

RESOLUTION NO.50 ON ROAD SAFETY OF CHILDREN

[CM(87)13]

The Council of Ministers of Transport, meeting in Madrid, on 26 and 27 May 1987:

HAVING REGARD to the report of the Committee of Deputies on the safety of children;

CONSIDERING:

- That the premature death of young road users must be regarded as particularly unacceptable, precisely because they are children.
- That traffic accidents represent the most common cause of accidental death among children under 15 years old.
- That it has adopted several Resolutions since 1975 with a view to reducing the mortality of children in road accidents, and that the in depth study by the OECD Scientific Expert Group on Traffic Safety of Children presents valuable analyses which supplement the statistics on children's deaths and injuries in road traffic.

RECOMMENDS the Member countries of ECMT:

- To pay due regard to the safety aspects in the planning of the traffic environment, especially in residential areas, considering the child's inherent need for living range, and to organise through traffic in residential areas by physical and regulatory means.
- To pay special attention, outside residential areas, to the design and location of crossing facilities used by children, especially near the schools and in places where children move a lot in the traffic.
- To inform drivers about children's difficulties in traffic and to instruct them to be aware of the children's specific capabilities and limitations.
- To provide children at different ages with training designed to call attention to the risks in the environment where the child plays and exists.
- To emphasize the roles of parents as instructors of their children, especially before school age, and as an example to children and young people in traffic.

- To inform parents about the risks due to the fact that children are entering traffic at an increasingly early age as cyclists, or indeed as drivers of mopeds.
- To encourage the development and use of a light protective helmet suitable for cycling.
- To urge parents to transport those children who cannot use seat belts in appropriate child seats.

REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY OF CHILDREN

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I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The general situation in road safety and the problems involved have been outlined on a number of occasions in previous reports. It is however worthwhile recalling the main facts. The findings set out in this report have been analysed in detail in the study by the OECD Scientific Expert Group on Traffic Safety of Children (OECD, April 1983).

By way of introduction, reference may also be made to a report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1981 which states:

"Any attempt to generalise is prone to error, but one can say, generally speaking, that accidents cause between a quarter and half the deaths in Europe in the 1-14 age group: traffic accidents represent between one-third and half of this total and are the most common cause of accidental death".

Throughout the twentieth century remarkable progress has been made in reducing overall mortality and improving the general health among children, but no such improvement has been achieved in reducing child mortality from traffic accidents. Consequently, the relative importance of traffic accidents as a cause of impairment, disability and death of children continues to increase.

When analysing accident statistics, even those for ECMT member countries, it has to be borne in mind that, although formally comparable, the national data vary considerably as regards their coverage and reliability. Methods of compiling statistics differ significantly from one country to another. Also, the definitions used for certain accident terms and the methods of recording the data are often different. Therefore the crude figures given and the corresponding percentages cannot in themselves explain the underlying reasons for the occurrence of accidents; nevertheless the trends can be informative.

The term "child" in this text is defined to be those from 0-14 years of age. This group is often divided into three subgroups: 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 years old.

In 1986, the OECD published a report by a Group of Experts entitled: "Effectiveness of Road Safety Education Programmes". This report made a detailed assessment of the value of road safety education as an accident prevention measure. In spite of the well-known fact that the most powerful effect on the safety of unprotected road-users (particularly children, juveniles and the elderly) derives from measures related to the way in which the traffic environment, interpreted in both its broad and narrow senses, is designed and structured, the report describes in depth different methods to evaluate road safety education approaches. The OECD Expert Group decided to confine its attention to studies on the road safety

education provision for unprotected young road users up to the age of 16. The report contains important methodological recommendations for those active in both developmental and evaluational research. It also states that it is of little value to add to the recommendations published in the OECD report (1983) on the traffic safety of children.

II. CHILD ACCIDENT STATISTICS

The statistics below highlight trends from 1970 to 1979 as set out in the OECD study published in 1983. More recently, a limited updating of the data was carried out on the initiative of the ECMT Road Safety Committee. The results, which are given in the text in brackets (), are based on the data for 1985 supplied by eleven countries and, in particular, seven ECMT members.

General assessment

Children in the 0-14 age group constituted in 1979 on average 23.2% of the population in the group of countries under review (N= 16) (1985, 19.1%, ten countries) and accounted on average for 8.4% (1985, 7.1%, ten countries) of the total number of road accident fatalities.

The breakdown of child road deaths as a percentage of the total number of road deaths shows that the 0-4 age group is the least affected (1985, the same). The respective breakdown for child injuries is substantially the same. The most affected age group in child road injuries is the 10-14 year olds (1985, the same, eight countries).

A comparison of the death rate figures for children in different age groups with those for the total number of deaths of those in the same age groups, reveals that for the age group 5-14 one death in four results from a road accident. This data concern results from nine countries.

As regards the breakdown by sex, the OECD analysis in 1983 found that the ratio of girls to boys killed in road accidents is roughly 1 to 3, for cyclists nearly 1 to 4. The above updated data for 1985 supplied by eleven ECMT countries show that the ratios have changed: the ratio of girls to boys killed in road accidents is 1 to 1.5. In the case of cyclists the ratio is 1 to 2.1.

