

INTERPLAY BETWEEN PUBLIC AUTHORITY, INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY IN DENMARK

THE SOLUTION

Danish road safety is influenced by many players, ranging from public authorities and interest groups to the media. This is a strength, and provides for public acceptance of measures and a lively debate on how to improve road safety for all. Together with road users' own personal responsibility to act responsibly and carefully on the roads, a strong sense of community can bring down crash numbers and create safer transport.

This strength is evident when all players work together to improve road safety. Actions against speeding on primary roads bear witness to close cooperation between the players, with the Danish Road Directorate, municipalities and police working together for many years to build roundabouts and erect "black spot" signs, for example. The haulage industry, trade unions, the Danish Cyclists' Association, the Danish Road Safety Council, the Danish Transport Authority, the police, Local Government Denmark, the Danish Road Directorate and the Danish Road Accident Investigation Board (AIB) have worked together on a number of initiatives to prevent right-turn crashes between cyclists and lorries. The initiatives have raised awareness among drivers and cyclists and contributed to a fall in the number of right-turn crashes.

"Horizontal" cooperation is to be intensified in the coming years. The authorities in particular have a leading role to play, because the public sector employs more than 700,000 road users. Drawing up and implementing road safety policies – which could include guidelines for professional drivers, for example – in workplaces can create better driving behaviour, and private companies can follow suit. Safer driving can save companies money in fuel and insurance costs.

The Road Safety Commission aims to involve a wide range of players in its work to prevent road crashes in Denmark. The Commission therefore urges anyone who can help to improve road safety to do so. The task of reducing the number of road users injured on the roads cannot be tackled by one player alone. The Road Safety Commission advises every single player to do what they are best at, and to promote and develop effective measures in their area. The players defined in the action plan as being responsible for initiating the suggested measures are mainly public bodies – but private companies and interest groups also have an important role to play in implementing the measures.

Public bodies: Public bodies have a responsibility to work to reduce the number of road crashes. In particular, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Transport play a major role in relation to road safety.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the regulation of road traffic and safety, including drawing up draft laws and administrative regulations within this area. The Ministry of Justice also includes key services like the police, who handle traffic control, and the Danish Road Safety Council is closely connected to the Ministry as provided by the Council's bylaws.

The Danish Road Safety Council is a private foundation whose purpose includes promoting traffic safety by propagating awareness and acceptance of the dangers and difficulties faced by road users in traffic, and – within the framework of legislation – to work for the implementation of road safety measures. In this context, the Danish Road Safety Council is also responsible for long-term national campaigns and the information service. The Road Safety Commission was established by the Minister of Justice.

The Ministry of Transport is responsible, through the Danish Transport Authority, for rules on vehicle equipment etc. and, via the Danish Road Directorate, for the national road network. The Danish Road Directorate also acts as the secretariat for drawing up the rules of the road and is responsible for the national accident database and for investigating fatal crashes. The Danish Road Accident Investigation Board reports to the Minister for Transport, and has carried out in-depth analyses of frequently occurring crashes of a serious nature since 2001.

The Ministry of Children and Education, the Ministry of Taxation and the Ministry of Health and Prevention also play major roles in connection with research and measures in the matter of road safety and treatment.

The municipalities are important players in the effort to prevent road crashes. The municipalities are responsible for a large part of the Danish road network and therefore play an important role in relation to road engineering, campaigns and information, as they are close to citizens, particularly school pupils. Practically all municipalities are striving to improve road safety. Many municipalities draw up road safety management plans, most of them based on the Road Safety Commission's action plans. A survey of the country's 98 municipalities conducted by Local Government Denmark in 2012 showed that 77 of them had a road safety plan, while 84 reported that they were working on road safety issues in schools. It is crucial for the municipalities to continue this work. The Road Safety Commission also advises the municipalities to take an active part in ensuring that resources continue to be set aside for local campaigns which can complement and support national campaigning efforts.

The regions are responsible for the treatment of crash victims in the country's hospitals. Fast and effective treatment can save lives and reduce the risk of permanent disability after a road crash. The hospitals are also in possession of important data which can be used to supplement the police records of road crashes and hence target the preventive work being carried out by other players concerned with road safety.

