

Dear reader,

Ever since humankind started sharing public space with vehicles, road safety has been a hot topic. Pedestrians and cyclists are most vulnerable and often this is an important barrier when promoting sustainable, active travel. This e-update is a journey into the history of road safety and explores the relationship with Mobility Management and sustainability.

This topic is also covered in [various ways](#) by the upcoming ECOMM. The [call for presentations](#) just opened.

Millions died and millions more will die



Mary Ward, the first person killed by a car.
Source: www.irishcentral.com

People can have a lifetime of achievement overshadowed by one particular act in which they happened to be first. [Mary Ward](#), an Anglo-Irish amateur scientist, was one of these people. An extraordinary woman who, in 1869, had the bad luck to be the first person killed by a motorised car.

Today, worldwide more than 1.2 million people die in traffic each year. The number is still slowly growing, see the [Global status report on road safety](#) from the World Health Organisation.



Source: www.globalgoals.org

In the countries currently belonging to the EU, road fatalities have gone down by almost 70% since 1991 – from more than 76,000 to about 26,000 last year – a success story of faster emergency services, better medical treatment, safer vehicles, stricter controls, safer road design, better education and also road safety campaigns. However, the number of accidents and the number of injuries has only decreased by about 25% in these 25 years. Every year there are more than 1 million accidents causing these 26,000 deaths but also 1.5 million injuries! Of these, about 100,000 are permanently disabled and 200,000 have serious injuries – this happens every year! In spite of the successes, these are still terrible numbers. In urban areas (which are on average safer than rural areas) about half of the fatalities and even more of the serious injuries are cyclists and pedestrians – and the great majority of these are caused by cars hitting cyclists and pedestrians. Overall, both walking and cycling are still safer than using a car.

The difficulties with road safety statistics



Please click on the image to enlarge it.

Overall the EU does a fantastic job in collecting data, standardising it and making it available. Still, methods for recording vary widely and selective “cherry-picking” opens many possibilities for interpretation. To give just three examples:

- Austrian police electronically records traffic accident causes. In less than 4% of fatality cases, they found alcohol to be the main cause. However, international comparison data shows that in reality, the share is between 20 and 30%. It is assumed that the main reasons for this discrepancy are that (a) those killed are normally not blood tested and (b) other main causes (such as speeding) are recorded even if the underlying cause was alcohol.
- 13 EU countries also record hospital data according to the so-called EU Injury Database (EU-IDB). According to estimates based on this EU-IDB about four million people annually are injured in road traffic accidents (more than twice the number from the official statistics).
- Cycle helmet laws: The share of head injuries of car users, pedestrians and cyclists is about the same. Nobody would think of making helmets obligatory for pedestrians and car drivers, but for cyclists it is at least a discussion in almost every country. The consequences of making cycling helmets obligatory are highly controversial – some

interpret it as making it safer, others as making it less safe – see some of the arguments [here](#).

Excellent statistics can be found on the [Road Safety pages of the European Commission](#)

More cycling and walking make it safer



Source: www.ecf.com

It might be counterintuitive: more cycles on the road lead to a lower cycle accident rate. Yet, practically all cities in which cycling is increasing are having this experience. How can this be? The interpretation is the following: The more cycles are on the road, the more commonplace they become. Thus motorists pay more attention and become more tolerant of their behavior. Also, the more people cycle, the more likely it is that motorists also cycle themselves and have an even more considerate road behavior towards cyclists. [Critical Mass](#) is a celebration of the alternatives to cars and it is based on this safety in numbers. The effect for cyclists is also true for pedestrians – the more there are, the safer it is for them. A good study on this safety in numbers relationship is [“Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling”](#).

Pedestrians and cyclists: enemies or allies?



Source: www.bicigasteiz.com

To grow cycling, traffic planners often position cycling paths on pedestrian pavements, as this is often much easier than to take away space from car traffic (parking or traffic lanes). Pedestrian areas in city centres can form obstacles for cyclists – thus the question often is whether they should be allowed or not – especially as such zones often provide safe cycling routes in a car-oriented city centre. In places with high numbers of pedestrians, this will inevitably create discomfort – especially for pedestrians. However, experience and research show that with good design the situation is largely self-regulatory. A study of over 100 pedestrian zones in the Netherlands showed that the number of cyclists in such zones is largely independent of whether cycling is allowed or not, but mostly dependent on the number of users. To alleviate the situation, there are many solutions:

