

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

No. 33

23-04-2026



EU ROAD DEATHS FALL BY 3% IN 2025 BUT PROGRESS REMAINS TOO SLOW

Preliminary figures released by the European Commission show that around 19,400 people died on EU roads in 2025, a 3% decrease compared with 2024 and 580 fewer fatalities. While this marks progress, most Member States are still not on track to meet the EU target of halving road deaths and serious injuries by 2030. Significant improvements were recorded in Estonia and Greece, while Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Poland and Romania are currently on course to reach the 50% reduction goal. However, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia continue to report some of the highest fatality rates, whereas Sweden and Denmark remain the safest countries.

Rural roads accounted for more than half of all fatalities, and vulnerable road users represented 70% of deaths in urban areas. Men accounted for 77% of road deaths, with young people and older adults particularly at risk. The EU's long-term strategy, known as Vision Zero, aims to eliminate road deaths by 2050, but current progress is considered insufficient, highlighting the need for stronger national and EU-level measures to improve road safety.

[More information](#)



UN INTRODUCES NEW RULE TO REDUCE FATIGUE-RELATED ROAD ACCIDENTS

A new regulation adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe aims to reduce fatigue-related road crashes by introducing Driver Drowsiness and Attention Warning (DDAW) systems in vehicles. Driver fatigue is a major global safety concern, contributing to a significant share of road accidents that cause around 1.1 million deaths and more than 40 million injuries every year. Fatigue affects drivers' reaction times, decision-making, attention, and ability to maintain speed or lane position, often leading to more severe crashes because drowsy drivers are less likely to brake or take evasive action. Studies show fatigue contributes to 15–20% of road accidents in Europe, while in the United States sleepiness is linked to 21% of fatal crashes and thousands of deaths annually.

The new DDAW systems will monitor driver behaviour and physical condition using methods such as steering pattern analysis or driver-monitoring cameras, providing warnings when drowsiness is detected. However, vehicles with a maximum design speed of 70 km/h or lower will be exempt, as urban driving patterns make fatigue detection less reliable. The regulation is expected to come into force by the end of 2026, after which participating countries will incorporate it into national legislation, marking an important step toward improving road safety and reducing fatigue-related accidents worldwide.



[More information](#)



UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING TO ACCELERATE GLOBAL EFFORTS ON ROAD SAFETY

A high-level meeting on improving global road safety will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 20–21 July 2026, convened by the UN General Assembly President and the World Health Organization. The event will focus on accelerating commitments to halve road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030, bringing together heads of state, ministers, experts, civil society, academia and private sector representatives to advance global road safety efforts.



The meeting builds on previous initiatives, including the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the 2022 Political Declaration and the 2025 Global Ministerial Conference in Morocco. A new action-oriented declaration will be

agreed ahead of the event, while a recent report from António Guterres highlighted that road traffic injuries remain a major global challenge and called for stronger institutions, long-term planning and measurable targets worldwide.

[More information](#)



AFRICAN ROAD SAFETY CHARTER ENTERS INTO FORCE AS FIRST LEGALLY BINDING FRAMEWORK

The African Union's African Road Safety Charter entered into force on 12 March 2026, marking Africa's first legally binding continental framework for road safety. The milestone was reached after Mozambique became the fifteenth country to ratify the Charter. The initiative aims to address rising road fatalities in the World Health Organization African Region, where deaths increased by 17% in the decade to 2021, reaching nearly 250,000 fatalities annually — the highest rate globally.



The Charter requires signatory countries to strengthen national road safety agencies, improve legislation on key risk factors such as speeding and drink-driving, invest in safer infrastructure and vehicles, and enhance emergency response systems. Supported by the WHO and aligned with the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030, the framework represents a major step towards halving road deaths and injuries across Africa by 2030.

