



## Safety policies, vision and management

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**Chapter 6 : Safety policies, vision and management**  
**Draft2 – D Fleury**

The previous chapters demonstrated where safety problems may lie, how to analyse them, how to implement well-suited actions and how to evaluate the effects. At this stage, we should insist on the complexity of road safety actions, and therefore the importance of taking each country's specific features into account. The strategies adopted elsewhere (vision zero, sustainable safety, etc.) could then be adapted to the specific cultural, social and institutional features of each country in question. The application of European Union directives and recommendations must also be understood as taking these specific features into account.

**1 Vision and context**

Managing safety actions requires taking local conditions into account, both in their technical dimensions and in their organisational and institutional aspects.

**11 Taking each country's specific road safety problems into account**

The history of the Road Safety struggle in each country will determine the level of prevention and the observable rate of risk. The strategies implemented are not at the same levels of maturity, consistency and integration.

The problems posed must be analysed within the specific context of each country. Thus, alcohol consumption differs from one part of Europe to another. The characteristics of the automobile fleet, bicycle riding, the use of motorcycles and mopeds are obviously to be taken into account in road safety assessments. It is even more obvious that the characteristics of the networks need to be taken into account. Some more densely populated countries have sprawling urban features. In other countries, however, the length of the local rural networks explains the high level of seriousness of the accidents observed.

The good practices which have been analysed in certain countries have to be adapted to these local characteristics.

**12 Taking institutional organisation into account**

Obviously, all road safety actions are undertaken and have an impact on the national level, the regional level and the local level. Certain levels can be stressed, however, depending on the type of action.

Thus, automobile standards are defined on the international level, which is where the main concerns lie. The same holds true for road signs and standards, but their effective application will also depend on particular local conditions.

Moreover, a country's political organisation (its constitution) must be considered to explain certain observable differences in safety planning practices. This holds true for the federal or centralised structure of the country. In some countries, the infra-national level may play a determining role: this is the case of the Belgian Regions or the German Länder, for example. The responsibilities and relative importance of the various institutional structures - from the

national level all the way down to the city level, with all the other levels in between - must be taken into account. The consequences, particularly in terms of imposing strategic actions, are not the same depending on the country's degree of federalism.

The political organisation of countries makes it advisable to stress the consistency of actions used in de-concentrated strategies for which the national government clearly sets objectives, while federal and/or decentralised structures tend to require a concentration on efforts in stakeholder participation based on the involvement of local governments and associations by emphasising their responsibility toward society.

These two trends are necessarily complementary in modern democracies, but the institutional context plays a significant role in defining strategies of action and in organising implementation

In view of including road safety in more global policies, ministerial attributions should also be taken into account insofar as they are able to facilitate such inclusion. Thus, the dispersion of ministerial attributions for urban planning, public works, transportation, safety and the environment may facilitate or hinder an overall picture of the layout and transportation dimensions. In Great Britain, a single department, the DETR, is in charge of all of these fields of action.

### **13 Strategies for action**

The way Road Safety is thought out and the philosophy behind the action obviously influence the strategies adopted.

First of all, the present state of understanding has made it possible to pinpoint actions that have been shown to improve Road Safety. Organising Road Safety actions requires a strong involvement on the part of all concerned stakeholders who are able to influence the application of these particular measures. Quite often, efforts are concentrated on just one or a few aspects of Road Safety. There are several reasons for this; the first is a functional dispersion among administrations; the second is the large number of disciplines concerned (road techniques, vehicles, human factors, etc.); the third is the large number of functions within the administrations in charge of Road Safety, which means compromising on the allocation of limited resources.

While major progress has been possible in this way, and while increases in safety are thus still accessible, certain measures are nonetheless hindered by questions of their social acceptability, existing conflicts between social objectives (traffic, environment, pollution, etc.) and between social objectives and individual desires.

A distinction is usually made between two types of strategies for action. In the first, Road Safety acts as the principal stimulus. Actions then influence activities in other sectors of local interest.

The second strategy is given in reaction to certain sector-based activities which have consequences on Road Safety or which offer opportunities to include Road Safety in other policies. This is why a "multi-annual Road Safety programme" is felt to be a necessity so as to take advantage of all opportunities.

Some countries insist on including this programme in a wider policy. Thus, Road Safety is sometimes included in an overall public health policy or in transport policy. The Netherlands provides a good example of a sustainable transport policy which includes a strategy for developing sustainable safety.

