

## ESV 2003 – ITALIAN GOVERNMENT STATUS REPORT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper will provide an overview of the main progress of the Italian government in these last two years in the field of road safety. It focus on the follow up of the “National plan on road safety”, adopted two years ago.

For the first time Italy waged a plan to encompass all the aspects related to the road safety. All the actors in these field have been involved in a common strategy: Central Administration, Local Administrations, Road Management Authority etc. had the common task regarding priorities, effectiveness and transparency directives. In the following statement it will be shown the ways of its application. Even though the plan has been designed to focus on the reduction of road casualties, the plan has demonstrated its capacity also as a living structure devoted to time lasting, due to his annual revision of the goals, performed on the basis of critical analysis of obtained results.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

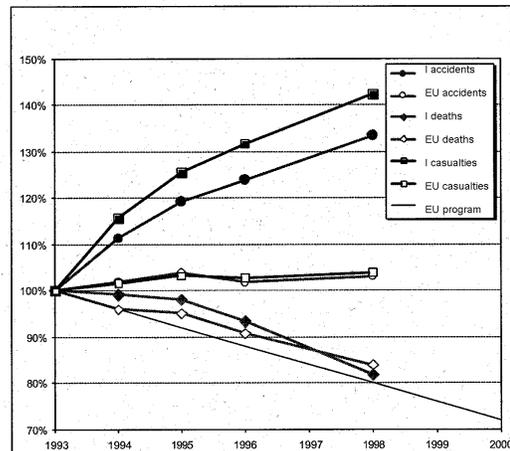
#### 1.1 Car accident trend in Italy and comparison with other European countries.

The assessment of the car accident tendency in Italy, from 1993 to 2000 gives a different progress to death and casualties trends respectively. While the death toll has been reduced about 12%, from 7,163 to 6410, the casualties are increased of 46%, from 206,689 to 301559, and car accident of 37%, from 153,400 to 211,000.

Such differences show a reduction of the accident severity that could be represented by the *rate of mortality*, namely the rate between death toll and accidents. Such aftermath is due by the better vehicle passive safety, more effective in the event of a collision, to the safety devices such as safety belts and air-bags and to better medical emergency technologies.

It is meaningful to analyze the tendency Italy/UE with respect to the goals assigned by the EU that are planning a reduction of 40% of accidents by 2010.

Accidents, deaths and casualties: comparison Italy-EU



Particularly, while the death trend whether for Italy or EU is matching the planned goal (- 40% by 2010), the number of accidents and casualties are increasing for Italy while for EU are unchanged.

Within the 15 European countries in the bracket period 1980-1996 a whole reduction of 9.1 % of car accident has been recorded. Such encouraging result is due anyhow from dishomogeneous variation from each countries. Such profound differences among European countries have to be put in relation with a different commitment that these countries have endorsed to cope the road safety issue. Some of those have undertaken significant program of coordinate interventions to reduce road accidents.

The road accidents aftermath remain unacceptable in the Italian case. These consequences have not only an unacceptable effect in terms of human lives. The high rate of casualties, with respect to the European average, produce from a strictly economic point of view of professional resources a heavy burden in term of social costs. As a matter of fact they cause temporary inability, that means loss of working hours and absorb huge resources from the national public health. As a consequence they impose to the victims' families terrific expenses. Even firms are affected by this tragic tribute. Actually, one third of victims is

caused by road accidents during working hours or on the way home from job places.

These burdens, all together, determine a social cost of 21 billion Euro per annum, according to 1997 data. This cost mates thoroughly that backed up by France; a European country matching Italy in mobility levels and safety road conditions.

## 1.2 Conclusions

The “National plan on road safety” has been devised to tackle the scarce figures reported in the preceding paragraph: an unacceptable high social-economical cost that has imposed a drastic change to the entire country.

Accordingly a definition of an effective and strict road safety politics, shored up by more stringent laws, has been waged in order to cope with the main road accident risk factors and match a common European standard of road safety.

## 2. STATE OF THE PLAN RESULTS

### 2.1 Determination of risk factors.

The reference objective undertaken by the plan has been based on the indications contained in the second program on road safety devised by the European Commission: reduction of 40% of wounded-death toll by 2010.

Particularly the plan has been designed as a functional tool to the creation of cultural conditions, within the regulation framework, resources, technical instruments and infrastructure interventions and organizational assets.

One of these instruments, useful to define the proper action to cope the issue, has been the definition of risk actors and areas by all the subjects involved (e.g.: the Italian Statistical Institute, road police statements etc.)

The causes of road accidents can be generally defined as a whole of miscellaneous factors that contribute to the accident occurrence, that is an infrequent event caused by different conditions.

