

THE NEW PARADIGM FOR SAFE CITY STREETS

Today we have the knowledge and the means to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries in urban streets, and to greatly improve the quality of life and health of our citizens.

Traffic safety is a global problem in which cities have a crucial role to play. Adopting a 'Vision Zero' approach requires political leadership, strategic clarity and decisive action, as well as the ownership of all involved – elected officials, transport professionals and citizens.

We need effective solutions and a reliable paradigm for their development and deployment. A growing number of cities are taking up this challenge. We must step up the diffusion and the adoption of the principles on which their successful experience is based. Therefore,

We, the cities, recognise the following principles as necessary for sound and effective action for traffic safety:

1. Our streets, our responsibility

Death and serious injury are not an inevitable by-product of urban mobility. Traffic crashes and risk behaviours have underlying structural causes that cities can act upon. A 'safe system' approach addresses the interaction between road users, vehicles and infrastructure on our streets. All parts of this system must be improved. If people make mistakes or one part fails, street users are still protected.

2. Don't blame, protect

People have diverse needs and capabilities. Safety policies for our streets must expect people who make mistakes, drivers who aren't fully aware of the danger their behaviour can create, as well as people who are younger, older or have disabilities. These challenges must be addressed by careful planning, realistic management, universal design, and strict enforcement.

3. City streets are not motorways

Walking and cycling in city streets does not require a driver's license and isn't subject to age limits. City streets are a different environment from motor-oriented high-ways and roads and need specific safety approaches. They are the heart of our communities and must be healthy and attractive places to live, work, play and do business. The safety of a street depends on the safety provided to its vulnerable users.

4. Mobility must be safe, or it won't become sustainable

Safety fears are often cited as the most important impediment for walking more or taking up cycling, including by parents who feel they must drive their children to school. Streets must be safe for people to embrace sustainable modes, and for cities to mitigate climate change. Improving the safety of our streets will unlock the potential for walking, cycling,

public transport and a growing number of shared micro-mobility options to advance climate and air quality objectives.

5. Safety leads to efficiency

Reducing speed is one of the most important things cities can do to make city streets safer. A person is about five times less likely to be fatally injured if hit at 30 km/h than at 50 km/h. Wider lanes, higher speed limits and traffic lights that favour motorised traffic are not the solution to urban congestion. Improving conditions for walking, cycling and public transport reduces the need for motorised journeys. Efficiency must work for all modes and cannot compromise the safety of some.

6. Reduce risk at the source

Motor vehicles, due to their higher speed, larger mass and stronger structure, are the main source of risk in city streets. Reducing the number of motor vehicles on our streets also means reducing the danger that they pose. Measures to reduce risky behaviour on the part of drivers must take precedence over restrictions on the free movement of citizens who walk, cycle or use public transport.

7. Fairness and freedom of choice

Cars and trucks present lower risk to their users, at the expense of higher risk for other people. Decades of mobility policies favouring motorised traffic created an imbalance that generates higher risk for some modes, distorting options and reducing freedom of choice. The rise of micro-mobility has shown the impact this has, with e-scooters being used on footpaths because their users are afraid of motor vehicles, which in turn leads to safety concerns for pedestrians. Multimodality implies vulnerability and we must ensure safety for all modes.

8. The right to know

Sound data is the basis for sound policies. Public entities must work together and allocate adequate resources to collect and analyse data on traffic safety. Civil society (including citizens, the scientific community and the press) have the right to easily access and understand relevant information about traffic crashes and the fatalities and injuries they cause. Openness about data on traffic safety is in the public interest and helps to drive improvement.

9. Technology can be a promise, not an alibi

We need technology that can reduce the number of private motor vehicles and make them safer, such as Intelligent Speed Assistance. Yet technological innovation must never become a source of new constraints for pedestrians and cyclists. For example, with requirements for people and public streets to become machine recognisable. Technology for tomorrow must not delay the implementation of solutions required today.

10. Let cities lead

Cities that are innovating and leading in street safety efforts must be empowered to shape policies on the national and international levels, and legislation must help cities take the necessary steps to ensure safety in their streets. Cities must be encouraged to share their experience with their national and international peers and must be supported as champions for traffic safety.

We, the cities, act now.



Arad, Romania

Helmond, The Netherlands

Arnhem Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Lisbon, Portugal

Barcelona, Spain

London, UK

Berlin, Germany

Madrid, Spain

Farkadona, Greece

Schaarbeek, Belgium

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Cities and regions are invited to sign the declaration during the Autumn of 2019.

Dagmar Köhler
dkoehler@polisnetwork.eu

Thomas Wilson,
thomas.wilson@eurocities.eu