[More information](#)



EU PLAN TO FREEZE SAFETY RULES FOR SMALL ELECTRIC CARS RAISES SAFETY CONCERNS

A proposal by the European Commission to freeze safety requirements for small electric cars for up to ten years has raised concerns from the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC). The plan, part of the Automotive Omnibus package, would create a new vehicle sub-category (M1E) while delaying future safety upgrades until 2036. ETSC warns this could create a two-tier safety system and lock in outdated standards at a time when the EU is already struggling to meet its target of halving road deaths by 2030.



The organisation highlights that small electric cars are often used in urban areas, where vulnerable road users account for around 70% of fatalities. Delaying technologies such as advanced emergency braking and dooring prevention systems could increase risks. ETSC also criticised the lack of an impact assessment and urged EU lawmakers to maintain current safety standards and instead promote smaller vehicles that meet the latest safety requirements.

[More information](#)



ITALY MOVES FORWARD WITH ALCOHOL INTERLOCK PROGRAMME FOR DRINK-DRIVING OFFENDERS

Italian Ministry of Transport has published a list of approved alcohol interlock devices and authorised installation workshops, marking the implementation phase of Italy's new programme. Under the rules, drivers caught with a blood alcohol content above 0.8 g/l face criminal charges, fines and possible imprisonment. Once convicted, offenders must install an alcohol interlock device in any vehicle they drive.



The device must remain installed for two years for drivers with alcohol levels between 0.8 and 1.5 g/l, and three years for those exceeding 1.5 g/l. Offenders must cover the estimated €2,000 installation cost, as well as annual calibration and disposable mouthpieces. The measure brings Italy in line with several European countries using interlocks as a rehabilitation tool, with the UK Government also recently announcing plans to introduce similar measures.

[More information](#)



DRIVERS FREQUENTLY DISABLE HGV SAFETY SYSTEMS, GERMAN SURVEY FINDS

A survey conducted by the German Road Safety Council (DVR) has revealed that many heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers are regularly switching off key safety technologies, potentially undermining efforts to improve road safety. The study, involving more than 500 truck drivers, found that 59% do not use driver assistance systems continuously, while nearly one in five reported frequently deactivating them. Lane Keeping Assist was the most commonly disabled system, switched off by 56% of respondents, followed by Intelligent Speed Assistance (16%), Adaptive Cruise Control (15%), Turning Assistants (8%) and Emergency Brake Assist (5%).



The findings suggest that limited training and poor system design may be contributing to low acceptance. Around 32% of drivers said they had received no formal briefing on how to use the technology, and 45% relied on informal guidance from colleagues. More than half of respondents reported “alarm fatigue”, describing frequent warnings and interventions as distracting or irritating. Manfred Wirsch emphasised that most drivers still consider assistance systems useful, but called for improved training and clearer, more intuitive system design, including standardised

symbols and fewer false alarms, to increase acceptance and ensure these technologies deliver their intended safety benefits.

[More information](#)



GERMAN RESISTANCE TO AUTOBAHN SPEED LIMITS PERSISTS DESPITE GROWING SUPPORT FOR RESTRICTIONS

Germany’s long-standing attachment to high-speed driving on unrestricted sections of the Autobahn continues to shape the national debate over speed limits, even as support for restrictions grows. The German Automobile Club’s President described fast driving as part of an “almost loving relationship” with cars, highlighting freedom and engineering appreciation rather than thrill-seeking. Germany remains the only democracy without a blanket motorway speed limit, although around 70% of Autobahn sections already impose restrictions. Calls for limits have intensified during recent energy and environmental crises, including appeals from the International Energy Agency urging slower speeds to reduce fuel consumption and emissions.



Political resistance, however, remains strong despite shifting public opinion. Figures such as Christian Lindner and Friedrich Merz have dismissed nationwide limits as unnecessary or symbolic, while industry groups argue that electrification will reduce environmental benefits. Nevertheless, research suggests a 130km/h limit could deliver significant economic and environmental gains, and a stricter 120km/h cap could cut motorway

deaths by 36%. Public support has also increased, with a majority of voters and members of the ADAC now favouring a Tempolimit, reflecting a growing tension between Germany’s historic car culture and calls for greater safety and sustainability.

