

Issued to the Danish Parliament on 15 December 2000

Report to the Danish Parliament from the Minister of Transport on the Road Safety Commission's new objectives

The Road Safety Commission advises the Minister of Transport on road safety and in spring 2000 they published a new action plan on road safety in Denmark under the title *'Every accident is one accident too many - road safety starts with you'*.

People working regularly with road safety in counties and local authorities have requested a debate about the new objectives in the Danish Parliament. This report is to address that request.

In 1988, the Road Safety Commission issued Report No. 1157 *'Road Safety Policy Action Plan'*. In that report, the Road Safety Commission for the first time set specific figures on goals for road safety in Denmark.

A dramatic development led to the Road Safety Commission's action plan. On average, in 1986 and 1987 there were 711 deaths and 12,709 injuries on Danish roads.

Therefore, the Road Safety Commission's goal was to reduce the number of deaths and injuries by at least 40 per cent at the end of 2000. This corresponded to a maximum of 427 deaths and 7,624 injuries for 2000. This goal was to be independent of increases in traffic.

The goal has not been achieved.

On the basis of the years of 1986 and 1987 with 711 road deaths, there was a drop of approximately 28 per cent up to 1999 when 514 people lost their lives on the roads. That is, 197 fewer are killed on the roads each year.

At the same time, from 1988 to today, traffic has increased by almost 50 per cent.

The increase in car traffic means that, *ceteris paribus*, there is a greater risk of road accidents. The Road Directorate has calculated that for each 10 per cent increase in car traffic, the number of accidents will increase by 6 per cent.

This shows that there has been a significant improvement in car-traffic safety per kilometre driven. A corresponding improvement for cyclists and pedestrians has not taken place.

The considerable drop in the overall number of accidents during the period is primarily due to the work which has been carried out to improve road safety through the design of roads, safer cars, changes in the behaviour of road users, police checks, campaigns and information initiatives, etc.

The 1988 Road Safety Commission's action plan contained a total of 32 initiatives where each one of them were to contribute to reaching this goal. These initiatives included legislation, campaigns, road technology, safety equipment in cars, and car design.

In order to acquire knowledge of the actual effects of individual initiatives and the effects of the plan as a whole, the Road Safety Commission has proposed the initiation of an overall evaluation of Danish road safety work, to be carried out during 2001.

The Government supports the proposal for an overall evaluation of road safety work in Denmark, and it considers it advisable to have foreign specialists examine Danish road safety work, clearly in close cooperation with the most important Danish players in the area.

New goal for road safety

The Road Safety Commission's new goal is a 40 per cent reduction of deaths and injuries within the next 12 years, i.e. before the end of 2012. Figures for 1998 are to form the basis for this goal. In 1998, 499 people were killed and 4,100 were seriously injured on the roads. By the end of 2012 these figures are to be reduced to 300 deaths and 2,400 serious injuries.

In other words, this means that, if we have reached the goal by 2012, 200 lives will be saved and 1,700 serious injuries in road accidents will be prevented.

In relation to the Road Safety Commission's previous goals, a new aspect in the new action plan is emphasis on deaths and serious injuries, i.e. not *all* injuries. This new direction is primarily a deliberate emphasis on preventive initiatives for serious road accidents, and also recognition of the fact that the statistical material for less serious injuries remains rather uncertain.

The Government finds the Road Safety Commission's goal ambitious but realistic.

In relation to the countries with which we usually compare ourselves, Denmark has considerably more deaths, and particularly more deaths in road accidents involving younger people. Denmark has 9 deaths in road accidents each year per 100,000 inhabitants, while figures for Sweden, Norway and United Kingdom are 6-7 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. The Netherlands and Finland also have fewer deaths per 100,000 inhabitants than Denmark. Using road safety as a yardstick, Denmark copes worse than comparable countries.

Developments in Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom demonstrate that it is possible to have a modern, efficient traffic system, and at the same time reduce the number of road accidents.

There has also been greater international focus on road safety in recent years. WHO, the World Health Organisation, has assessed that loss of life and serious injuries arising from road accidents will soon become the third most common cause of death. This compares with the figure for 1990 when they were in ninth place. Globally, road accidents are already the most common cause of death for the 3-to-35-year-old age group.

