

Measure 48: Harmonisation of road safety checks and penalties

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<p><i>Policy package:</i> ID: Road Safety, quality and environment</p>
<p><i>Measure 48</i> By 2005 harmonise the rules governing checks and penalties in international commercial transport on the trans-European road network, particularly with regard to speeding and drunk-driving</p>
<p><i>What is the problem being addressed ?</i> Part 3 of the WP addresses just this issue, which is the object (amongst other things) of Commission Recommendation indicated below. Indeed, the failure of drivers to comply with basic road safety legislation (relating to drinking and driving, wearing a seat belt or crash helmet, and speeding) is the main cause of serious accidents. According to COM (2003) 311, action focusing on these three factors could help to meet more than half the target of halving the number of people killed on the roads. Another appreciable consequence is that calmer driving can help bring about a significant reduction in fuel consumption and exhausts emissions. Studies and research on this subject (e.g. GADGET and ESCAPE projects) have shown that, to achieve a significant improvement in compliance with the rules by road users, an overall approach is needed which combines policy checks with education and awareness campaigns for users.</p>
<p><i>Measure's costs and/or benefits:</i> The costs of policy checks may be considered to be fairly low. The drafting and approval of more stringent Blood Alcohol Content limits in national codes is implicit in current operations. Purchasing analysis equipment (breathalisers) and training police officers may reach only a diminishing amount compared to technical measures obtained by vehicle and infrastructures re-design and production, improvement. Education and awareness campaigns for users will be obviously more costly. European Union could support EU information campaigns to raise a sense of awareness about the consequences of not complying with road safety regulations and about enforcement.</p>
<p><i>Legislative implementation at the EU level:</i> Commission Recommendation C(2000) 4397 of 17 January 2001 on the maximum permitted blood alcohol content (BAC) for drivers of motorised vehicles. Reduced BAC limit enforced in some countries are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Austria from 0.8 to 0.5 g/l to 0.1 g/l for novice drivers• Belgium from 0.8 to 0.5 g/l• Netherlands: from 0.5 to 0.2 g/l for novice drivers• Sweden from 0.5 to 0.2 g/l• UK from 0.8 to 0.5 g/l
<p><i>What are the objectives ?</i> The best performing Member States in terms of road safety also have the most efficient checking systems. However, checks vary considerably from one Member State to another. Car and lorry drivers know that they must slow down in some countries, but that they can drive in others almost without impunity. This is shocking since it is easy to drive from one country to another, and this situation creates distortion of competition in the commercial haulage sector. To remedy to this situation, the Commission has proposed various measures in the context of social harmonisation of road transport (see Measure 4). In order to estimate the impact of the above proposals, the Commission launched studies to gather basic information on road traffic regulations and their checking and enforcement in the EU, and to analyse the costs and benefits of the proposals. For some measures cost-benefit ratios of 10:1 have been identified. Reports from the five countries which have modified national laws in compliance to the above Commission Recommendation on maximum permitted blood alcohol content, witness to decreasing incident rates and drunk driving convictions, indicating that actual operational implementation and consequent improvements of safety are highly probable.</p>
<p><i>Interactions with other WP measures:</i> Increased safety and economy of road transport will tend to make choice of road mode more attractive,</p>

hence counteracting the desired shift from road to rail.

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Output indicators:

Key output indicators for this measure should be:

- Number of checks
- Total amount of penalties

A major revision of procedures to be followed by highway and urban police is in order. In order to assess impact it is vital that at least a qualitative, but, if necessary, a quantitative assessment of BAC be carried out and recorded even in minor incidents with no fatalities.

Outcome indicators: intermediate impacts on transport markets

Distribution of speeds has to be harmonised internationally in order to avoid a shift between rules when going through national borders. Unrealistic speed limits set too low should be avoided as they have just the result of challenging and irritating drivers. Drunk driving per se has no relationship to other system indicators. It may be considered the only variable uniquely connected to safety.

Outcome indicators: final impacts on transport users and non users

As stated above under Interactions with other WP measures , improvements in safety may be expected to influence modal splits as well as end users and public satisfaction. On the other hand in this context multiple feedbacks loops are active, so that it may not be possible to establish causal relationships. Outcome indicators may objectively impact mode choice, but the above consideration concerning difficulty of recognising causal links has to be kept in mind. Consequently statistical evidence may be very hard to collect. Trends to be shown in tables and graphs will be hard to come by. Recourse may be attempted to surveying reactions and opinions of the public - and the limitations and pitfalls of this choice will have to be considered. Suggested outcome indicators and expected impacts are:

- Accident related fatalities (they should decrease)
- Road accidents (they should decrease)