



COMMISSION REMAINS COMMITTED TO HALVING ROAD DEATHS BY 2030

The European Commission published its report to track progress towards the EU's goal of halving road deaths and serious injuries by 2030. While progress has been made in reducing road fatalities, the report reveals that the current pace is insufficient.

19,940 people were killed on Europe's roads in 2024. This represents a 12% decrease since 2019 but falls significantly short of the annual 4.6% reduction needed to meet the 2030 targets, as set in the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030.

Road safety is a shared responsibility between the EU and Member States. While national and local authorities carry out most day-to-day actions, the EU also plays a key role in strengthening road safety across Europe. Recent EU initiatives include updated requirements for driving licences, better cross-border enforcement of traffic laws, and a comprehensive overhaul of the EU's road safety and vehicle registration rules.

The report presents more ambitious actions requiring coordinated efforts from EU institutions, Member States, and local authorities. The Commission will take measures across five priority areas.

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UN DECADE OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT: A GLOBAL COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE-FIRST MOBILITY

Governments, transport leaders, and development partners gathered at United Nations headquarters to launch the first United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026–2035) – a milestone moment designed to transform how people move, how goods flow, and how societies connect.



Transport touches every aspect of life

In his remarks at the launch event, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary Dmitry Mariyasin reminded delegates that transport is not an abstract sector. “It shapes the rhythm of daily life— how a parent reaches a clinic, how a farmer brings food to market, how a student gets to school. These stories remind us that transport is about people first — and when we improve transport systems, we improve lives at scale.”

Improving connectivity is central to removing barriers to opportunities for many communities around the world. The Decade can serve as a powerful catalyst for advancing regional integration, supporting intra-regional trade, strengthening economies, especially in fragile contexts and landlocked developing countries.

Public transport, cycling lanes, and shared mobility options are helping young people access education and jobs while reducing pollution in urban centres. Stronger road-safety standards and safer vehicle regulations are preventing crashes, saving lives, and ensuring that families can travel with confidence on the region’s roads. These human-centred gains illustrate what the Decade aims to scale globally. Achieving transformation of the transport sector requires financing, governance reform, stronger data systems, capacity-building, and innovation.

For UNECE, which played a central role in shaping the Decade’s global Implementation Plan, the message was clear: sustainable transport is not only about systems – it is about people.

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UN ANNOUNCES A GLOBAL REGULATION TO FACILITATE SAFE INTRODUCTION OF SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES ON PUBLIC ROADS WORLDWIDE

A decade ago, automated driving was widely forecast to be on public roads by 2020. However, while technology progressed, the task proved more complex than anticipated, requiring sustained research and development, as well as a clear, trusted regulatory path.

After 10 years of technological maturation and regulatory developments, as well as two years of intensive consultations and drafting, a draft global regulation on Automated Driving Systems (ADS), will allow deployment of autonomous vehicles with no supervision by a driver, on public roads.



The proposal, adopted by the UNECE Working Party on Automated/Autonomous and Connected Vehicles (GRVA) at its last meeting (19 - 23 January 2026), establishes uniform safety provisions and a harmonized methodology for validating vehicles equipped with ADS, anchored in a safety case approach and robust research and development processes.

The draft regulation will be submitted to the UNECE's World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) for adoption at its next session (23-26 June 2026). Before that, GRVA will finalize technical provisions regarding data collection for ADS. If adopted by the World Forum, the global regulation would enter into force immediately.

The draft global regulation aims to meet the needs of diverse markets and foster innovation while ensuring the highest level of safety on the road. Its key features include Safety Management System (SMS), testing credibility, Safety Case, in-service monitoring & reporting (ISMR), and Data Storage System for Automated Driving (DSSAD).

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ETSC RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON THE SMALL AFFORDABLE CARS INITIATIVE

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is deeply concerned by the European Commission's approach to small car safety timelines and its unprecedented reliance on industry demands in the Small Affordable Cars initiative announced in December.