WHO, the World Bank, the OECD and the EU are encouraging coordinated preventive initiatives to reduce the number of deaths and injuries on the roads.

In the OECD countries alone, 120,000 people are killed on the roads each year. This corresponds to over 300 deaths every day, all year, or to seven full Boeing 767s crashing each week. This would never be accepted in aviation, and enormous resources would be spent on solving the problem if it arised. Corresponding attitudes should be the point of departure for road safety.

There is a growing understanding in the OECD countries that a significant reduction in road accidents will be expensive. Denmark has a high proportion of road deaths compared with the other Nordic countries and several North European countries, while more internationally Denmark has a relatively good road safety record.

The Government will contribute to targeting and developing international cooperation on road safety, and in particular reporting of accident statistics, research results and development projects will be improved, while new methods of road safety will also be enhanced in the forthcoming four-year period.

The Road Safety Commission has established the framework for initiatives over the next 12 years. The Government will join this lead to ensure that initiatives are implemented to fill out this

framework. However, counties, local authorities, and enterprises also have an important role in this regard. Two-thirds of all road accidents take place on county and municipal roads.

Every accident is one too many - the Danish vision

Encouraged by the Government action plan for road safety, the Road Safety Commission has established a national vision for road safety work - '*Every accident is one accident too many*'. This vision agrees with the Swedish '*zero vision*' in that the point of departure is that all deaths and injuries on the roads are unacceptable.

A similar philosophy can also be found in, for example, the working environment, and aircraft and railway safety.

The Government will work towards this vision becoming a common point of departure for the many stakeholders and players working with road safety in Denmark: local authorities, counties, the police, the Ministry of Transport and its agencies, private organisations and enterprises.

It is not envisaged that this vision should be a specific, realisable target to be achieved tomorrow. Rather, the vision should be considered as a guide to be applied when new roads are laid, campaigns are organised, residential and industrial areas are planned, and in legislative requirements for road users and vehicle design.

In order to emphasise the responsibility of each road user for road safety, the Road Safety Commission has decided to add a second vision - '*Road safety starts with you*'. The idea is that it is still possible to achieve a lot by influencing the behaviour of road users through information, education, and campaigns, through redesigning road lay-outs, and through improved police initiatives. We can say that we will try to prevent injuries by 'preventing' human mistakes.

The Road Safety Commission has illustrated the significance of the human factor in road safety with a very telling example.

If all motorists just:

- kept to the speed limit,
- wore their seat belts, and
- did not drink and drive,

the goal set for 12 years' time would be achieved in one fell swoop. All experience shows, however, that motorists will not do these things by themselves. Therefore, a wide range of measures must be implemented in order to reach the Road Safety Commission's goal.

How can the goal be reached?

In order to reach the goal, the Road Safety Commission has pointed out a total of 62 different initiatives and measures to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries by 40 per cent during the next 12 years.

The Road Safety Commission proposes to divide the overall 12-year period into three phases of four years.

The Government initiatives for road safety have therefore been designed with a view to being realised within the next four-year period.

The Road Safety Commission maintains that the initiatives for the next four years should continue to focus on the four central areas:

- Accidents caused by speeding
- Accidents resulting from drink-driving
- Accidents involving cyclists
- Accidents at junctions

These are well-known themes, but one or more of these elements continues to be involved in up to 80 per cent of all accidents.

The Government fully supports maintaining focus on these four themes for the next four years. In this regard, the Government has also noted the Road Safety Commission's point that the greatest potential for reducing the number of road accidents lies in reducing speeds.

Local efforts - great effect

By far the majority of Danish roads are the responsibility of local authorities and counties. Counties are responsible for 10,000 km. of road, while about 60,000 km. are municipal roads. The county roads account for 35 per cent of deaths and serious injuries, while 54 per cent of deaths and injuries occur on municipal roads.

The Road Directorate has calculated that substantial, direct financial savings are possible from preventing road accidents, not least for local authorities and counties.

On average every injury costs the public purse about DKK 250,000. Of this amount, counties pay DKK 112,000, corresponding to 45 per cent of the cost, local authorities are responsible for DKK 100,000, or 40 per cent, while the central government proportion is DKK 38,000 or 15 per cent.

Money invested in prevention of road accidents is money well spent. In other words, both lives and money are saved.