Indirect factors are those caused by the risk exposure, request of vehicle use and transport. Direct risks are typically shared in the road environment: infrastructures and their characteristics, external environment (visibility and weather conditions), driver (dangerous behaviors) and vehicles (active and passive safety devices).

ISTAT figures (Italian Statistical Institute) focus on lack of right of way giving (23%), careless driving

(15%) and speed excess (14%) as those main causes of accidents and mortality.

Such statements have been carried out on the base of criteria that assign the cause of accident to a main event that ostensibly is responsible of the accident occurrence. A keener and more specific analysis should drive to the disclosure of more causes.

Having defined synthetically the different elements that converge to the accident event, three different levels to examine closely have been determined. These correspond to the three moments of the accident process. As an example to each level one or more aspects are dedicated. On each of those an action could be undertaken:

- The first level regards the conditions responsible and enhancing the risk of accident, such as:
  - ◆ Driving behavioral factors.
  - ◆ Infrastructures conditions: state of use, geometry, traffic signs, safety standards, etc.
  - ◆ Environmental conditions: weather and visibility (night/day).
  - ◆ Traffic: intensity and composition.
- To the second level there are conditions that cause the accident event:
  - ◆ Active safety systems: timeliness and effective information on the state of the risk factors, effectiveness of active safety devices etc.
  - ◆ Psychological characteristics of drivers and its time of reaction.
- To the third level conditions that influence the impact effects are listed:
  - ◆ Condition of infrastructures related to the equipment provided to cope safety (barriers, absorptive attenuators, etc.).
  - ◆ Use and adoption of passive safety systems on vehicles: such as air-bags, improved safety belts able to prevent or reduce injuries.

### 2.1.1 The institutional intervention.

The nature of the plan implies that in the same field of intervention will operate simultaneously Administrations of different sectors and different levels, without exclusion of any private subject. Accordingly it implies the need to coordinate and organize the miscellaneous contributions in the “*fields of intervention*” and in the “*lines of activity*” to avoid dispersions and repetitions, which would have negative repercussions on the effectiveness levels of the Plan itself.

The fields of interventions have been defined and inspired by the analysis of factor risks and in relation to the main problems of the road accidents, as reported in the above paragraph.

At this aim the safety plan take its roots on the Institutional Regulation that is inspired to two principles: **Agreement** and **Subsidizing**, where it is clear that the Parliament is constituted not only by a system of intervention defined and realized by the govern. As a matter of fact such a system of actions and incentives is referred especially to Regions, local Administrations and to the boards of service and transport network management.

Furthermore, the regulation prescribe the compulsory assessment of coherence and effectiveness of interventions and sets that the results of such assessment have to be widely delivered through the “*Report of Parliament on the State of the Road Safety*”. Under this profile the “*National plan of Road Safety*” is aligned, as a reference point, on the contents and organizational modules adopted by the countries that have got the highest level of road safety.

The fruitful coordination of all the institutional partners involved is producing his effect on traffic safety through new decrees and more stringent controls concerning driving behaviors, driving license deliveries, a more severe sanctions politics related to breakers and incentives .

### 2.1.2 Legislative actions.

The consequences of these coordinated actions, ignited by “*National plan of Road Safety*”, have been the revision by the Parliament of the national laws concerning road traffic. These mainly regard the adoption of some amendments (or the proposal to introduce modifications) to the Road Code concerning the following items

- a) Scored driving license. The validity of all the driving licenses shall be linked to a score range of 0-20. At the time of the release of the driving license it will be attributed a max score of 20. The score loss is linked to the violations of the most important behavior rules. At the time of getting the lowest score of 0, it will be required the participation to updating training courses in order to gain the lost scores.
- b) Introduction of a certificate of eligibility for mopeds driving to minors having at least fourteen years old.
- c) Note of the General Register Office of drivers caught while driving tampered

- d) Withdrawal of the driving license to whom is not complying to the revision of the driving license. For the time being it is provided the withdrawal of the driving license only in the case the driver, who must comply the revision, is caught while driving..
  - e) Severe sanctions for violations concerning the speed limits, the safety distance, the use of safety belts and helmets.
  - f) Introduction of pocket instruments for indirect test of blood alcoholic level. The future introduction of such instruments will allow a precautionary control of drivers and not only in the cases of suspected drunk driving.
  - g) Reduction of the legal limit from 0.80 to 0.50 grams of alcohol per liter of blood.
  - h) Differentiation for new licensed drivers (for the first spell of three years of driving) of the provided limit for alcohol blood content (e.g.: 0.20 g/l).
  - i) Compulsory use of vehicle lights, even in day time, on motorways, speedways and bypass ways and possible extension to all roads
  - j) Wearing of retro-reflective vest to be used in the case of emergency (e.g. car failure during night time).
  - k) Compulsory fitting of retro-reflective markings on heavy duty vehicles in order to improve their visibility.
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