

Improving Road Safety Management in Romania

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Abstract

Although Romania joined the European Union (EU) in 2007 and adopted EU road safety regulations, road safety legislation was lacking and disparate. Prior to 2016, Romania was one of few EU countries that did not have a National Road Safety Strategy, and a National Law mandating Road Safety Audits in 2008 for road infrastructure was ineffective. This road safety management policy gap resulted in Romania having one of the worst road fatality rates in the EU. This presentation outlines the consequences of such a gap and legislative changes made to improve road safety management to precipitate reductions in road fatalities.

Background

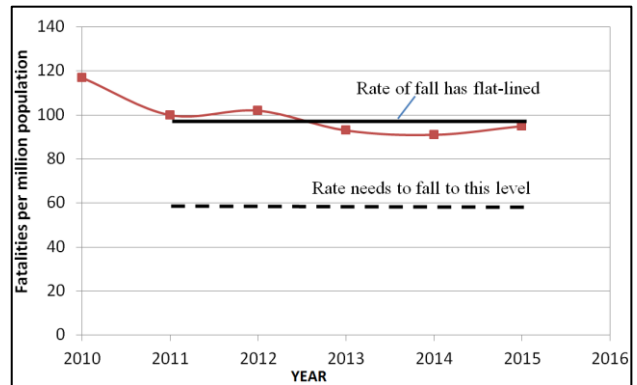
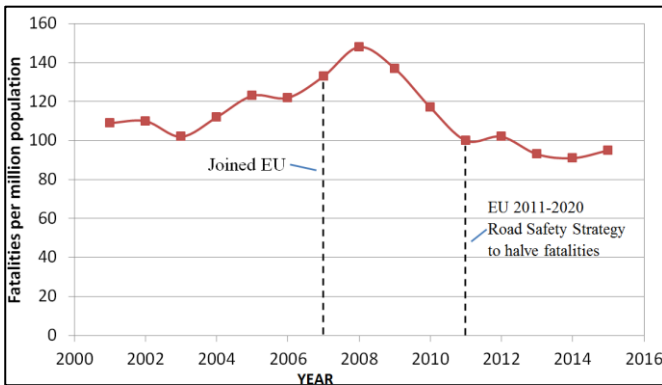
The European Parliament and Council adopted on the 19th of November 2008 directive 2008/98/CE regarding road safety management, thus emphasising the increasing importance of road safety in that jurisdiction. The United Nations also, through the resolution adopted on the 2nd of March 2010, recognised the gravity of the road safety problem by declaring the decade 2011-2020 as the “Decade of action in road safety”.

In response Romania, as an EU country, adopted the ambitious target to reduce the number of its road fatalities by half over the period 2001-2010. Given the surge in economic activity and subsequent rise in mobilisation in the period 2000-2011, particularly so after Romania joined the EU in 2007, Figure 1 shows the fatality rate per head of population started to rise in 2003 to a peak in 2008. A fall in fatalities began when Romania, concerned it was not going to reach the EU target, introduced a National Law (Law 265/2008) mandating Road Safety Audits (RSAs), for new road infrastructure. However, this legislation was flawed and led to a situation where only a select group of Auditors were approved to carry out RSAs. This in turn resulted in large fees, which subsequently resulted in RSAs not being carried out. By 2011 Romania fell well short of its target. Moreover, its fatality rate started to flat-line over the next five years as shown in Figure 1. It is now slowly rising again.

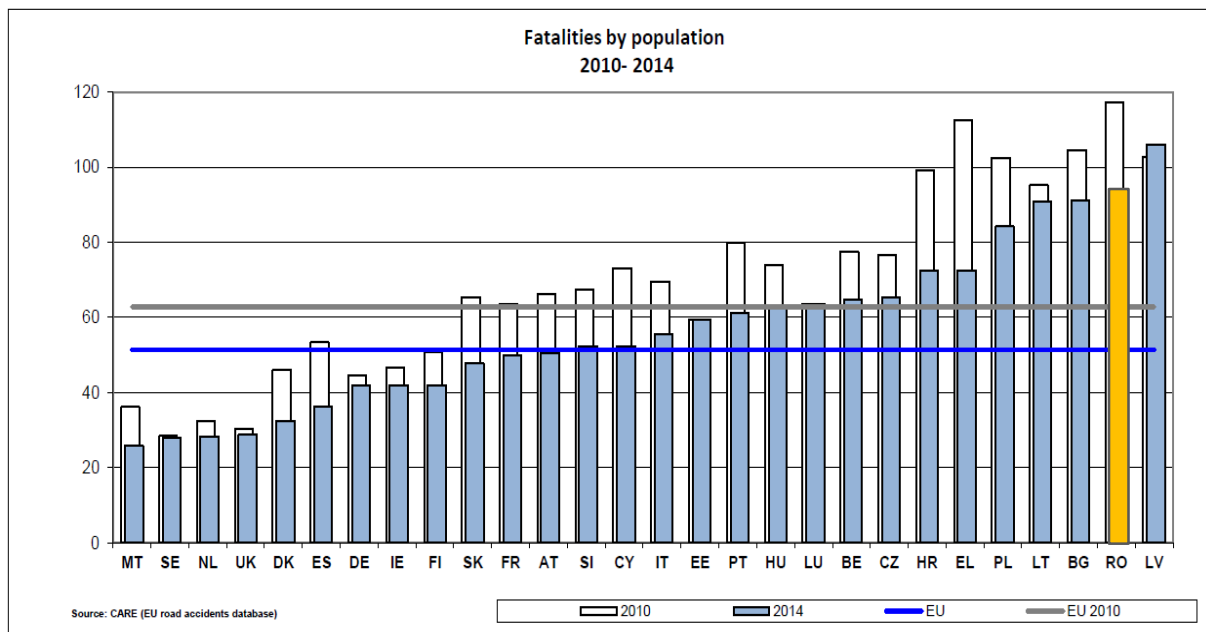
Meanwhile, the EU adopted the next decade’s Action Plan 2011-2020, which continued to maintain the goal reducing the UE’s 2010 serious injuries and fatality rates by 50% by 2010. Romania was subsequently required also to adopt its long-term target of reducing its 2010 fatalities by 50% by 2020 in line with the EU objective, but this was legislated only just recently in 2016. As a consequence, Figure 1 shows that Romania is now one of the worst performing countries in terms of road deaths per million inhabitants and its relative change in fatality rate from 2001 to 2015 is the smallest of all EU countries.