The Government believes that one of the greatest benefits of road safety work over the last 12 years has been that counties and local authorities have become much more actively involved in local road safety.

All counties and more than 100 local authorities have set targets for road safety in the form of a road safety action plan.

The challenge in this area for the coming years is to motivate the local authorities that are yet to adopt a local action plan to do so, and to cooperate with the local authorities that want to develop local road safety work. For example, this may be by actively using road safety planning in county and municipal planning, and not least in daily operations. In short, the plan must be followed up by action.

Counties and local authorities have a unique opportunity to identify the locations of local road safety problems, and at the same time a possibility to directly involve local residents in solving these problems.

Early involvement of residents in local road safety work in a municipality, urban neighbourhood, area, or road can help to ensure optimal utilisation of public resources where the problems actually exist and in such a way that the problems are actually solved.

There is great interest and willingness to contribute to solving specific local road safety problems

and to take part in local road planning. At the same time, experience from several projects and trials shows that, if residents are involved from as early as the planning phase, projects have the greatest chance of success.

Over the next 12 years, counties and local authorities must also play a significant role in road safety work.

Many local authorities are looking for a technical, specialist sparring partner in local road safety work. The Government will try to meet this desire through cooperation regarding the regional and sector funding pools by assisting local authorities with specific advisory work in the roads sector. Furthermore, at a more overall level, the Government will ensure that there is always a statutory basis which allows counties and local authorities the optimal framework to create safe solutions to road safety problems locally.

Interplay between stakeholders

Enhanced national road safety initiatives over the next four years necessitate stronger and more binding cooperation between the various stakeholders and players. Ensuring coordination of the efforts of the many individual players to create priorities, cohesion, and impact will require a lot of work.

The Government will initiate the enhancement of cooperation between the national stakeholders and players in road safety. The first step will be to ensure that the individual authorities and institutions prepare long-term and coordinated action plans for road safety on the basis of the goals the Road Safety Commission has adopted and by creating closer and more binding cooperation between central government players.

Central government tasks

An impression of the profitability of individual measures can be obtained by comparing the calculated effects against the costs of the initiatives proposed. On the basis of calculations from the Road Safety Commission, the Government have placed priority on a number of measures which it hopes to realise over the next four years; the first period of the Road Safety Commission's action plan.

The initiatives are as follows:

- Consider introduction of a system for suspending driving licences for repeated violations of the Road Traffic Act, the 'points system'
- Campaigns to increase wearing of seatbelts
- Automatic speed checks nationwide
- Trials with automatic speed checks and checks on observation of red lights
- Enterprise plans for road safety
- Measures against drink-driving
- Measures for young motorists
- Promotion of safety for cyclists and pedestrians
- Systematic road safety efforts on state roads
- Increased research and development in road safety
- Improved road-accident statistics
- Establishment of a Accident Investigation Team for road accidents

All these initiatives represent a good extension of the Government's 1997 action plan for road safety.

Points system

The Road Safety Commission has recommended examination of the extent to which a points system can help to improve road safety, in particular with respect to the accident risks for young motorists.

The objective of the so-called points system is that certain violations of the Road Traffic Act receive points and result in suspension of a driving licence for a period when a specific number of points has been reached.

Working groups under the Road Safety Commission have already examined this issue.

Iceland has already introduced such a scheme, and both Norway and Sweden are in the advanced stages of introducing similar schemes.

The Government therefore believes that the time is ripe to consider the proposal once more. There may be a need to examine whether such a scheme can be preventive, especially with regard to young motorists.

Therefore, in the spring I requested the Road Safety and Transport Agency to set up a committee to examine and describe the possibilities and consequences of the introduction of a points system for driving licence, including a system with the possibility of suspension of the driving licence. Moreover, the committee will assess the needs and possibilities for implementing legislation on this scheme.

The committee is composed of representatives from the Ministry of Transport, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Chief of Police, the Association of Chief Constables in Denmark, the Danish Association of Judges, the Police Union in Denmark, the Federation of Danish Motorists, the Danish Transport Research Institute and the Road Safety and Transport Agency.

The committee is assessing the recommendations of the previous working group, the road safety effects of introducing a points system, the relationship with the current rules in the Road Traffic Act for suspension of a driving licence, the practical design of the system, including administration and enforcement, as well as the financial and administrative consequences.