Lastly, an integrative philosophy is appearing which calls for intrinsic safety in road transport systems. Applying this viewpoint to concrete situations requires a clear sharing of

responsibilities among the people in the design and the application of rules. In Sweden, the "vision zero" approach uses such principles:

1. The designers of the system are always ultimately responsible for the design, operations and use of the road transport system and are thereby responsible for the level of safety within the entire system.

2. Road-users are responsible for following the rules for using the road transport system set by the system designers.

3. If road-users fail to obey these rules due to a lack of knowledge, acceptance or ability, or if injuries do occur, the system designers are required to take the necessary further steps to counteract people's being killed and seriously injured.

This type of vision strongly influences the overall design of the road transport system.

## **14 Safety target management**

The road safety struggle increasingly uses *management by objectives*. National road safety plans use targets at a very general level, and if these targets are quantified, they deal with specific road user groups or specific countermeasures. Results are thus stressed more than the means used to achieve them; quantification of the target level (number of accidents, risk level) is used to define guidelines.

"Two different approaches could be used to define targets: a top-down approach and a bottom up one. In a top-down approach the target is set first. This target must be attractive enough to be adopted by politicians. Such an adopted target legitimises the policy process (manpower, funds, etc.) for the measures to be taken. It is to be hoped that enough effective measures will be or become available.

In the bottom-up approach, all relevant data and information have been collected and an assessment has been performed leading to a realistic target. This approach is by definition a realistic one and is to be recommended when a rational approach is chosen, but to accelerate road safety policy the top-down approach could be advisable as well.

When a targeted approach has been chosen, a combination of the top-down and bottom-up approaches will be normal practice, because this will make it possible to choose between realism and idealism" (OECD – 1994 - Targeted road safety programmes).

## **2 Framework for a safety policy**

### **2.1 Bringing skills together**

A road safety policy is based on intentions that are present and ready to act to prevent accidents. These intentions may be brought together specifically around the idea of prevention (often around the idea of enforcement), but they can also be part of wider fields of concern.

We should mention the following:

- Current concerns in favour of sustainable development, which may lead to a change in the paradigm in terms of economic and urban development on the one hand, and in how the road network is designed on the other, leading to a less strict, but certainly more consistent, vision of motorised travel on the political agenda. Moreover, European towns are highly sensitive to the quality of their public spaces for many reasons related to their historical heritage, tourism or property value.

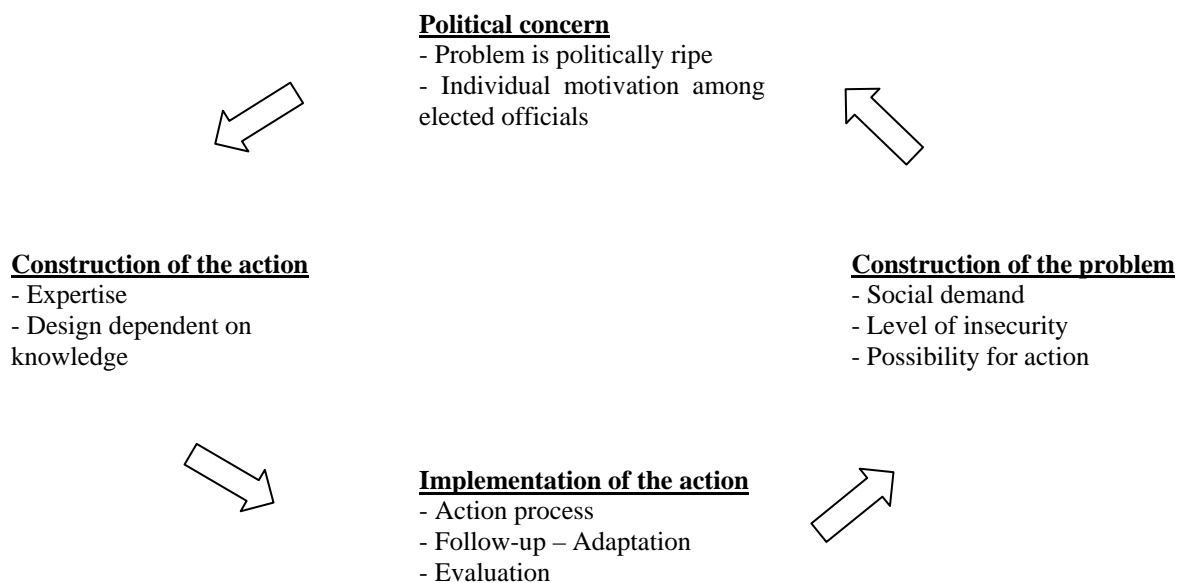
Notably, the levels of foreseeable nuisances caused by the general growth in motorisation should, in the future, occupy an ever more important place in decision making and forceful policies are being implemented for a more rational management of motorised traffic.