Urban vehicles need the highest safety standards, not delays

ETSC welcomes the Commission's decision to classify the new "Small Electric Vehicle" (M1E) sub-category within the existing passenger car (M1) category. This ensures that these vehicles must comply with all of the existing EU vehicle safety standards.

Small electric vehicles are designed primarily for urban environments – the exact locations where interactions with vulnerable road users are most frequent. Technologies such as Automated Emergency Braking (AEB) with pedestrian and cyclist detection are designed precisely to save lives in these settings. If the Commission delays the application of the latest generation of these technologies to the very vehicles most likely to encounter pedestrians and cyclists in city centres, it will be a dereliction of duty. We cannot accept a two-tier safety system where "affordable" urban cars lack the latest protection for the people outside the vehicle.



The role of the European Commission is to assess risk and protect the public interest, not to legislate based on the demands of the entities being regulated. While reducing administrative burden is valid, using an industry wish-list as the baseline for reviewing safety and environmental laws sets a dangerous precedent for EU governance.

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EURO NCAP: NEW 2026 PROTOCOLS TARGET DISTRACTION, IMPAIRMENT, AND SPEEDING

The European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) has unveiled its most significant protocol overhaul in over a decade. Starting in 2026, the voluntary safety rating will shift to a new methodology based on four factors: Safe Driving, Crash Avoidance, Crash Protection, and Post-Crash Safety.

While Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) has been mandatory for new vehicle types since 2022, Euro NCAP is significantly raising the bar by extending independent verification of speed-limit information accuracy beyond test tracks into real-world on-road driving.

The 2026 protocols also introduce dedicated scoring for systems that identify signs of drug or alcohol impairment, placing emphasis on Driver State Monitoring (DSM); to achieve a 5-star rating, vehicles must employ continuous eye- and head-tracking and the tests will now reward “unresponsive driver” interventions – technologies that can detect a medical emergency or extreme intoxication and safely bring the vehicle to a controlled halt. Additionally, Euro NCAP is pushing back against the “touchscreen-only” interior design trend. To secure a top safety rating, manufacturers must provide dedicated physical controls for core functions, including indicators and hazard lights, windscreen wipers, the horn, and SOS/eCall functions.

While ETSC applauds Euro NCAP for leading the way, it maintains that voluntary ratings are not a substitute for legislation. The European Commission must now look to these updated standards as a blueprint for the next revision of the General Safety Regulation (GSR).



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SPEEDING BY MORE THAN 50 KILOMETRES PER HOUR BECOMES A CRIME IN FRANCE

In France, speeding exceeding 50 kilometres per hour will no longer be punished with just a fine, it will become a crime which may even lead to prison sentences.

The new provision, published in the French Official Gazette last December, establishes that offenders may be sentenced to up to three months in prison and a fine of 3,750 euros. Furthermore, it will be recorded in the offender’s history with the consequences that this may have for the limitation in civil life.

In 2024, 63,217 speeding violations exceeding 50 kilometres per hour were registered in France, representing a 69% increase compared to 2017. Excessive speed is considered the second leading cause of fatal traffic accidents. In 2024 there were 3,190 fatalities in the country.

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SELECTIVE RADARS TO IDENTIFY UNINSURED VEHICLES IN FRANCE

Nowadays, thanks to new technologies, speed cameras no longer only monitor speeding offences, but also serve to detect other offences, such as not having compulsory insurance.

According to estimates by the French National Interministerial Road Safety Observatory (ONISR), 515,000 drivers in France drive without insurance, and 4.8% of motor vehicles involved in casualty accidents are uninsured. These and other data have prompted the French authorities to step up enforcement of the regulations through automated systems and in cases of risk behaviour such as speeding, with the aim of helping to prevent tragedies and protect lives.

The French road safety authority has therefore announced the implementation of a new system to identify uninsured vehicles, but only those exceeding the speed limit by at least 50 km/h. In order to check whether the vehicle is insured or not, the registration number of the offending driver will be used, and the data will be cross-checked with the national database that centralises all insured vehicles in France — at least three days after the date and time of the offence to ensure that it is correctly updated. The report will be sent to the public prosecutor's office of the competent court, which will decide on the measures to be taken for each offence: speeding and lack of insurance.

