

IS ROAD SAFETY A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM IN ROMANIA?

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Abstract: Road safety is an important public health problem in EU, that had as a goal to halve the number of road deaths by 2010 compared to 2001. This paper aimed to assess the degree of accomplishment of this target in Romania. The Romanian achievements were assessed, using EURO CARE database. Unfortunately Romania is far away from the average EU target and even far away from the average of the twelve new member states (reduction of 16.8%), reaching more traffic deaths in the last years than in 2001 (25% more in 2008 and 14% more in 2009). This means for 2009 an excess of 346 deaths compared to the baseline and of 1571 deaths compared to EU target for 2010. Romania is the only member state with such a high gap from the baseline in both years. More focus is needed at national level in order to develop appropriate objectives and feasible mechanisms to better implement the new strategy 2011 – 2020.

Cuvinte cheie: siguranță rutieră, decese prin accidente rutiere, strategie

Rezumat: Siguranța rutieră este o problemă importantă de sănătate publică în UE, care și-a propus înjumătățirea numărului de decese prin accidente rutiere în anul 2010, comparativ cu 2001. Articolul a urmărit să evalueze nivelul de realizare a acestei ținte în România. Indicatorul a fost analizat utilizând date din baza EURO CARE. Din păcate, România este departe de ținta UE și chiar departe de media celor 12 noi state membre (reducere de 16.8%), înregistrând atât în 2008, cât și în 2009 mai multe decese prin accidente rutiere decât în 2001 (cu 25%, respectiv cu 14%). Pentru anul 2009, aceasta a însemnat un exces de 346 de decese față de anul 2001 și respectiv de 1571 decese față de ținta UE pentru anul 2010. România este singurul stat membru care a avut această situație atât în 2008, cât și în 2009. Ca urmare, sunt necesare mai multe eforturi în plan național pentru a dezvolta obiective naționale realiste în legătură cu noua strategie UE 2011 – 2020 și mecanisme fezabile de implementare, pentru atingerea unor rezultate mai bune în viitor..

INTRODUCTION

Road safety has a very high importance as a public health problem at EU level. In 2001, the Commission proposed through the second White Paper on European transport policy that the European Union should set itself to halve the number of road deaths by 2010 (from 54,300 in 2001 to 27,100 in 2010, for EU 27) [1]. This very ambitious target was also enforced through the Third European Action Programme for Road Safety (2003 – 2010). The document provided also 62 proposals for concrete actions in the field of vehicle safety, infrastructure and users' safety [2]. An ex-post evaluation of this plan showed that the fatalities declined, but not as expected. In 2008 there was an average reduction of only 28% instead of 42% (38,900 deaths) and in 2009 the reduction reached 35% instead of 46% (35,500 deaths).

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this paper was to assess the degree of accomplishment of the EU Road Safety target in Romania..

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A review the EU strategic documents in the Road Safety field were done, in order to identify their goals and

targets. Based on these, the Romanian targets were assessed, using CARE and other international and national databases.

RESULTS

Figure no. 1. The annual percentage change in road fatality compared to 2001 baseline in Romania



Sursa: Dta base CARE [3]

Even the trend in EU is not as expected, it is however decreasing and not very far away from the target (-35% instead of -46% in 2009). One of the main challenges was the EU

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accession for 12 new member states, which were not considered in 2001. There is an important gap between the old and the new member states (-40.8% compared to -16.8% in 2009) [4]. Unfortunately Romania is far away from the average EU target and even far away from the average of the twelve new member states (figure 1). After the first two years, the road fatality started to increase and the percentage changed (compared to baseline) has become positive since 2005. The maximum gap has reached in 2008 (25% higher than the baseline). In 2009 the number of deaths was 14.12% higher than the baseline, meaning an excess of 346 deaths compared to the baseline and of 1571 deaths compared to EU target for 2010

DISCUSSIONS

Even Romania is implementing all the EU directives related to road safety and has some specific national measures which in favor of this objective (eg. Blood Alcohol Concentration of 0 for drivers), the road safety is however a huge public health problem at a national level. The road fatalities increased during 2003 – 2008 and even a small decreasing could be seen in 2009, the level is still higher than in 2001. Romania is the only member state that experienced a higher road fatality than the baseline, both in 2008 and 2009. Among all the member states, Bulgaria experienced a higher road fatality than its baseline in 2008 (but only with 5% plus, compared to 25% in Romania) and Malta in 2009 (16%) [4].

In this context, more focus is needed for the road safety related problems from all the national stakeholders like the Government, the ministries (especially the Ministry of Administration and Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health), cut also the communities and the civil society organizations. The determinants of this situation need to be analyzed and understood at a national level. Till now Romania didn't have a specific strategy for road safety, but a general objective is included in the National Strategy for Public Policy 2010 – 2013 [5]. However, the new EU strategic frame "Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020" [7] should be carefully analyzed by the Romanian counterparts, in order to establish appropriate goals for the national context and proper mechanism for implementation and evaluation. Among the major objectives of this strategy there are: improving education and training for road users, enforcing the road rules, developing safer infrastructure, safer vehicles, promoting the new technologies, improving the emergency and post-injuries services and protect the vulnerable road users.

CONCLUSIONS

The road safety is a major public health problem in Romania due to the high number of deaths attributable to it, Romania being far away from the EU target of halving the road deaths in 2010 compared to 2001, but also far from the new member states average (- 16,8%), with a positive difference in both 2008 and 2009. More focus and cooperation are needed at a national level in order to develop realistic objectives and feasible mechanisms to implement the EU strategy, for achieving better results in the future.

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