



## Road safety: 4,000 fewer people lost their lives on EU roads in 2020 as death rate falls to all-time low

Brussels, 20 April 2021

Today the European Commission published preliminary figures on road fatalities for 2020. An estimated 18,800 people were killed in a road crash last year, an unprecedented annual fall of 17% on 2019. This means almost 4,000 fewer people lost their lives on EU roads in 2020 compared to 2019. Lower traffic volumes, as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, had a clear, though unmeasurable, impact on the number of road fatalities.

Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: *"With almost 4,000 fewer deaths on EU roads in 2020, compared to 2019, our roads remain the safest in the world. Still, we are behind our target for the last decade and joint action is needed to prevent a return to pre-COVID levels. In our [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#), we have reiterated our commitment to implementing the EU road safety strategy and bringing down the death toll for all modes of transport close to zero."*

### EU's roads by far the safest in the world

Over the previous decade between 2010 and 2020, the number of road deaths dropped by 36%. This was short of the target of 50% fewer deaths that had been set for that decade. However, with 42 road deaths per 1 million inhabitants, the EU remains the continent with the safest roads in the world. As a comparison, the world average lies at more than 180.

Based on preliminary figures, 18 Member States registered their lowest ever number of road fatalities in 2020. EU-wide, deaths fell by an average of 17% compared to 2019 though the reduction was far from uniform with the largest decreases (of 20% or more) occurring in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Malta and Slovenia. In contrast, five Member States (Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Finland) recorded an increase in fatalities although the number in small countries tends to fluctuate from year to year.

Over a longer timeline, the number of deaths on Europe's roads fell by 36% between 2010 and 2020, below the EU target of 50%. Only Greece (54%) exceeded the target followed by Croatia (44%), Spain (44%), Portugal (43%), Italy (42%) and Slovenia (42%). In total, nine Member States recorded falls of 40% or more.

While the unprecedented developments in 2020 led to some changes in the ranking of countries' fatality rates, the safest roads remain in Sweden (18/million) while Romania (85/million) reported the highest rate in 2020. The EU average was 42/million.

### Impact of the pandemic hard to measure

Lower traffic volumes, as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, had a clear, though unmeasurable, impact on the number of road fatalities. However, preliminary data in the US, for example, show that fatalities spiked in 2020 in spite of lower traffic volumes. Indeed, evidence in some EU countries also points to an increase in risk-taking behaviour, in particular speeding, during lockdown periods.

### Impact on urban mobility as a result of COVID-19

Cycling has experienced a significant rise in popularity and many cities around the world (temporarily) reallocated road space to cyclists and pedestrians. This encouraging development can have a significant positive impact on air quality and climate change and at the same time creates new road safety challenges.

EU-wide, around 70% of road fatalities in urban areas involve vulnerable road users which includes pedestrians, motorcyclist and cyclists. Tackling road safety in cities is therefore a key area of focus and the Commission wants to ensure that road safety is taken into account at all stages of urban mobility planning. Road Safety will be an important element of the new Urban Mobility Initiative to be brought forward by the Commission later this year. In this regard, two European capitals, Helsinki and Oslo, achieved the milestone of zero pedestrian and cyclist deaths in 2019, citing speed reductions as essential to progress.

## Background

These figures are being released on the occasion of the [EU Road Safety Results Conference](#), which brings together policymakers, civil society and road safety practitioners to assess the state of play of road safety in the EU and how best to take the next steps towards 'Vision Zero'.

The [Stockholm Declaration](#) of February 2020 paved the way for further global political commitment with the [UN General Assembly Resolution on road safety](#) proclaiming the period 2021–2030 as the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and including a new reduction target for 2030. In this regard, the EU had already taken the lead and set itself a new 50% reduction target for deaths – and, for the first time, also serious injuries – by 2030. This was set out in the Commission's [Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety](#) and [EU road safety policy framework 2021-2030](#) in 2018 and 2019 which also set out ambitious road safety plans to reach zero road deaths by 2050 ('Vision Zero'). This included setting out key performance indicators for safe roads and roadsides; safe vehicles; safe road use, including safe speed, sober driving, preventing driving while distracted and use of safety belts and protective equipment; and fast and effective post-crash care.

## For More Information

[2020 road safety statistics: what is behind the figures?](#)

[Commission's road safety work and EU road safety statistics](#) and analysis

### Road deaths per million inhabitants – preliminary data for 2020

	2010	2019	2020	% change 2019- 2020	% change 2010- 2020
<b>EU-27</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-36%</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	78	56	44	-22%	-40%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	105	90	67	-26%	-40%
<b>Czechia</b>	77	58	48	-16%	-35%
<b>Denmark</b>	46	34	27	-22%	-39%
<b>Germany</b>	45	37	33	-11%	-25%
<b>Estonia</b>	59	39	45	15%	-24%
<b>Ireland</b>	47	29	30	6%	-30%
<b>Greece</b>	113	64	54	-16%	-54%
<b>Spain</b>	53	37	29	-21%	-44%
<b>France</b>	64	50	39	-21%	-36%
<b>Croatia</b>	99	73	58	-20%	-44%
<b>Italy</b>	70	53	40	-25%	-42%
<b>Cyprus</b>	73	59	54	-8%	-20%

<b>Latvia</b>	103	69	74	7%	-35%
<b>Lithuania</b>	95	67	63	-6%	-41%
<b>Luxembourg</b>	64	36	42	18%	-19%
<b>Hungary</b>	74	62	46	-25%	-39%
<b>Malta</b>	31	32	21	-31%	-15%
<b>Netherlands</b>	32	34	31	-8%	1%
<b>Austria</b>	66	47	38	-19%	-39%
<b>Poland</b>	103	77	65	-15%	-37%
<b>Portugal</b>	80	63	52	-18%	-43%
<b>Romania</b>	117	96	85	-12%	-31%
<b>Slovenia</b>	67	49	38	-22%	-42%
<b>Slovakia</b>	69	50	45	-9%	-33%
<b>Finland</b>	51	38	40	4%	-19%
<b>Sweden</b>	28	22	18	-14%	-29%
<b>Switzerland</b>	42	22	26	21%	-31%
<b>Norway</b>	43	20	18	-11%	-54%
<b>Iceland</b>	25	17	22	33%	0%

There was one road fatality in Liechtenstein in 2020 and zero in 2010 and 2019.

The Transport Community published similar data on fatalities in 2020 for the Western Balkans' regional participants on 15 April (<https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Annual-Statistics-2020.pdf>).

The 2020 figures are based on provisional data for some countries and may be subject to minor changes when the final data are released in autumn 2021. The percentage changes in the table are based on the absolute number of fatalities, not the rate per million inhabitants.

Press contacts:

[Stefan DE KEERSMAECKER](#) (+32 2 298 46 80)

[Stephan MEDER](#) (+32 2 291 39 17)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)