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STUDY CONDUCTED IN FRANCE REVEALS CRITICAL GAPS IN CHILD RESTRAINT USE

New research from France highlights a persistent and worrying safety gap: nearly two out of three children are still not properly secured in vehicles. The OURSE study (Observing Child Safety on the Roads), conducted by the Prévention Routière association in partnership with CEESAR and LAB, warns that despite recent progress, installation errors remain a major threat to young passengers.

According to the French road safety observatory, road collisions claimed the lives of 46 children in 2024 – nearly one every week – with half of these fatalities occurring while the child was a passenger in a car.

The research identified several common and dangerous errors, such as incorrect harness adjustment, loose or twisted seat belts and improper ISOFIX use. Crucially, 78% of parents surveyed believed their child was correctly secured, yet 59% of those children were actually at risk due to installation mistakes. An analysis of fatal crashes between 2021 and 2023 further underscored this danger, showing that 46% of children killed were either improperly secured or using unsuitable restraints. Experts estimate that proper installation could have reduced injury severity for one in every two children.

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ROME FOLLOWS OTHER EUROPEAN CAPITALS WITH NEW 30 KPH SPEED LIMIT

Rome has become the latest European capital to sharply reduce speed limits, forcing Italians notorious for breakneck driving to slow down in an effort to reduce accidents and pollution.

The Eternal City's new limit of 30 kph throughout the historic centre took effect on January, almost halving the previous 50 kph limit in streets overwhelmed by residents, tourists and cars. These roads reflect a city built for cars that no longer exists, lower speeds save lives and speeding plays a role in 7.5% of the city's road accidents. The new limit has been enforced gradually, to allow drivers to get used to it.

Rome is following the example of European capitals such as London, Brussels, Paris and Helsinki which have embraced slower, safer streets, in some cases overriding strong opposition from motorists.

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UK ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY SIGNALS LONG OVERDUE SHIFT

The UK government has published a new road safety strategy that, if fully implemented, would mark a significant change of direction after more than a decade of limited progress.

ETSC welcomes the renewed political attention to road safety and several concrete measures that closely align the UK with best practice across Europe. In particular, the strategy signals a clear realignment with EU vehicle safety standards, including mandatory technologies such as automated emergency braking. Evidence from across Europe shows these systems can prevent serious crashes and save lives.

ETSC also strongly welcomes the proposal to lower the drink-driving limit. England and Wales currently have the highest legal blood alcohol limit in Europe, a situation that has long undermined road safety efforts. Lower limits are associated with fewer drink-driving crashes and fewer deaths. The commitment to introduce alcohol interlocks is equally positive. These devices are already used in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Poland and Sweden, where they have proven effective in preventing repeat drink-driving.



Despite its reputation as a relatively safe country, the UK has achieved very little improvement in recent years. Road deaths have fallen by only 8 percent over the past ten years. By contrast, in Norway deaths fell by 39 percent over the same period. This stark difference underlines the importance of political will, sustained investment and strong targets. It also shows that even countries with a good road safety record can achieve remarkable results when road safety is treated as a genuine priority.

[More information](#)



US ISSUES URGENT SAFETY WARNING AFTER TWO DRIVERS KILLED IN CRASHES WITH FAULTY AIR BAGS

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has issued an urgent warning to American used car buyers, owners and repair shops after two more drivers were killed in crashes in December by dangerous Chinese replacement air bag inflators that are likely illegally imported.

The auto safety agency said it was aware of 10 crashes resulting in death or serious injury from ruptured replacement air bag inflators made in China and likely illegally imported into the United States.

NHTSA said eight drivers have been killed in otherwise survivable crashes, while two other drivers suffered severe injuries in vehicles that had the original air bags replaced with substandard air bags after a previous crash. These bag inflators malfunctioned in crashes "sending large metal fragments into drivers' chests, necks, eyes and faces."

For consumers buying used vehicles that were in a previous crash where the air bag deployed, it should be inspected immediately to ensure the air bag is a legitimate replacement equivalent to the original.

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