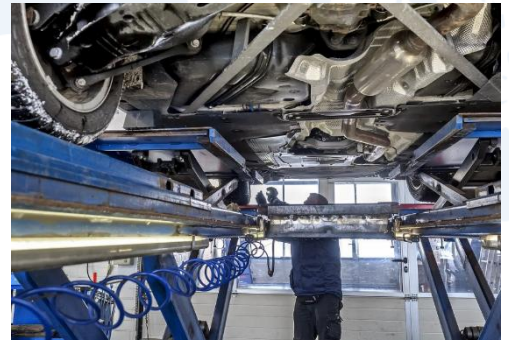
[More information](#)



MEPS URGED TO STRENGTHEN VEHICLE INSPECTION RULES AHEAD OF KEY EU VOTES

Members of the European Parliament are preparing to vote on revisions to the EU's Roadworthiness Package, legislation that will shape vehicle safety inspections across Europe. The report, led by Jens Gieseke, includes proposals welcomed by the ETSC, particularly the extension of periodic technical inspections to a wider range of motorcycles. The plan would introduce mandatory testing for motorcycles between 50cc and 125cc, expanding current EU requirements and improving safety oversight for powered two-wheelers.

However, ETSC has urged lawmakers to strengthen the proposals further by addressing several safety gaps. The organisation is calling for mandatory roadside inspections for vans, which are increasingly used for commercial deliveries but remain subject to limited checks. It also recommends mandatory testing of advanced safety systems, including lane-keeping assistance and automated driving features, to ensure faults are detected. In addition, ETSC advocates more frequent inspections for older vehicles, suggesting annual checks for cars and vans over ten years old. With parliamentary votes approaching, the organisation is urging MEPs to modernise vehicle inspection rules to reflect ageing vehicle fleets, new technologies and evolving road safety challenges.



[More information](#)



LONDON SIGNALS CRACKDOWN ON OVERSIZED VEHICLES IN NEW VISION ZERO PLAN

The London mayor, Sadiq Khan, and Transport for London have launched Vision Zero Action Plan 2, outlining measures to eliminate road deaths and serious injuries in London by 2041. The plan includes developing evidence on the risks posed by oversized vehicles and using local powers to address their safety, congestion and environmental impacts. Larger vehicles, often linked to the growing trend of "carspreading", are considered to increase collision severity and reduce available road space.



London follows similar initiatives across Europe. Paris introduced higher parking fees for heavier vehicles after a 2024 referendum, while Cardiff implemented surcharges for heavier cars in 2025. The European Transport Safety Council has also highlighted comparable plans in Brussels, reflecting a broader European trend towards limiting oversized vehicles to improve road safety and urban space.

[More information](#)



US TRAFFIC DEATHS FALL TO LOWEST LEVEL SINCE 2019 AFTER PANDEMIC SURGE

Road fatalities in the United States fell significantly last year, reaching their lowest level since 2019 following a sharp increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, traffic deaths dropped by 6.7% to 36,640, while the fatality rate declined to 1.10 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles travelled — the second lowest figure recorded in the country's history. The improvement follows several years of elevated fatalities, including a 10.8% surge in 2021, when 43,230 people were killed — the highest annual total since 2005. Pedestrian and cyclist deaths also reached their highest levels in more than four decades during that period.

Officials attribute the decline to renewed safety efforts and changing driving patterns. The head of the U.S. auto safety agency stated that authorities are intensifying strategies aimed at reducing risky behaviours before they lead to fatalities. The reduction marks the fourth consecutive annual decrease, with deaths falling below 40,000 in 2024 for the first time since 2020. Experts say risky driving increased during the pandemic as roads became less crowded and enforcement appeared reduced, while impaired driving also rose. In response, the US government allocated \$5 billion for road safety improvements under the 2021 infrastructure law, as studies highlighted the economic impact of crashes, which were estimated to cost society up to \$1.37 trillion — equivalent to 1.6% of national economic output.

[More information](#)