The committee expects to have a final report ready before summer 2001. The Government will then take a position on the proposals on the basis of the deliberations of the committee.

Wearing of seatbelts must be increased

The Road Safety Commission has pointed out that campaigns and more checks that people are wearing their seatbelts is one of the most effective and efficient ways of reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads.

The Danish Transport Research Institute has recently completed a survey of the number of people wearing a seatbelt in cars.

This survey shows that about 80 per cent of Danish drivers wear a seat belt, while only about half of back-seat passengers wear a seatbelt. If seat-belt use were increased from the current 80 per cent to 85 per cent, 18 lives would be saved each year, and 87 serious injuries would be avoided.

Most motorists wear a seatbelt on the motorway, while only 73 per cent wear their seatbelt while driving in small towns.

In comparison, in Sweden the average number wearing a seatbelt in the front seat is more than 90 per cent.

There is a need to change the behaviour of Danish motorists so that they have no doubt that seatbelts save lives.

A first step was that the fine for not wearing a seatbelt was increased to DKK 500.00 from 1 September 2000.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport has asked the Danish Road Safety Council to prepare a nationwide seatbelt campaign to commence in spring 2001.

In addition to the primary objective, i.e. to increase the use of seatbelts, there will also be assessments of the extent to which a new type of campaign can get road users to change their behaviour. This new type of campaign is more aggressive, insistent and direct.

The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of people wearing seatbelts in towns from 73 per cent to 85 per cent, and to increase the general use of seatbelts by back-seat passengers from 50 to 70 per cent.

The effect of the campaign efforts will be measured throughout the campaign period using seatbelt counts on Danish roads.

Automatic speed checks

Driving too fast is a contributory factor in a large number of road accidents in Denmark. Speed measurements show that the average speed on urban roads, country roads, and motorways is between 5 and 10 per cent over the permitted speed limit, and more than 50 per cent of motorists exceed the speed limit.

Speeds must be brought down. The objective of the trials with automatic speed checks has been to ascertain whether some form of check would be able to contribute to reducing speeds. The trials have shown that this is possible.

After a short trial to test the consequences for police administration and case processing, a final trial of automatic speed checks was initiated on 1 January 1999. The trial covered police districts in Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, Svendborg, and Odense, as well as Gentofte and Gladsaxe Municipalities.

The trial officially finished on 1 April 2000.

Evaluation of the trial shows a drop in average speeds of 2.4 km/hr over the final months of the trial, corresponding to a drop of about 5 per cent. In many places this has meant that average speeds have fallen to below the speed limit.

Speed reductions for the whole period of the trial were 1.2 km/hr, corresponding to a drop of 2.5 per cent. International surveys indicate that a drop in average speeds of 2.5 - 5 per cent results in a drop in the number of injuries of between 5 and 15 per cent, and in the number of deaths of between 10 and 20 per cent.

Even slight reductions in average speeds therefore offer extremely high rewards for road safety, partly because the highest speeds fall the most.

After 1 April 2000, automatic speed checks have become part of the police's own checks. In the

police agreement, which formed part of the Finance Act 2000, funds were allocated to continue the scheme until evaluations of the trial were available and a decision on the future of automatic speed checks had been made.

With regard to the Finance Act 2001, we have decided to establish a nationwide scheme for automatic speed checks which is expected to be fully operational in 2003. Automatic speed checks will be applied on the most dangerous roads, and streets where road safety problems and high speeds call for them. Furthermore, checks will also be on exposed stretches such as near road-works and schools.

Introduction of automatic speed checks in a nationwide scheme will be followed up by massive information campaigns.

The introduction of automatic speed checks nationwide will be an effective way of improving policing of Danish roads to the benefit of road safety.

Organised transport

A large and as yet untapped potential exists in the work already commenced in making commercial transport safer.

For the first time, the 1997 Government action plan for road safety focussed on the important role of enterprises in road safety. The role of enterprises is crucial in that they are responsible for a large amount of transport on roads; almost a third of all transport on Danish roads is commercial transport.

With this background, enterprises are encouraged to prepare local enterprise plans that focus on the enterprise's road safety policy. For example, this may be in the form of agreements with employees on how they can move safely on the roads, goals for reducing the number of accidents while driving during working hours, etc. Several public-sector and private enterprises have implemented enterprise road safety plans, and many are preparing such plans. The Ministry of Transport's own Department has also taken up the challenge and is preparing an enterprise road safety plan for driving during working hours.

