

The European Road Safety Observatory (ERSO): Supporting Evidence-Based Policy for Safer EU Roads

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Extended Abstract

The European Commission (EC) has established an ambitious target of reducing road crash fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2030, as part of its broader “Vision Zero” strategy aiming to eliminate deaths and serious injuries on EU roads by 2050. To support this objective, the European Road Safety Observatory (ERSO) serves as the European Union’s central information system on road safety, providing a comprehensive evidence base for policy development, implementation, and evaluation across Member States. ERSO builds upon national crash data collected in the European Commission’s CARE database, which ensures harmonized and comparable information across all EU Member States. By analyzing and presenting these data, ERSO enables policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to monitor trends, assess progress, and design effective countermeasures to enhance road safety outcomes.

In 2024, 19,940 people lost their lives in road crashes across the EU, representing a 2% reduction compared to 2023. While this marks steady progress toward the EU’s 2030 targets, the pace remains gradual, and the figures reflect the persistent challenges in achieving Vision Zero. With 45 deaths per million inhabitants, the EU maintains one of the best road safety records globally; however, each statistic underscores the profound human and societal impact of preventable road incidents.

ERSO’s strength lies in its rich and diversified data resources and analytical tools. Its content encompasses annual statistical reports, collision matrices, country profiles, facts and figures, infographics, and key performance indicators (KPIs) that collectively measure progress across critical dimensions of road safety. Additionally, thematic reports provide insights into collision patterns, risk factors, and intervention effectiveness. This systematic monitoring and transparent dissemination of information allow for a deep understanding of crash causality across all road user types, from motorists to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and e-scooter riders. The added value of ERSO lies in its ability to transform raw data into actionable knowledge. By offering reliable, comparable, and timely information, ERSO supports evidence-based policymaking, enabling EU institutions and Member States to identify high-risk areas, evaluate existing safety measures, and prioritize investments where they can save the most lives. Moreover, ERSO facilitates cross-country learning and best practice exchange, fostering a culture of continuous improvement in road safety management. Beyond policymaking, the public dissemination of data and performance reports contributes to raising awareness among citizens and stakeholders. By highlighting specific risk factors and behavioral patterns, ERSO helps motivate safer behavior among road users and supports communication campaigns aimed at changing attitudes and reducing risky conduct.

As the basis for monitoring and evaluating road safety progress at national and EU level for the period 2021-2030, ERSO plays a central role in guiding policy decisions, measuring performance, and advancing the EU’s commitment to safer roads for all.

Keywords: Road Safety Monitoring, European Road Safety Observatory (ERSO), Vision Zero, Evidence-Based Policy.