
FERSI calls for a road safety mission in Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe: an excellent opportunity for achieving roads without victims

Currently, the European Commission is working on Horizon Europe, an ambitious €100 billion research and innovation programme that will succeed Horizon 2020. Horizon Europe will incorporate clearly specified policy missions that ensure the effectiveness of research and innovation funding by pursuing clearly defined targets. FERSI, the Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes, supports this view as it gives Europe an excellent opportunity to pursue and achieve roads without victims. As such FERSI strongly calls on the European Commission to recognise road safety as one of the important policy missions in the Horizon Europe framework programme.

Meeting the EU road safety ambitions by thorough and innovative research

With the Valetta declaration on road safety¹, the EU has adopted strict and very ambitious road safety targets for 2030, not only related to road fatalities, but for the first time, also to serious injuries: halving the number of both from the 2020 baseline. As a longer term goal, the EU has indicated to strive for zero road fatalities in 2050², i.e. roads without victims. Whereas previous EU targets were close to being met, during the last years safety developments seem to have stagnated; a picture that is almost universal for Europe³. Without doubt, for meeting the 2030 and 2050 targets we need to turn the tide and make a huge step forward. This step is only to be realised by thorough, innovative scientific research that extends and optimally integrates our knowledge in the areas of road user behaviour, road infrastructure and vehicle safety; research that follows the principles of the safe system approach⁴ towards substantially improving traffic safety culture in the entire EU.

Solving existing and new issues in a developing road transport system

For substantially improving road safety, in-depth knowledge is needed in the nature and relevance of existing risk factors in the oncoming decades, as well as the way new technologies can help to eliminate or mitigate their detrimental effect of road safety. For example, distraction by more and more in-vehicle information and devices, fatigue in an increasingly 24/7 economy, and impairment by ever new drugs. Furthermore, the rapidly increasing number of older road users pose several challenges for guaranteeing their (safe) mobility. Moreover, research needs to focus on new road safety issues, for example on the opportunities and challenges of vehicle automation, vehicle connectivity and the use of roadside technology. The ever-developing possibilities of large-scale (automatic) data collection, storage and analysis technologies are expected to help to bring existing knowledge at a new level.

¹ Valletta Declaration on Road Safety, March 2017.

https://www.eu2017.mt/en/Documents/Valetta_Declaration_on_Improving_Road_Safety.pdf

2. COM(2018) 293: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:0e8b694e-59b5-11e8-ab41-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_2&format=PDF

³ 12th Annual Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Report. ETSC, Brussels; June 2018 <https://etsc.eu/12th-annual-road-safety-performance-index-pin-report>

4. ITF (2016). Zero Road Deaths and Serious Injuries: Leading a Paradigm Shift to a Safe System, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789282108055-en>.

Evidence-based road safety investments highly cost-beneficial

Road accidents come with high societal costs; even in relatively safe countries these costs amount to as high as 2% of their GDP. In general, investments in evidence-based road safety measures have benefits that outweigh their costs several times. In addition, contributing to a society where both conventional and technical solutions are fully integrated, put European industry in a world leading position. Hence, from a rational point of view, investments in road safety, both at research level and at measure implementation level, should not be an issue, but nevertheless it often is. This might be one of the reasons that developments in road safety are stagnating and research can help to understand what prevents society from doing the things it clearly needs and can do in a cost-effective way.

Road safety hand in hand with health and well-being, environment and inclusivity goals

Health and well-being, environment and an inclusive society are European challenges that to a large extent go hand in hand with a safe road transport system. For example, for keeping our cities clean and their citizens active and healthy, walking and cycling are crucial modes of transport. In order to promote their use, an acceptable level of safety is a prerequisite. Similarly, a sufficiently safe traffic environment is a precondition for providing older or disabled citizens sufficient opportunity to independently participate in society and maintain their social contacts. Drug and alcohol abuse is a European-wide problem that leads to violence, diseases, broken families, et cetera, but also to many road victims. New partnerships and collaboration between these different societal relevant fields will allow for an even more cost-effective contribution to these main challenges of the European society and, in addition, contribute to an attractive society for all European citizens.

In conclusion: a policy mission with a huge societal impact

FERSI concludes that road safety is an issue with a huge impact on many aspects of our society. Recently, the developments towards safer roads have stagnated and big steps are needed to bring the ambitious European road safety targets within reach. Road safety research is at the basis of realising such big steps forward. It is clear that this research fits the Commission's aim for effective research and innovation perfectly well, given its huge societal and economic benefits, and its direct relation with other high priority policy areas. That is why **FERSI strongly calls** on the European Commission **for including road safety as one of the policy missions** in its Horizon Europe framework programme.

FERSI - Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes
17 January 2019

Contact: Rob Eenink, FERSI President: rob.eenink@swov.nl