

## Road Safety Country Profile



### COUNTRY FACTS

<b>Area:</b>	<b>9 250 km<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Inhabitants:</b>	<b>759 100 (2003)</b>
<b>Road Network:</b>	<b>11 408 km (2000)</b>
<b>Passenger Car Ratio:</b>	<b>408 per 1 000 inhabitants (2002)</b>

Road safety is ranked among the highest priorities of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, as the road accident records of the country are not among the most enviable in Europe. In 2001, the Ministry of Communications and Works approved a 5-year Strategic Action Plan for Road Safety (2002-2006) with a quantitative target for a reduction of 20 % in road accident fatalities and serious injuries by the end of year 2006 (compared to the average figures of the period 1996-2000). A second Strategic Plan for Road Safety (2005-2010), based on the revision of the first plan was approved in December 2004 in order to improve the procedures and road safety resources of the original plan, and to adopt the European target for halving the number of road accident victims by 2010.

Table 1 shows a general decrease in the number of accidents, injuries and fatalities throughout the period from 1994 to 2003. Accidents decreased in 2004 where as the number of fatalities increased.

**Table 1.** Annual development in injury accidents, injuries and fatalities in Cyprus, 1991-2004. (Data for accidents and injuries for 1992-1994 and 1996 were not available at the time of writing.) Please note that only the number of fatalities is comparable to similar statistics for the other Member States due to differences in data collection procedures for the number of accidents and injuries.

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Accidents *</b>	3 172**				3 052		3 021	2 641	2 500	2 397	2 393	2 367	2 358	2 080
<b>Injuries</b>	4 232**				4 517		4 490	3 916	3 712	3 586	3 531	3 523	3 411	3 176
<b>Fatalities ***</b>	103	132	115	133	118	128	115	111	113	111	98	94	97	117
per million inhabitants	150	189	161	184	162	174	155	149	150	147	129	124	128	154

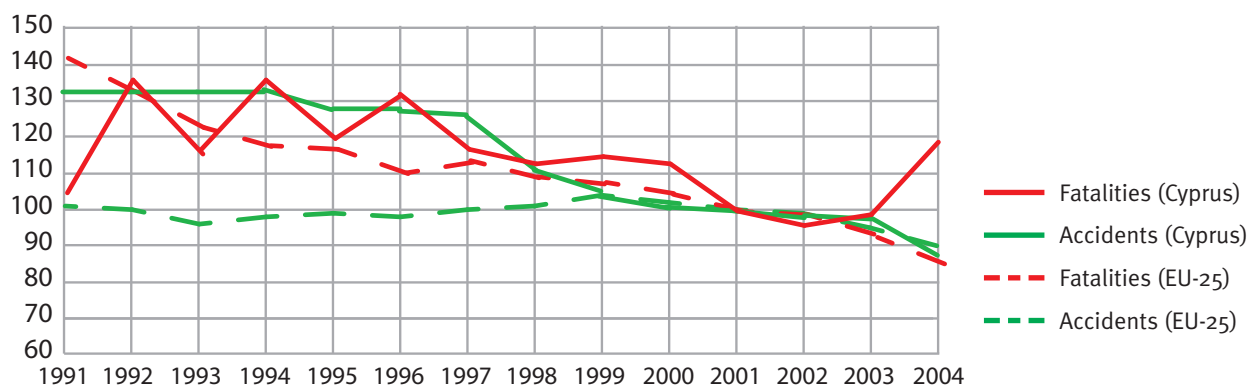
\* Accidents with injuries

\*\* 1990 data

\*\*\* Death within 30 days of accident

Source: CARE project data (see also: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index_en.htm))

Figure 1. Annual developments (year 2001 = 100) in fatalities and accidents on national and EU-25 level.



Source: CARE project data (see also: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/index_en.htm))

The Cyprus Road Safety Unit has identified the main road safety problems in Cyprus to be: a) fatal and injury accidents occurring at disproportionately higher rates for motorcyclists and elderly pedestrians, b) traffic violations by young drivers are frequent and related to red light violation, speeding and drunk-driving and c) generally low compliance with traffic rules, especially regarding seatbelt use and speed limits.

Increased public awareness campaigns and the implementation of systematic traffic police enforcement measures began in autumn 2004. During the first quarter of 2005 a stabilisation of fatal accidents and a decrease in serious injury accidents was recorded.

## Country organisation, responsibilities and resources

The authority responsible for road safety in Cyprus is the Ministry of Communications and Works. The Minister is advised on road safety matters by the National Road Safety Council, which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications and Works. The Council comprises representatives from all government authorities related to road safety and also a number of representatives from relevant non-governmental organisations.