- The medical profession has also become alarmed by the increase in the number of traffic victims. Thus, road insecurity is developing into a veritable public health issue requiring preventive processes from healthcare actors.
- Other fields of public or private action could also be mentioned: awareness among police forces toward questions of security and safety or individual delinquency. Associations – often made up of victims – can play the role of lobbyists with the public authorities. Economic agents related to the automobile or two-wheeled vehicles are also sensitive to road accidents...

Bringing skills together obviously results from a political initiative by elected officials capable of holding up road safety as an essential value. They are thus transmitting an often highly diffuse social demand, as well as the EU recommendations which now set objectives for reducing the number of victims in Europe.

As this report has tried to show, this mobilisation of skills is being undertaken by taking into account the historical and organisational context in each country and the state of our understanding of insecurity. This requires technical and organisational expertise to make a real prevention policy possible.

## 2.2 A dynamic process



### Definition and implementation of a road safety policy

Action in favour of road safety first of all entails *construction of the problem*. Experience has shown particularities and specificities depending on the time and depending on the country. This type of construction is based on the status of social demand; it may stress better vehicle design or greater repression, it may insist on road layout, etc.

This construction also evolves according to the level of insecurity. Technicians and the media thus play the role of alerting public opinion. But denouncing the problem is not enough. Certain possibilities for action are usually stressed by the technicians or the media who

demand their implementation. There is then a focus on following the rules, combating drunken driving, speed reduction, protection of urban (residential) zones, educating young adults, driver training, verifying the abilities of the elderly, vehicle performances, etc.

No matter how technically well-founded it may be, no action can really be implemented without *political concern*. It is therefore necessary for a number of politicians to be militants for the road safety cause, considering that it is within their power to act and to gather together a small core group of technicians from various areas who can propose actions and implement them.

Their motivation has several origins but it is also the result of maturity toward this question as a political problem, in other words the effects of these actions – which often impose constraints and restrictions – have to be acceptable to the elected officials without unacceptable political consequences.

*Construction of the action* should be based on strong technical expertise using robust knowledge drawn from experiments that have often been carried out in other countries. Care must be taken to ensure that the users' ability to adapt in the medium term does not produce results that do not correspond to reasonable expectations. This is why many researchers today are publishing meta-analyses to take stock of a subject based on experiments published in scientific journals. These summaries are always very useful in predicting the consequences of actions and thus in adapting them.

*Implementation* then requires effective political management, a follow-up of the action being used to adapt it and an evaluation providing an assessment.

## **23 Management and evaluation**

Safety policy management will thus take into account particular social contexts in which certain measures are called for on the social level (see the recent changes in attitudes in France, for example). Certain targets are then favoured over others. On the other hand, part of society may find it difficult to accept some actions.

The public is increasingly being included in decision-making and in actions, whether in the legislative texts which create obligations for local authorities or in concrete practices. But this kind of inclusion is not easy and this is where the social management of safety policies must be applied in various forms depending on the country, the institutional context, the degree to which prevention has developed, etc...

From a more technical point of view, when the action is implemented, a follow-up of its impact should be performed. This follow-up should be carried out in the short term, by direct observations to assess any deviations from the safety objectives laid down in the programme of action. This can lead to a refined adaptation of intervention strategies and corrections when dysfunctional situations arise.

A quantitative evaluation of the long-term effects (several years), notably for the number of accidents and victims, must be carried out. This makes it possible to assess the usefulness of a particular action, of course, but also to improve our general understanding of its effects. By bringing several experiments together, through meta-analyses, we can assess the quantitative evolution of road safety.

Political management ensures the success of a preventive action. Quantitative evaluations provide assessments of the policies implemented and of whether the pre-set objectives are met.