Road Safety Actions in 2016

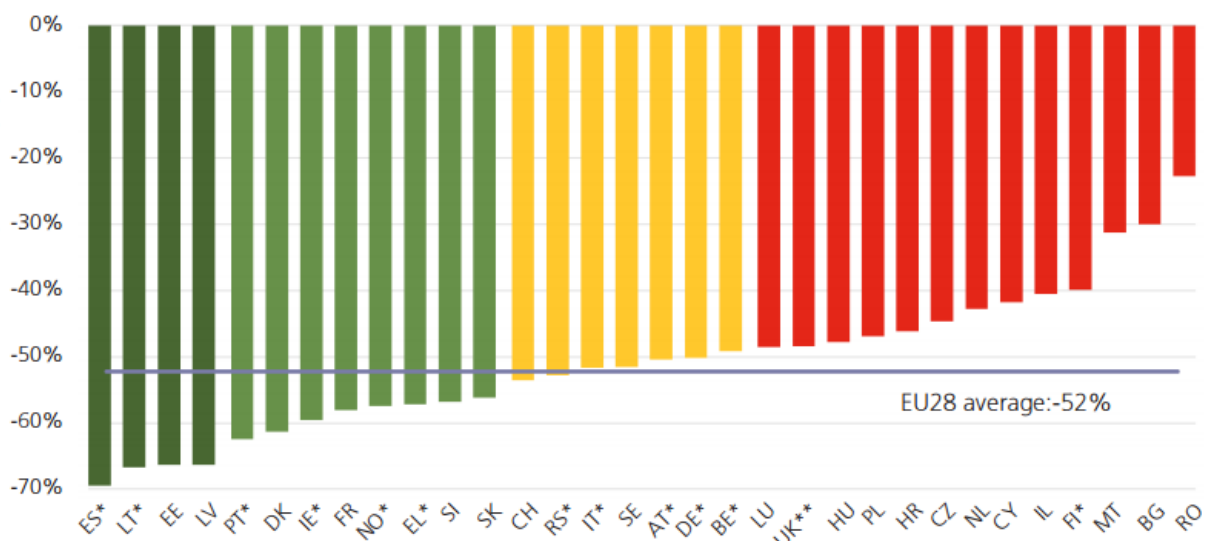
The end of 2015 brought in a new Romanian government, with an intermediary and non-politically aligned mandate, essentially a technocratic government with specialists from all fields of interests. One of the priorities of this non-politically aligned intermediary government was to address road safety, particularly the main issues regarding Romania’s National Road Safety Strategy and its Road Safety Action Plan, and correcting Law 265/2008 regarding RSAs and road safety inspections, all of which were in a draft status from 2010 to 2016, including Romania’s General Transport Master Plan (2015).



Romania's fatality rate per million population from 2001-2015 has recently flat lined.



Romania's fatality rate per population compared to other EU countries.



Relative change in road deaths between 2001 and 2015 for EU countries (Romania on far right)

Figure 1. Romania's (RO) road safety fatality rate and benchmarking performance

The National Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 and the Action Plan were finalised in March 2016 and passed in October 2016 through Governmental Decision no. 755/2016. Also, Emergency Ordinance no. 22/2016 from June finally corrected Law 265/2008. This was some 8 years later, after more than 16,000 road users have died and ten times this number have been seriously injured on Romania's roads. Official government documents now present the bleak statistics along with an analysis of the main causes of crashes, a definition of the road safety problem, along with ten main action items and objectives to address Romania's fatalities and serious injuries.

This presentation will discuss Romania's history of road safety legislation, the consequences of its Road Safety policy gaps, the current situation regarding Romania's National Road Safety Strategy, its Action Plan, current activities regarding training of RSAs and activities regarding RSAs and road safety inspections.

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