As part of the work on enterprise responsibility, in 1999 the Ministry of Transport published '*Save Lives - Save Money*' ('*Spar liv - spar penge*') which offers good advice on safe transport for enterprises. The report was sent to a wide range of private and public-sector enterprises to increase their awareness of road safety. In order to increase the incentive for enterprises to make efforts in this area the report shows that, on the basis of a more narrow financial approach, there is common sense in preparing an enterprise policy for safe transport.

In the agreement between the Government, the Danish Red-Green Alliance, and the Socialist People's Party regarding the so-called 'Whitsun Package', in 1999 a further DKK 5 million was earmarked for an enterprise project for which the Road Safety Council is responsible. Specifically, the project involves the participating enterprises introducing a system to register the road accidents that occur within the framework of the enterprise.

Moreover, a consultancy service was established as part of the project. Through this service, individual enterprises are presented with a number of initiatives which can contribute to making driving for the enterprise safer. The consultants also advise on how these initiatives can be implemented.

The project will also cover the safety aspects of employees' journeys to and from work, and the environmental aspects of enterprise transport.

The project is still in the start-up phase, where the precise project, including the content of the consultancy service, is being planned.

A monitoring group with representatives from the General Workers' Union in Denmark, the Danish Union of Sales Representatives, the Working Environment Authority, the Confederation of Danish Industries, and individual enterprises with experience in the area has been established. The monitoring group is to ensure that the project is designed to meet the needs and wishes of the enterprise and its employees with regard to road safety.

In 1999, the Road Safety Council, the transport sector, the General Workers' Union in Denmark, and the Road Safety and Transport Agency completed the '*Safety through conversation*' campaign where the target group was lorry drivers, drivers, and transport buyers. The campaign had a good effect on lorry drivers and drivers. The goal was primarily to use drivers' own experience on the roads as inspiration to broader discussion on how safer behaviour among drivers can be promoted.

The Government considers that it is important to work further with this dialogue-oriented project by extending it to transport enterprises over the next four years.

Finally, over the next four years the Government will also work to encourage transport buyers to demand safer transport. Firstly the Government will ensure that advisory material is prepared on how transport buyers can demand safer transport when entering into agreements and contracts on transport and supply.

Trials with a combination of automatic speed checks and checks on observation of red lights

The Road Directorate has estimated that driving through red lights alone costs 20 deaths and 500 injuries every year.

Partly due to this, in March 2001 a trial will be initiated at seven junctions on and around Ringvejen in Århus with automatic speed checks and checks on observation of red lights. The trial will run for one year and will be evaluated immediately after.

On the basis of the trial, the Government will assess the extent to which automatic checks on the observation of red lights should be used at junctions with traffic lights where experience shows that many accidents occur because of drivers jumping the lights.

Efforts regarding drink-driving

Although the number of accidents connected to drink-driving has fallen steadily over the past 12 years, drink-driving is still the cause of about 25 per cent of deaths on Danish roads.

Therefore, a need remains for initiatives combining targeted campaigns and police checks.

This has become a well-trying method with good results, but the Government believes that large nationwide drink-driving campaigns combined with police checks are not enough in themselves.

Several counties have good experience with special drink-driving campaigns for young people. The most well known is the North Jutland 'guardian-angel' campaign. It is important that counties are able to come into direct contact and dialogue with young people who exhibit dangerous behaviour on the roads. Therefore, the Government sees an important task in counties carrying out special campaigns for young people on drink-driving.

As was also mentioned in the Danish Government Programme on Public Health and Promotion 1999-2008, over the next four years the Government will initiate special efforts regarding motorists

who are convicted of drink-driving several times. Specifically, more convicted drunken drivers with an alcohol problem requiring treatment should receive such treatment rather than serve a sentence. During the last session the Danish Parliament passed an Act which makes it possible to replace a prison sentence with an agreement to start a structured alcoholic treatment programme.

In addition, a collaboration between the Road Safety and Transport Agency, counties, and local authorities will carry out compulsory training courses on alcohol and driving for drunken drivers who have had their driving licence suspended, either conditionally or unconditionally.

