1. EUROPEAN COMMISSION
2. Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support
3. TSIC-RoC - 18891
4. IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY FOR VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN LATVIA
5. Project description summary
6. August, 2024 C:\Users\sanuja.sajan\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\EY_Logo_Beam_Tag_Stacked_RGB_EN. WMFA blue flag with yellow stars

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IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY FOR VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN LATVIA

Project title for communication to a wide audience

**Empowering Lives: Enhancing Road Safety for Vulnerable Road Users in Latvia**

Summary

The general objective of this Project is to support institutional, administrative, and growth-oriented structural reforms in Latvia. The specific objective of this project is to aid national authorities in decreasing the occurrence of traffic accidents resulting in injury or fatality among vulnerable road users.

Context

Over the past years Latvia has not seen a significant decrease in traffic accident-related deaths and serious injuries.[[1]](#footnote-2) Moreover, Latvia constantly ranks between the top 5 EU countries with highest road fatality rate per million inhabitants (60 in 2022).[[2]](#footnote-3) The rate for vulnerable road users seriously injured or killed in road traffic accidents is considerably high in Latvia. Over the years there has not been a significant decrease in the number of vulnerable road users killed in road traffic accidents.

The EU has set a goal to reduce road fatalities to zero by 2050. “Vision zero” is the EU’s strategy to achieve this goal.[[3]](#footnote-4) Additionally, the EU has developed medium term strategy to increase road safety – “EU road safety policy framework 2021-2030”.[[4]](#footnote-5) Within the framework, the EU aims to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 50% between 2020 and 2030. The framework is based on “Safe System approach” which is developed from European best practices on road safety. It places the focus of road safety policy on preventing deaths and serious injuries.

To diminish the number of fatalities and injuries, especially among the most vulnerable road users, it is equally crucial to assess and implement solutions beyond those solely focused on road infrastructure. Specifically, implementing measures that comprehensively address education for all road users and raise awareness about road traffic safety.

Support delivery

In collaboration with the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia, the project endeavors to enhance road safety policy, fostering heightened awareness and safer behavior among vulnerable road users. This involves evaluating the current situation in Latvia, conducting a best practice analysis across Europe, and formulating recommendations, including a detailed roadmap for implementation. The project also includes the development of an awareness-raising campaign aimed at highlighting existing and potential risks associated with micro-mobility.

The total duration of the Project is 10 months from October 2023 till August 2024. A detailed Project workplan has been developed that includes activities performed during all 5 Project phases and allows to track the progress of all Project activities at the same time.

1. Inception report:
   * Outlines Project activities, implementation methods, governance details, and addresses potential implementation risks, providing mitigation measures.
2. AS-IS Report and Road Safety Analysis:
   * Constructs a comprehensive assessment of current road safety conditions for vulnerable road users over the past five years. Reviews best practices and develops a reference model for comparison with the current situation in Latvia.
3. Recommendations Report on Road Safety Implementation:
   * Encompasses a detailed set of recommendations to bridge the gaps between the reference model and the current situation in Latvia for road safety among vulnerable road users.
4. Awareness Raising Campaign Report:
   * Aims to promote the safe integration of micro-mobility options with a focus on road safety for vulnerable road users. Based on data and recommendations from Deliverable 2 and Deliverable 3, the report emphasizes broader factors influencing road safety concerns.
5. Final report:
   * Provides an overview of conducted activities and offers suggestions for future steps. Includes recommendations for assessing and supervising project results, along with key lessons learned. This information is valuable for presenting the project to external entities and guiding similar endeavors in different EU Member States.

Results achieved

Due to the extensive research conducted and the broad range of aspects examined, the list of findings from this project is quite comprehensive. However, some of the key findings include the following:

1. Infrastructure in Latvia is fragmented, for example cycling paths end abruptly, often they are designed in non-standardized ways. VRUs often must share infrastructure and then suddenly the infrastructure is separated. Due to fragmentation in infrastructure, VRUs that are not pedestrians are forced to use infrastructure meant for cars, pedestrians, and cyclists, therefore moving around the street a lot.
2. In contrast to best practice countries, pedestrian walkways are shared between different VRUs. On roads where there are no cycling paths, cyclists, electric bicycles, electric step scooters are not prohibited to use pedestrian walkways and are permitted to use the right side of the road.
3. Latvian bicycle standards comply with best practices in infrastructure design; however they are rarely applied in real life. Most roads do not have cycling paths at all.
4. Views about infrastructure that affects vulnerable road users in Latvia are polarized and sometimes not substantiated by data and research. There is a lack of effective mechanism to facilitate communication between municipal authorities, Latvian Road Traffic Safety Directorate, Latvian State Roads, NGOs, and professionals (e.g., spatial planners, engineers etc.), although they often have information that other institutions do not have.
5. While information on road traffic accidents is available, including various additional information as type of accident, involved road users, time and location etc., there is no information about the fatal road accidents, where a criminal case has been initiated and it limits the possibility to analyze these accidents to understand root-cause of those accidents.

Throughout the project, several key lessons were learned as various critical elements were thoroughly analyzed. The most significant lessons include:

1. Effective stakeholder involvement, including urban planners, NGOs, and ministries like the Ministry of Health for post-crash care, is crucial in road safety evaluation and decision-making. Currently, these parties operate independently, lacking unified mechanisms to collaborate and create shared value.
2. Best practices in road safety must be critically assessed, as many factors, including historical and cultural beliefs, contribute to a country’s success in reducing road fatalities. These non-direct factors make it challenging to replicate similar solutions across different countries.
3. Road safety requires significant investment and is a time-consuming process. Long-term improvements often demand high financial resources, so it’s essential to prioritize medium-term recommendations that offer the greatest impact with the least financial investment.
4. In Latvia, there is a strong auto-centric culture, making it difficult to shift public perception towards the benefits of micromobility. Changing these deeply rooted beliefs will require long-term efforts and effective measures to influence cultural attitudes related to road safety.
5. Infrastructure solutions often overlook people with reduced mobility. The best solutions for vulnerable road users should also accommodate this group. Reframing the discussion to include older people, children, and those with reduced mobility as vulnerable road users could have a positive impact.
6. There is a tendency to blame vulnerable road users in road interactions. This contrasts with leading countries where the person with the greatest potential to cause harm is held more responsible and expected to be more aware of their actions.

1. [Ikmēneša un biežāk atjaunotie CSNg dati | Ceļu satiksmes negadījumi | Statistika | CSDD](https://www.csdd.lv/celu-satiksmes-negadijumi/ikmenesa-dati) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Road safety statistics 2022 in more detail (europa.eu)](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/background/road-safety-statistics-2022-more-detail_en) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [H2020 Transport-Road Safety 2022-web.pdf (europa.eu)](https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-02/H2020%20Transport-Road%20Safety%202022-web.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Next steps towards ‘Vision Zero’ - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d7ee4b58-4bc5-11ea-8aa5-01aa75ed71a1) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)