- awareness raising on courteous behavior towards pedestrians, for example the [“Gemeinsam unterwegs” campaign](#) by the city of Bolzano, Italy, or the [bike warden](#) watching over a canal towpath in London.
- Good design of the shared street space, for example the [New Road in Brighton & Hove's inner city](#) or the [Mariahilferstrasse in Vienna](#).
- Provide ample separate structures for cyclists and pedestrians. More on this see this article by Blogger [David Hembrow](#). Fining cyclists for speeding in pedestrian zones is probably not the best idea.
- Regulations, for example the [new regulation on cycling in pedestrian zones in Vitoria-Gasteiz](#)



Photo by [Gary Cziko](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The dangers of distraction are all too real



Image: courtesy of [Pawel Kuczynski](#)

Distracted driving is a leading cause of road traffic crashes all over the world. One of the most common causes is the [use of mobile phones while driving \(even when using hands-free\)](#). But distraction is also an issue for [pedestrians](#) and [cyclists](#). A new dimension is augmented reality – as potentially provided by special glasses – like for example [Google glass](#).

But augmented reality can even be provided by a simple smartphone. The latest game craze, [Pokémon GO](#), is a free-to-play, location-based augmented reality game where players use a mobile device to locate, capture, battle, and train virtual creatures, called Pokémon, who appear on the screen as if they were in the same real-world location as the player. Released in July 2016, it quickly became a global phenomenon, having been downloaded by more than 130 million people worldwide.

On the one hand, the game was credited for promoting [physical activity](#) and helping [local business grow](#), but it has also attracted controversy for contributing to [accidents](#) and becoming a [public nuisance](#) at some locations.

It is clear that the game is also causing some dangers, says [Youth For Road Safety \(YOURS\)](#). “We want our youth to enjoy the exhilaration of catching a Pokémon, but we also know that it is important to be wise on the road and to stay safe.”

Planning for sustainable road safety



Source: www.bmvit.gv.at

Sustainable Safety is the name of the **Dutch approach** to improve road safety. Introduced and quickly adopted by all road managers in 1992 the goal was to fundamentally change the system by taking a person as a yardstick. Sustainable Safety is about a lot more than just infrastructure. Roads and vehicles must be adapted to the human capabilities and the human has to be educated enough to be able to operate a vehicle on a road in a safe manner. The approach is based on **five principles**: Functionality, Homogeneity, Predictability, Forgivingness and State Awareness.

A national medium or long term Road Safety Plan is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable improvements in road safety. The plan should set measurable long term and mid-term road safety targets, build capacity of local institutions, and provide alternative sources of financing for road safety measures.

An example of a very successful Road Safety Plan is the (**Austrian Road Safety Programme 2011-2020**), which helped to reduce the number of traffic deaths by almost 50 percent.

On an international level, the WHO provides road safety manuals [here](#), the Commission provides the **results of EU projects** and many other **tools**.

Funding for road safety



Photo by [Tax Credits](#), CC BY 2.0

A sustainable **funding** source is required for the implementation of road safety measures. In Finland, for example, a road safety tax has been levied on compulsory vehicle insurance for about 50 years. At 1.1 percent of premiums, the fund is used to finance the work in the field of public education, road user information and road safety promotion. (Source: GIZ, **The Road Safety Cent**). Some countries such as **Austria** and **New Zealand** are using personalised licensing plates to finance their national Road Safety Trust.

Road safety campaigns and education



Source: www.tac.vic.gov.au

"I have no neck, a sunken nose, air bags between my ribs and limbs that bend in all directions. My name is Graham, and I am different." He has all the body parts a human would need to stay alive in a high impact road accident, because the human body has not evolved to survive high impact collisions.

Australia's Transport Accident Commission describes Graham as "an educational tool that will serve the community for years to come as a reminder of why we need to develop a safer road system that will protect us when things go wrong." A school curriculum has also been developed to enhance the learning experience for students visiting Graham in person or online.

Teaching safety skills to children can provide lifelong benefits to society, but should be seen as a long-term intervention strategy. Children may remember the messages in the short term, but effective and sustainable development of positive attitudes towards road safety are best achieved by inclusion in the core curriculum, for example as a cross-curricular theme as provided in the **Guide to teach road safety**, created by Brake with support from the UK's Department for Transport.

Upcoming events

- **European Road Safety Campaigns Conference**
17-18 November 2016 – Brussels, Belgium
<http://www.ecrsc.eu/>
- **European Bike-Sharing Conference**
30 November 2016 – Rotterdam, The Netherlands
<http://velo-citta.eu/>

- **Act TravelWise Annual Conference: Sustainable Travel in a Changing World**
17 January 2017 – Birmingham, UK
<http://www.acttravelwise.org/>

For more events, please visit the [EPOMM calendar](#).



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