It is a crucial task for the regions, together with the police and the municipalities, to ensure that there is better and more systematic recording of road users injured on the roads and treated in the country's A&E department. Localising these accidents and identifying the types of accident and vehicle can help immensely to reduce the number of serious and minor injuries treated by the A&E department.

The private sector: Private players see their primary interest in developing good products to optimise their revenue. This interest can create incentives to improve road safety. This can be most clearly seen in the insurance sector, which has a long tradition of supporting initiatives to reduce road crashes and injuries. Transport companies, carrying both passengers and freight, may see a financial benefit when the number of crashes in their business is reduced. Vehicle importers, vehicle manufacturers and dealers and producers of accessories for vehicles develop and sell vehicles and technology to help drivers to drive more safely. This reduces problems for the segment of vehicle buyers who want to prioritise safety. To a slightly lesser extent, bicycles and cycling accessories are being developed to promote safety on the roads.

Companies may also see an advantage in displaying social responsibility in areas like road safety and the environment. The industry organisation Danish Transport and Logistics (DTL) has worked consistently to promote road safety, e.g. in the campaign “Road safety at eye level”, which has reached 70,000 children.

The Union of Danish Driving Instructors plays a crucial role in training future road users. Interest groups such as the Danish Cyclists’ Federation and the Federation of Danish Motorists (FDM) also aim to safeguard their members’ interests in relation to road safety and run campaigns in this area. This work includes imposing requirements on relevant institutions such as the highway authorities (state and municipalities), and also informing their members about safe behaviour on the roads. It is essential for authorities and other players to involve interest groups in their efforts to improve road safety.

Many of the initiatives proposed in the action plan serve to improve the scope for other players to act. This is true of research and development work, which can help to provide the players with new knowledge. They can then target and tailor their efforts. DTU Transport and Aalborg University play key roles in this.

Forward-looking role of the players

In the future, the players should work even more closely together to achieve their objective. The Road Safety Commission urges those involved in road safety work to define their responsibilities within the overall effort and draw up plans to implement a targeted and effective programme. All players should also realise that many of these initiatives may entail costs – economic, organisational and/or political. On the other hand, the gains made may be multiplied both for society and for the players themselves in the form of savings on sick days, avoidance of material damage, and increased satisfaction among citizens and employees.

The Road Safety Commission also stresses the importance of the players “opening doors” to each other by coordinating their efforts and making it easier for each other to work to reduce the number of crashes and injuries in the most effective way from a socioeconomic perspective.

The municipalities play a major role in local road safety work. To maintain this in the future, the Road Safety Commission recommends that:

- the municipalities back up the Commission's national action plan, national objectives and proposed actions;
- the municipalities set up road safety boards across municipal boundaries, involving local players such as the police, local businesses in the transport sector and interest groups;
- state authorities provide knowledge and tools that can help to make the municipalities' road safety work more effective.

International cooperation

In the coming plan period, the Danish Road Safety Commission expects this work to generate new initiatives that are not covered in this action plan. International players will continue to have an important role – as they do today. One example of this is Euro NCAP, which has promoted the development of safe vehicles since 1997 and has also influenced developments in parts of the world other than Europe.

Public procurement and tendering

A general opportunity for the public sector players is that they can influence road safety by the process and quality that they apply to their procurement and tendering procedures. This can have a major bearing on road safety, for both passenger and freight transport. Public procurement can thus set new standards for:

- driver training
- safety equipment in vehicles (e.g., alcohol locks and emergency braking systems)
- special requirements for vehicles in city traffic

Examples are the City of Copenhagen's procurement of waste management services, which calls for low cabs on the lorries to improve the drivers' view of cyclists and pedestrians on urban roads. The Road Safety Commission recommends that the public sector players include these new ideas for road safety work in their business plans or action plans for municipal road safety work.

Link to the Danish road safety action plan 2021-2030:

[Handlingsplan 2021-2030 - Mål og Strategi \(faerdselssikkerhedskommissionen.dk\)](https://www.faeldeksikkerhedskommissionen.dk/handlingsplan-2021-2030-mal-og-strategi)

Danish Road Safety Commission

2021-2030 Action Plan Summary

FURTHER INFORMATION

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