

PRESS RELEASE

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Road Deaths: Latest traffic safety data released

Drop in road fatalities accelerated in 2010, developments less positive in 2011

The IRTAD Road Safety Annual Report 2011 has been released by the International Transport Forum at the OECD. The report analyses the road safety performance of 32 countries in 2010 and also includes the latest provisional data for 2011. The report was prepared by the Forum's International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group (IRTAD)*.

Background

Worldwide, at least 1.3 million people were killed in road crashes in 2010; 50 million people were injured. Nine out of ten victims were in low and middle-income countries. High income countries are generally looking back on a decade with record reductions in road fatalities. Emerging countries undergoing rapid motorisation, however, currently see the number of traffic casualties increasing year after year.

The United Nations launched a "Decade of Action for Road Safety" in 2011 with the aim of stabilising, and then reducing, global road deaths by 2020.

Data presented in the IRTAD report focuses primarily on OECD countries.

Latest data

Country data collected by IRTAD for the year 2010 shows that:

- Road deaths continued to decrease in most IRTAD countries.
- Several countries reached new record lows in road fatalities.

Latest, provisional data for 2011 shows a continuing downward trend for many IRTAD countries. However, half of the EU countries observed an increase in the number of fatalities in 2011.

Fred Wegman, Chairman of IRTAD, said: "We will need the benefit of hindsight to assess whether the increase in the numbers killed in some countries in 2011 is a re-adjustment after very large reductions in the last few years or whether the downward trend has reached a plateau requiring additional policies being implemented to lead to further reductions."

Notwithstanding the mixed performance in 2011, several countries recorded a more pronounced reduction in the number of fatalities over the last three to four years than during the preceding 15 years. Among these are the United States, Hungary, Ireland and Denmark.

Interpretation

It is possible that the financial and economic crisis that hit a part of the world recently has had a positive impact on road safety statistics through a variety of effects: a decrease in mobility, less goods transport by heavy vehicle traffic, fewer inexperienced high-risk drivers on the roads or a reduction in leisure driving. However, this is a hypothesis. It has not been possible to quantify the impact of an economic downturn on road safety and a scientifically satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon is lacking. IRTAD plans to further research this relationship.

Severe winter conditions in many European countries at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 may have impacted road safety statistics and this will be researched as well by IRTAD.

Véronique Feypell, road-safety expert at the International Transport Forum and IRTAD co-ordinator, noted that, above all, "most countries now have in place well defined and targeted road safety measures, which have borne fruit over the last few years."

Added Feypell: "We see the very complex issue of explaining trends in road casualties as a key area for cooperation in the IRTAD Group. We are also working on better understanding trends in serious traffic injuries, which in the past have received relatively little attention. IRTAD is working on getting countries to agree on a common definition that captures the full extent of the problem and has recently published guidance on reconciling police and hospital records to get an accurate estimate."

The International Transport Forum will also release this year important research pieces on pedestrian safety, cyclist safety and the effectiveness of road safety measures which will be an important contribution to safety policy.

***Note to Editors**

Set up in 1988, the IRTAD Group's mission is to be the worldwide reference regarding road safety data collection and analyses. IRTAD maintains a database with accident and other safety indicators for 32 countries (www.irtad.org). IRTAD is also a global network of road safety experts and statisticians from renowned safety research institutes, national road and transport administrations, international organisations, universities, automobilists' associations, NGOs, the car industry and the insurance sector.

In 2008, IRTAD began to expand its coverage to low- and middle-income countries, in particular through the establishment of twinning projects. An important step forward was taken with the launch of the IRTAD-LAC database to support the newly-created Ibero-American Road Safety Observatory.

Current IRTAD member countries are: Argentina**, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cambodia**, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Lithuania**, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States. International Organisation members are: the European Commission (DG MOVE), European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), FIA Foundation, The Motorcycle Industry in Europe (ACEM), The World Bank.

** Accession countries

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