Efforts regarding young motorists

Young motorists, and in particular young male motorists, appear disproportionately often in accident statistics. Therefore, a special effort regarding this group is required. In addition to initiatives such as those already mentioned in this report, i.e. special campaigns against young people drink-driving and consideration of the introduction of a points system, during the next four years the Government will launch other initiatives aimed at this group.

As a first step, the Danish Transport Research Institute and the Road Safety Council started a research project into charting young motorists' lifestyles in relation to how they use the roads.

Furthermore, DKK 2 million has been granted from the Road Traffic Pool for trials with local initiatives regarding young motorists. On the basis of experience from these trials the Government will decide how targeted initiatives for young motorists can be designed.

Safety for cyclists and pedestrians

The Government believes that urban roads in particular should be designed such that bicycling or walking are safer and thereby a more attractive alternative for road users. In recent years a large number of demonstration projects have been supported from the Road Traffic Pool and regional and sector funding pools.

In Odense, the national 'Cycle City' (*Cykelby*) project is being carried out, and will stop within the next four years. Partly on the basis of experience from Odense, the Government will assess whether new legislative initiatives are to be taken to promote safe cycling in towns and cities.

The Government is continuing support to development projects promoting safe roads for pedestrians and cyclists.

Finally, with support from the Traffic Pool, a new edition of the 'Cyclists Road Handbook' is being published. This is expected in mid 2001 and could comprise a good basis for behaviour campaigns aimed at cyclists who violate the Road Traffic Act, endangering their own safety, and in some cases that of others.

Road safety on state roads

In recent years traffic on the state road network has grown more rapidly than traffic on other roads. Approximately 27 per cent of all traffic today uses the state road network, even though the state's 1,620 kilometres of road only account for 2 per cent of the total road network in Denmark.

Fundamentally, it is right to gather as much traffic as possible on the main road network. This makes it possible to manage road safety problems more efficiently and it relieves local roads and streets.

Therefore, in the next four years, the Government will enhance initiatives for road safety on state

roads, amongst other things by continuing to redesign and rebuild road lay-outs at black spots, initiatives at stretches of road particularly exposed to accidents ('grey stretches'), and by systematically utilising road safety auditing on all roads. Moreover, the Road Directorate will develop road safety auditing as a tool to be used in on-going operating activities.

More research and development in road safety

A large number of the initiatives that have contributed to reducing the number of accidents will soon be completed to such an extent that it is no longer possible to expect the same effects from these measures in forthcoming years. Despite everything, there is a limit on how many speed bumps can be established, or the number of times a requirement to fit seatbelts can be introduced.

Finally, a number of cheap and easy measures to improve road safety have been introduced during the past 12 years and have had their full effect on the number and scope of accidents.

If the number of deaths and serious injuries is to be reduced, there is no doubt that new knowledge is required.

On this basis, from 1 August 2000 the Danish Transport Research Institute was established as a sector research institute under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport. The Safety and Environment Section (*Sikkerhed- og Miljøafdelingen*) at the Road Directorate and the Road Safety Research Council were disbanded in order to join the new institute.

The Institute is organised in three research areas:

- Infrastructure - road safety, design and environment
- Road users - transport risks and environment
- Transport economics and models

The Institute is still being developed and to start with had about 25 employees. This staff is expected to increase over a number of years to about 40 employees and some PhD students.

The Government believes that in forthcoming years, the establishment of the Danish Transport Research Institute will enhance research efforts to the benefit of road safety.

The Road Safety Commission has indicated requirements for new knowledge within three areas:

1. Causes of accidents and risk perception, behaviour on the roads, and the effects of measures.
2. Models for analyses of the relationship between road safety and environment, urban development, and health.
3. Development of prioritising and evaluation tools for road safety measures.

All areas the Government considers relevant and useful in future road safety work.

In the telematics area in particular, the Government believes that in coming years far more research into the road safety consequences of technology and telematics should be carried out. As a first step, through the Traffic Pool, the Danish Transport Research Institute has received funds for a preliminary project on IT equipment in cars and its use, spread, and influence on road safety.

Improved statistics on road accidents

From 1 April 2000, all 54 police districts in Denmark have been able to report road accidents via POL-SAS, a total EDP system for the police. This means that quicker and more reliable reports of

the circumstances behind individual accidents have become possible. However, reporting using POL-SAS is still in the running-in phase.