The following five authorities are directly involved in road safety issues:

- The **Department of Public Works**, Ministry of Communications and Works (road infrastructure)
- The **Department of Road Transport**, Ministry of Communications and Works (drivers and vehicles)
- The **Cyprus Traffic Police**, Ministry of Justice and Public Order (Enforcement)
- The **Ministry of Education and Culture** (road safety education)
- The **Ministry of Health** (emergency medical care)

In addition to the above mentioned authorities, regional and local authorities are also involved in road safety issues, as they are responsible for two-thirds of the road network.

The four ministries above provide the necessary staff for road safety management and traffic law enforcement. Six Interdepartmental Committees have been established for the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the Annual Road Safety Action Plan; the Road Safety Committee, the Safe Vehicles Committee, the Driver Training and Licensing Committee, the Traffic Law and Enforcement Committee, the Emergency Care Committee and the Public Awareness Committee.

Funding of road safety actions is decided and approved by the government on a circumstantial basis, according to the proposals by the Ministry of Communications and Works. It is currently being considered to provide funding for road safety improvement projects to the ministry on an annual basis.

The following is a list of stakeholders and players within the field of road safety in Cyprus:

The **Cyprus Road Safety Council** is a national council advising the Ministry of Communications and Works on road safety issues. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Communications and Works and has as its members representatives of all involved authorities in road safety: the Chief of Police, the Attorney General, the Directors of the Departments of Public Works and Road Transport, the General Directors of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the Cyprus Radio Foundation.

Alterations in the composition of the Council are currently under consideration, in order to improve the effectiveness and the flexibility of the Council.

A **Road Safety Unit** has been set up in the Ministry of Communications and Works, which acts as the executive, administrative and managerial tool of the Road Safety Council. The Unit analyses road safety conditions and risk factors and monitors actions and measures taken for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan 2005-2010. The Unit presents a report of the progress of the Strategic Road Safety Plan to the National Road Safety Council every four months. The Council of Ministers is briefed annually on the progress of the Strategic Action Plan and is asked to approve the funding of actions and the provision of required staff and equipment. Understaffing is a current problem, but this is expected to be resolved through a scheduled recruiting of additional qualified personnel. Until the availability of the additional staff, the five authorities involved in the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan will provide personnel on a part-time basis. The actions to be taken will be financed mainly by the national budget, but financial assistance will also be sought from EU funds and from the private sector as sponsorships. The Unit intends to carry out a comprehensive national road safety study through an international tender in 2005.

The **Cyprus Scientific Technical Chamber** will participate in the upgraded composition of the Road Safety Council.

The main purpose of the **Cyprus Safety and Health Association** (CySHA) is to contribute to the efforts for protection and promotion of safety and health at work and to the prevention of risks concerning the public in general. The CySHA is represented in the Road Safety Council.

The **University of Cyprus** is preparing a road safety study focused on the social impact of road accidents.

Involved in road safety issues are also the **Cyprus Youth Organisation**, **The Automobile Association**, the **Association of Cyprus Insurance Companies**, as well as several private sponsors of road safety programmes.

## Transport policies

The Traffic Code has been modified over the past five years to include traffic regulations specifically for motorways and roundabouts, to introduce a penalty point system for all dangerous traffic violations, and to make compulsory the installation of speed limitation devices on all heavy vehicles.

Other changes include:

- the compulsory use of seatbelts in cars for all passengers
- the compulsory use of crash helmets for motorcycles
- the infliction of on-the-spot fines

The compulsory use of crash helmets has been extended to include moped riders in built-up areas. The on-the-spot fines for offences relating to seatbelts, crash helmets, mobile phones and speeding have been significantly increased.

An update of existing traffic signage specifications has recently been completed and is expected to be legally adopted within the first half of 2005.

Following Cyprus' accession to the European Union, the driving licence issuing procedures and legislation were amended to adopt the European rules and the European vehicle categories.

The new Traffic Code is expected to come into force by 2006.

The European directive for the compulsory use of seatbelts in the front seats of mini buses (and small trucks up to 7.5 tonnes) has been adopted in the "Traffic Law for Engine Vehicles" act. Similarly, the directives for annual technical inspection of buses and revision of driving licence requirements for professional drivers have been adopted in national legislation.

The adjustments to the provisions of the third driving licence Directive proposed by the Department of Road Transport to the Road Safety Unit in December 2003 include the discontinuation of paper-form driving licences and the introduction of plastic cards, the investigation of the potential for using micro-chips in the plastic card, the renewal of driving licences every 10 years, the introduction of the motorcycle category, the progressive access of young drivers, as well as fitness to drive requirements for professional drivers.

