (NRSS) and Action Plan provide a long-term national vision for improved road safety performance and fatality reduction target, fully compliant with EU road safety policy. However, there is a clear need for more political support for implementing the strategy. In particular, increased political appetite for strong speed enforcement is needed in support of one of the key strategic aims in the NRSS – to improve speed enforcement processes and operations. There is clear evidence that a significant proportion of drivers are not complying with speed limits and do not give way to vulnerable road users. Any investment made in speed management measures, which are often low cost, generates government savings in terms of numbers of lives and injuries reduced by reductions in speed. Therefore, speed management is a sound economic investment. At the same time, there is limited association with the private sector and communities, since there is only coordination with government stakeholders at national and county level. Moreover, the legislative framework needs to be better developed so that regulation regarding road safety can be more easily amended and new laws can be adopted. Currently, there are limited financial resources allocated in order to implement the road safety policy measures. The budget for road safety measures is limited, and funding still needs to be discussed and identified by DPISR.

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