

PRESS RELEASE

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PUBLIC THEMATIC REPORT

PUBLIC POLICY ASSESSMENT ON ROAD SAFETY

On a half-century scale, the effectiveness of the road safety policy is indisputable and its results spectacular: from more than 18,000 killed on the roads of France in 1972, that number fell to less than 3,500 in 2018 and 2019. It is therefore an indisputable success.

There are signs, however, that a limit may have been reached. On the one hand, since 2013, the number of deaths has stopped decreasing. While the number of deaths per million inhabitants rose in France from 69.4 to 52.2 between 2008 and 2013, it remained broadly stable until 2019. On the other hand, France's position in relation to its European neighbours has slipped (ranking 14th out of 28).

At the end of its evaluation work, the Court considers that the major national measures targeting behaviour will increasingly need to be supplemented by using a diverse range of other means of action, involving vehicles, signage, and infrastructure. These measures should take place within a framework that has been redesigned in the light of changes in mobility and technologies. The Court makes 18 recommendations.

A policy defined in the 2000s, focused on behaviours

The fundamental orientation which was chosen in the 2000s, and which continues to inspire public authorities, legitimately favours actions targeting the behaviours of road users. From this point of view, the appearance in 2003 of automatic traffic control has made it possible to obtain undeniable results at a controlled cost. The observed decrease in the average speed on the roads affected by the reduction of the speed limit to 80 km/h has also contributed to user safety.

Fundamentally relevant, the choice of a priority action on behaviour was also a default choice, however, which reflected the difficulties of the State in acting directly on other factors, particularly road infrastructure, due to the segmentation of networks resulting from decentralization.

A model that must evolve in three directions: clarification, differentiation, inclusiveness

While the Court's assessment confirms the central axis of the road safety policy, it nevertheless raises questions about the "plateau" phase of its results since 2013, the health crisis and the corresponding drop in road traffic making it impossible to interpret the sharply declining data for 2020 and 2021.

The Court notes on the one hand that, beyond the number of road fatalities, this policy should take better account of the number of serious injuries, which is increasing, the number of victims among



vulnerable populations, which are more numerous due to changes in mobility (pedestrians and cyclists), and changes in demographics (elderly).

In addition, the priority given to automatic traffic controls must also be accompanied by a continued presence of law enforcement officers at roadsides and in traffic flows, in particular the national police. Finally, the road safety policy must better integrate the issues linked to new forms of mobility and the ecological transition, particularly in metropolitan areas.

As a common factor in these findings, citizens' support for road safety policy must be strengthened.

The need for conceptual and practical renewal


The comparison with other European countries highlights the advantages of comprehensive strategies, which seek to act simultaneously on behaviours, vehicles and infrastructure, sharing the design and implementation of policies with as many actors as possible ("safe system", promoted by the International Transport Forum). The French approach would benefit from building on successes in the field, by associating local authorities more closely with State action.


Finally, to reorient French policy towards a more coherent and better shared approach, it is essential to adapt its governance and increase its interministerial dimension. The ministry in charge of transport should play an increased role, alongside the ministry in charge of the interior.


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