Child pedestrian casualties

Of all pedestrian deaths 18% (15% in 1985, eleven countries) fall into the group 0-14. The age group 5-9 is relatively the most affected in child pedestrian deaths. The same age group is the most vulnerable to injuries.

Child cyclist casualties

Child cyclist fatalities account for, on average, 24% (18%, eleven countries, 1985) of all cyclist fatalities. In 1985, injuries to child cyclists accounted for nearly 27% of the total number of injuries to cyclists in eleven ECMT countries. As might be expected, the 10-14 age group was the most vulnerable cyclist group amongst children both during the seventies in the OECD countries and in 1985 in eleven ECMT member countries. The breakdown for injuries is the same as for deaths.

Child casualties as car passengers

Child car users can clearly not be the instigators but only the victims of road accidents. Road deaths and injuries to children as passengers in cars account on average for 35% and 49.3%, respectively, of all child road deaths and injuries (in 1985, 28.2% and 28.4% respectively in ten countries).

The incidence of deaths and injuries is roughly the same for all three age groups. According to the report drawn up by OECD in 1983, it would seem evident that traffic accidents are leading to a definitely too high incidence of long-term incapacity amongst children, particularly physical handicaps.

Trends in child road casualties between 1976 and 1985

In accordance with the above updating (see following table), it can be said that the relative safety of children improved more quickly than that of adults during the period 1976-1985.

Children (0-14 years) who are road accident casualties (killed and injured) (as a percentage of total accident casualties)

(Data for 11 ECMT Member countries covering the period 1976-1985)

Year	1976*	1977*	1978	1979*	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Category										
Killed	9	7	9	8	7	7	7	7	7	7
Injured	13	13	12	12	12	12	12	12	11	11
Killed as Pedestrians	18	18	17	16	15	15	15	15	14	15
Injured as Pedestrians	40	40	41	37	36	36	35	35	35	34
Cyclists killed	23	24	22	22	21	19	20	20	21	18
Cyclists injured	38	38	36	37	33	32	32	32	29	27

* The percentage for this year relates to only 10 member countries.

The safety trend for pedestrians is more favourable than that for cyclists and also more favourable for pedestrians injured than pedestrians killed. As regards cyclists, the number injured has fallen much more rapidly than the number killed. Overall, however, the number of children killed or injured is still totally unacceptable.

III. REFERENCES TO EARLIER ECMT RESOLUTIONS ON ROAD SAFETY

The ECMT Council of Ministers has approved several Resolutions with the aim to reduce the mortality of children in road accidents.

Resolution No. 33, adopted in June 1975

Subject: The problem of young children carried in front seats of motor vehicles.

- Main provisions:
- Obligation – unless there is good reason for not doing so – for children to be carried at the rear of motor vehicles.
 - Establishment of common standards for the design and type approval of special safety devices for children carried in motor vehicles.
 - Withdrawal from the market of seats and other safety devices for children which are plainly ineffective or even dangerous.

Resolution No. 37, adopted in June 1978

Subject: Driver training.

- Main provisions:
- Introduction of a comprehensive and coherent system of driver instruction, the main purpose being to ensure that behaviour is in conformity with road safety requirements.
 - Promotion of road safety education in schools as recommended by the ECMT/Council of Europe Joint Conferences.

Resolution No. 38, adopted in June 1978

Subject: Seat belts.

- Main provisions:
- Fitting of seat belts in new vehicles, preferably with three-point anchorage, both for front and rear-seats.
 - Compulsory, wearing of seat belts, both inside and outside built-up areas, for car occupants whose age, body measurements and physical condition allow it.

Resolution No. 39, approved in 1979

Subject: The road safety of children and young people.

- Main provisions:
- Environmental adjustments with due regard to the psychological and biological development of children.
 - The role of parents in promoting the safety of children.
 - Publicity campaigns as a safety device.

Resolution No. 44, adopted in May, 1983

Subject: Making cycling safer.

- Main provisions:
- Segregation of types of traffic and of bicycles and motor vehicles, primarily by means of the construction of cycle paths.
 - National information campaigns to make motorists and cyclists aware of the latter's vulnerability and advise them of the road behaviour required in consequence.
 - Adoption of technical standards for bicycles so as to ensure that they are as safe as possible.
 - Compulsory fitting of a standard set of reflecting devices on bicycles.

Resolution No. 51, adopted in November 1984

Subject: School transport.

- Main provisions:
- Planning, organisation and financing of school transport services.
 - Development of road safety education in schools including information on school transport safety.
 - Checks on the qualifications and retraining for drivers of vehicles used for school transport.
 - Improved safety arrangements at bus stops and at their vicinity.
 - Provision of adequate supervision at bus stops near schools, and the presence of supervision in the vehicle.
 - Development of the statistics on accidents involving children in school transport.

A new Resolution, designed to improve road safety for children and which takes account of the present situation is attached to this report, for approval of the Council of Ministers.