In connection with creating a database on road accidents, over the next four years the Government will work for better quality assurance and increase the degree of reporting. This will ensure that, in future, a more precise picture of the scope of road accidents, their type, causes and consequences, will be available.

Qualitatively improved statistics are thus crucial for ensuring that future initiatives are targeted and developed where they can achieve the greatest effect on road safety.

The health service possess important knowledge on road accidents, which so far has not been fully exploited. With respect to bicycle accidents in particular it has long been clear that there is great disparity between the official statistics prepared on the basis of police reports and the number of injuries to cyclists recorded by casualty wards.

Over the next four years, the first results will be available from work instigated by the Road Directorate and a number of counties on how hospitals register road accidents. The project aims at adding a hospital module to the Road Sector Information System which will make it possible to identify the accidents which are only recorded by hospitals.

Accident Investigation Team for road accidents

The Accident Investigation Team for road accidents is being established. The objective of the Commission is to improve basic knowledge on preventive work in road safety.

The Accident Investigation Team is to examine in detail the circumstances behind selected types of accident, and on this basis it is to indicate conditions which have contributed to causing the accident and the degree of injury.

It is intended that accident factors identified by the Commission will regularly be included in considerations regarding general road safety work.

The following institutions participate in the work of the Accident Investigation Team:

- The Road Directorate with expertise in road design, road markings, and road technology.
- The Danish Motor Vehicle Inspection with knowledge of vehicle technology and identification of areas prone to accident.
- The National Commission of the Police traffic division with experience in police investigation of road accidents.
- Danish Transport Research Institute with insights into the behaviour of road users and accident analyses.
- The Road Safety and Transport Agency with knowledge of road traffic legislation and heavy vehicles.
- The accident analysis group (*UlykkesAnalysegruppen*) at the Odense University Hospital with knowledge on the influence of physical forces on the human body and experience in preventing serious injuries in road accidents.

The Accident Investigation Team for road accidents will target areas where there is a need for new knowledge about road accidents. The Commission will not analyse all road accidents in Denmark, or for that matter the most tragic, fatal accidents, as the Commission would then be called out more than once a day and this would require much greater personnel and financial resources.

The Government believes that the ambitions for the work of the Accident Investigation Team will be

able to provide a valuable contribution to gathering knowledge and understanding road accidents in Denmark.

Grants to road safety

The Government considers that the initiatives reviewed here comprise an important contribution to reinforced efforts to reverse developments in road-accident statistics. The Government hopes that these initiatives will be followed up by the other stakeholders and players in road safety work, not least counties, local authorities, and enterprises.

The Government will also invest in road safety in future years.

With the introduction of nationwide automatic speed checks, funds for police initiatives and also funds for extensive information and campaign efforts will be ensured. Next year, DKK 42 million has been allocated to establish the scheme and provide funds for campaigns, information, and other operating costs. DKK 8 million of this sum has been allocated to the Road Directorate.

In connection with the Finance Act 2000, a road traffic agreement was settled such that the Traffic Pool will also amount to DKK 64 million for the next three years. Funds from the Traffic Pool are spent on research and development projects regarding the environment and road safety. In 2000 almost half of the funds were devoted to road safety projects.

The grant to the Road Directorate's regional and sector funding pools for minor roads, safety and environment were also included in the road traffic agreement. On average, a little more than DKK 100 million per year will be available here over the next three years.

The regional and sector funding pools are used for both road safety and environment initiatives on state roads, and as a source of investment for local authorities and counties which wish to participate in joint development tasks in road safety. It is a 50/50 scheme where local authorities and counties 'double' the efforts. The Finance Act 2001 added a further DKK 15 million per year over the next four years, primarily to be used to enhance local efforts from the regional and sector funding pools.

For research and development, the establishment of the new Danish Transport Research Institute means that DKK 24.6 million has been appropriated in 2001 to reinforce research initiatives.

The Danish Road Safety Council is included in the Finance Act with almost DKK 15 million per year, and, at the same time, via the Traffic Pool, it has been given a grant to increase campaign efforts, at first with regard to increasing the use of seatbelts. The Road Safety Council has a key role in the campaign and information efforts to encourage better road culture and behaviour from road users - or as the Road Safety Commission puts it: Road safety starts with you.