



21 June 2022

Mr. Taavi Aas,
Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure,
10122 Tallinn,
Suur-Ameerika St., 1,
Estonia

Dear Minister Aas,

Re: EC recommendation on lower speed limits

I am writing to ask how your government plans to act on the new recommendations¹ from the European Commission to local, regional and national authorities to reduce speeds on motorways and in urban areas.

Speed is a contributing factor in most crashes. Reducing average speeds across the EU by just 1 per cent could save 2100 lives a year.² The Russian invasion of Ukraine has also brought into sharp focus the energy and emissions savings that can result from reduced speed. These savings were outlined by the International Energy Agency in a joint announcement with the European Commission in April.³

The European Parliament called for new speed limit recommendations in its report adopted on 6 October 2021.⁴

ETSC supports the European Commission initiative and recommends maximum motorway speeds of 120 km/h, a maximum limit of 80 km/h on rural roads and 30 km/h in urban areas where motorised vehicles mix with pedestrians and cyclists. Though, from an energy saving and safety perspective, lower speeds are always better.

I am writing to all EU ministers of transport to ask if you will implement these new EC recommendations and, if yes, how. Which new speed limit reductions will you introduce on which road types? We plan to publish the responses, so we would appreciate your reply by 13th of July.

In the following paragraphs I would like to highlight some of the successes that different European countries have enjoyed thanks to recent reductions in speed limits.

Sweden reclassified the speed limits on its rural road network to address safety, the environment and other goals. Full compliance was estimated by the Swedish Transport Administration to save around

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A240%3AFIN&qid=1653033053936>

² <https://etsc.eu/reducing-speeding-in-europe-pin-flash-36/>

³ <https://etsc.eu/european-commission-and-iea-call-for-lower-speeds-on-highways/>

⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0211_EN.html

150 lives annually and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 700,000 tonnes (equivalent to emissions from 240,000 passenger cars).⁵

Brussels and Paris have recently reduced the urban speed limit to 30 km/h. Analysis by the Brussels region showed toxic emissions, noise and crashes all declined since the lower limit was introduced, and journey times were largely unaffected.⁶ Research, carried out in the UK, has shown that these lower speeds flatten out the extra acceleration needed in stop/start driving and can reduce CO₂ emissions, and therefore fuel consumption, by 25% on typical cars.⁷

Spain has introduced a new 30 km/h as the default speed limit on single-lane urban roads. Part of the final push to introduce this measure was that in 2019, official figures showed that, for the first time, the proportion of vulnerable road users killed on Spanish roads exceeded those killed in vehicles.

France lowered the speed limit from 90 km/h to 80 km/h on two-way rural roads without a central separator in 2018. This change resulted in a 12% decrease in the number of deaths on affected roads compared to the rest of the French road network.

As you can see, reducing speeds offers many benefits, at little cost. We look forward to your reply on how your government plans to act on these new recommendations, and stand ready to offer any advice and assistance that we can.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Antonio Avenoso', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Antonio Avenoso, Executive Director, European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/system/files/2021-07/2020-10-08-speed_input_paper.pdf

⁶ <https://mobilite-mobiliteit-brussels.prezly.com/bruxelles-ville-30-dernier-bilan-et-perspectives>

⁷ <https://skyrad.co.uk/transport-innovation-research/>