A sophisticated information and management system for driving and vehicle licences and records is used by the Department of Road Transport, containing all relevant information. A progressive permission for access to the information system's files is given to the administrative and managerial staff of the department (according to their rank), while all personnel has unrestricted access to the informative files of the system. The system's software is maintained and upgraded according to the operational needs of the department and the introduced changes to the licensing procedures.

## Road safety action plans

The Ministry of Communications and Works has launched a 5-year Strategic Plan for Road Safety 2002-2006. The plan sets a quantitative target for the annual number of fatalities in Cyprus not to exceed 90 by the end of 2006. This corresponds to a reduction of 20 % in road accident fatalities, compared to the average number of deaths in the period 1996-2000. This first plan was followed by the Second Strategic Plan for Road Safety 2005-2010. The second plan has adopted the target from the European Road Safety Action Programme of halving the number of road fatalities by 2010.

The measures of the Second Strategic Plan for Road Safety are:

- the institutional approval and staffing of the Road Safety Unit
- the establishment of interdepartmental committees and working groups coordinated by the Road Safety Unit
- the submission of an annual action plan by each responsible authority, including required funding, personnel and equipment
- the collection and summary of the proposed action plans by the Road Safety Unit and the submission to and approval by the National Road Safety Council
- the submission of the approval by the National Road Safety Council action plans to the Government for final approval

Previously, all road safety measures were proposed directly to the Ministry of Communications and Works by each responsible authority. With the approval of the Second Strategic Plan in December 2004, an action plan for the year 2005 was formulated according to the procedures described above. The plan includes a number of actions in eight different sectors. The focus is on traffic law enforcement, road network improvement, vehicle safety and driver behaviour. The sectors refer to legislation, enforcement, awareness, traffic training, road safety, safe vehicles, driver training and testing, and emergency care.

The main road safety actions proposed for 2005 are the following:

- intensive traffic checks for speeding, drink-driving, seatbelt use and helmet use
- improvement of road network safety by upgrading of the horizontal and vertical signage system, installation of safety barriers, construction of pedestrian crossings, installation of crush-absorption equipment and relief line marking of motorways
- increased technical inspection of used vehicles and heavy vehicles
- improved procedures for driver examinations and seminars for professional drivers

Cyprus has no Transport or Road Safety Observatory. The Road Safety Unit is the responsible technical body for road accident monitoring and evaluation. The Road Accident Statistical Office of the Cyprus Traffic Police Department carries out a general evaluation on road safety, while black spot analyses are made by the Department of Public Works. All evaluations are reviewed and utilised by the Road Safety Unit.

## Topics

A wide range of measures is being implemented to support a positive development within road safety. These measures are elaborated in the following sections.

### Road users

The standard of drivers is being elevated through a variety of measures. Legislation concerning driving licences has been harmonised with Directives 91/439/EEC and 2000/56/EC. The theoretical examination for a driving licence now includes questions on road safety and knowledge of vehicle construction, and will soon be computer-based. Existing drivers are being targeted through publicity campaigns on crucial road safety topics, which include TV and radio spots, articles in the press, distribution of printed material, etc. A road safety game is currently being run on the internet with government and private sponsoring and valuable prizes for the winners.

Road safety education (RSE) was introduced in 1997 in secondary schools and in primary schools in 2004. RSE is supported by a road safety competition on television among teams of high school students. A number of road safety parks are currently being constructed which will enhance the road safety education efforts. The Ministry of Communications and Works will this year be sponsoring visits to primary schools by a mobile road safety park.

Regarding legislation and enforcement, the Police have been given two powerful legislative tools: The penalty point system and high on-the-spot fines which are proving to be quite effective deterrents. The following measures have been introduced:

- traffic violations of speeding and seatbelt use have been included in the point system
- seatbelt use has been made compulsory for the back seats of automobiles
- helmet use for motorcycles has been made compulsory also in residential areas
- The maximum alcohol level in blood tests is proposed to be set at 50 milligrams/100 millilitres (90 at present) and in breath tests to 22 micrograms/100 millilitres (39 at present).

In 2003, 20 of the 97 fatal accidents in Cyprus were attributed to speeding resulting in 23 deaths and 125 injuries. Drink-driving does not seem to be a serious problem in Cyprus, since it caused a total of 125 accidents in 2003 with 3 deaths and 45 injuries.

### Vehicles

Cyprus is not a car producing country, thus the possibilities for significant influence on development of vehicle safety are naturally limited. The vehicle fleet is continuously being upgraded through harmonisation with EU legislation. This includes regular roadworthiness testing of vehicles, roadside inspections, compulsory use of seatbelts including child restraints, speed limitation devices on heavy vehicles etc. Tachographs will be introduced on heavy commercial vehicles and side and rear protective bars have been installed on heavy commercial vehicles. Since May 2004, all registered vehicles have to conform to European standards (European Type Approval Directives 70/156/ECC, 74/150/EEC and 92/61/EEC.).



## Road infrastructure improvement

The arterial road network in Cyprus is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Communications and Works (Department of Public Works). This is approx. one-third of the total length of roads and includes motorways, the main roads along rural corridors and the primary urban road network. Municipalities are responsible for another third of the road network; the secondary urban roads. The remaining third of the road network are the rural roads between villages which are under the jurisdiction of the District Administrations (Ministry of the Interior).

Roads are designed in accordance with the official geometric standards of the Department of Public Works, Ministry of Communications and Works for urban and for interurban/rural roads. These were drafted by European experts and are based on international standards. Introduction of road safety audits is included in the 2005 road safety action plan.

The existing road network is continuously improved with the application of a variety of measures. The interurban and rural roads are upgraded with the paving of shoulders, installation of guardrails, improvement of road signs and markings and reconstruction of black spots and other high risk locations. Installation of crash cushions at motorway exits is planned for 2005. A feasibility study for installation of variable message signs on motorways is also planned for 2005. A large number of traffic calming schemes has been implemented on trunk roads through villages, where excessive speeds were recorded. The urban road network is upgraded through the construction of pedestrian facilities (zebra and pelican crossings as well as pedestrian subways and footbridges on urban dual carriageways), installation of traffic signals with controlled pedestrian crossings at junctions, construction of pedestrian footways, implementation of traffic calming measures around schools and other sensitive areas, installation of street lighting etc. The introduction of speed and red light cameras at black spots on urban and interurban/rural roads is also planned for 2005.

## Other topics

### Emergency services

The following measures have been taken or are planned for the improvement of the emergence response time and emergency services:

- the old ambulances of the public hospitals are gradually being replaced by new, fully equipped vehicles
- the creation of a new emergency call centre directly connected to the ambulance stations is being promoted
- the establishment of two ambulance stations operating on a 24-hour basis in the regions of Lemessos and Larnaka, covering the broader area and a large part of the Nicosia-Lemessos-Larnaka motorway network
- Arrangements have been made to secure volunteer drivers for all rural health centres
- New communication systems have been installed in ambulances and their control centres
- A new emergence call control centre will be established in the new Nicosia Hospital
- The ambulance service will be improved with introduction of paramedics, creation of new stations and expansion of the service
- A “paramedic’s school” is also being planned and the composition of paramedic teams will be upgraded.

Victims of road accidents and their families receive free medical aid in the accident and emergency departments of the public sector if they are characterised as emergencies by the medical doctor (regulations related to the public hospitals and public services 2000 and 2002). Accident and emergency services are offered by the private sector as well, but at a nominal fee. Secondary care is provided in the public sector (including psychological support). The service is free for those who are entitled, and otherwise available at a cost based on financial criteria (according to the above mentioned regulations). Tertiary care for those with residual problems is provided free of charge.

The following measures have been taken to improve post-accident care:

- Continuous training of the medical/nursing staff of the accident and emergency care sections
- Operation of an emergency rescue unit
- Establishment of autonomous accident and emergency care sections
- Renewal of the ambulance fleet

The national legislation does not provide for the offer of legal aid to road accident victims or to their families.

Regarding legal issues, the relevant national legislation has been harmonised with the *acquis communautaire*. In relation to Directives 91/439/EEC and 2000/56/EC regarding driving licences, the theoretical examination has been revised and now includes questions on road safety and vehicle construction. The national legislation has also been harmonised with Directives 76/814/EEC, and 2003/59/EC and professional drivers of motor vehicles of over 7.5 tonnes GVW need to pass a written examination. They must also present evidence of driving experience and of having received driving training by an approved driving instructor for a minimum of 20 hours. The time allowed for the practical test of candidate drivers has been increased to 45 minutes for passenger cars (M1) and 60 minutes for buses and trucks.



# Information

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## Websites:

- Ministry of Communications and Works (Υπουργείο Συγκοινωνιών και Έργων) – [www.mcw.gov.cy](http://www.mcw.gov.cy)
- Ministry of Communications and Works, Department of Road Transport – <http://rtd.mcw.gov.cy>
- Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (Υπουργείο Υγείας) – [www.moh.gov.cy](http://www.moh.gov.cy)
- Cyprus Police (Αστυνομία Κυπρού) – [www.police.gov.cy](http://www.police.gov.cy)
- Ministry of Finance (Υπουργείο Οικονομικών) – [www.mof.gov.cy](http://www.mof.gov.cy)
- Scientific Technical Chamber of Cyprus – [www.etek.org.cy](http://www.etek.org.cy)
- Cyprus Statistical Service (Στατιστική Υπηρεσία) – [www.mof.gov.cy/cystat](http://www.mof.gov.cy/cystat)