

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION ON IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY, 9 MARCH 2006

The Government of Finland has undertaken systematic target-oriented traffic safety work through resolutions in 1993, 1997 and 2001. In the resolution of 2001, the Government adopted a long-term road safety vision for Finland, according to which the design of the road transport system must be such that nobody needs to die or be seriously injured on Finnish roads. The road safety plan that formed the basis for the resolution aimed at creating opportunities for the continuous development of the transport system so that by 2025 the annual number of road fatalities would not exceed 100. At the same time, the Government revised the objective previously set in 1997 such that by 2010 the annual number of road fatalities should be less than 250.

During the past ten years the annual number of road fatalities in Finland has declined only slightly, remaining at around 400. However, during the last three years the annual number of fatalities has been less than 400: there were 379 in 2003, 375 in 2004, and according to preliminary information the figure for 2005 will be about the same as for the previous year.

In all the countries where the number of road fatalities had declined, the favourable downward trend stopped at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. Some countries, particularly Sweden and Norway, witnessed an upward trend in 2004, which continued in 2005. Preliminary data shows that both Sweden and Norway have achieved a level of safety that corresponds to Finland's target for 2010. The situation has also improved in Denmark during the past few years.

With this Resolution of 2006 the Government confirms the goal that was set previously. By 2010 the number of road fatalities should not exceed 250. The long-term aim is still to improve traffic safety continuously, so that by 2025 there will be no more than 100 road fatalities per year.

The Government stresses that traffic safety aims must be taken into consideration in all decision-making concerning transport policy. In order to achieve these aims, the following particular measures will be prepared and implemented in 2006-2010:

Better cooperation

1. This Resolution will be implemented in close cooperation between the various authorities, and it will support the Internal Security Programme.
2. Application of new technology, particularly information technology, will be promoted and preparations will be made to take it into extensive use in road traffic. The Ministry of Transport and Communications will take steps to improve research and development, and to ensure better coordination of the work done by actors cooperating in the sector.
3. In spring 2006, regional traffic safety events will be organised under the leadership of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, in which the Road Safety

Programme 2006-2010 will be discussed, and the Government Resolution will be presented to the regional authorities, safety organisations and the general public for the development of regional road safety activities. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, State Provincial Offices)

4. The Regional Consultative Committees on Road Safety will check that their provincial road safety plans and programmes meet the aims of this Resolution. (State Provincial Offices)

5. Cooperation in the compilation of statistics on traffic accidents will be improved. An investigation will be made into ways of linking traffic accident statistics with the accident statistics compiled by the health care service, and thus of differentiating serious injuries as a separate classification to be monitored. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Interior, Statistics Finland, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health/National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, and *Liikenneturva*, the Central Organization for Traffic Safety in Finland)

6. A specific programme will be prepared to map out traffic safety problems related to the ageing of the population. (Ministry of Transport and Communications)

7. Investigations will be made into the possibilities of increasing the amount of traffic medicine training in the basic training of doctors, of establishing special traffic medicine units for the development of education and research, and of finding solutions to the more demanding driving-related health issues. (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Transport and Communications)

8. Steps will be taken to speed up the theme project on removing level crossings set up by the ministerial working group on transport infrastructure policy. (Rail Administration, Road Administration).

9. Efforts will be made to prevent hazardous situations or traffic accidents involving elk, deer or reindeer, by increasing the number of animal passages and game fences in the road network and by improving zones of visibility. A further aim is to decrease the incidence of elk accidents with the help of forest and game management.

EU cooperation

10. Attention will be paid to ensuring that by the end of 2008 the Ministry of the Interior's Emergency Response Centres will be ready to receive messages from the European emergency messaging system (eCALL), and so speed up the rescue services. The aim is to have the eCall system in place in new vehicles as from 2009. (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Transport and Communications)

11. Efforts will be made within the sphere of EU cooperation to have intelligent speed adjustment installed as standard equipment in all new vehicles to be imported to Finland. (Ministry of Transport and Communications)

12. During 2006, clarification will be sought as to the possibility of using Community legislation to reduce the maximum values of speed limitation devices in

heavy vehicles (present maximum 90 km/h), in order to improve drivers' compliance with speed limits and to enhance traffic safety. (Ministry of Transport and Communications)

13. The introduction of vehicle stability control systems will be promoted, in the first place in buses and coaches, and, as technology advances, in other heavy vehicles as well. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finnish Vehicle Administration)

14. Support will be given to Sweden's initiative on making the alcolock a standard device in new vehicles. (Ministry of Transport and Communications)

Reducing head-on collisions on main roads

15. Systematic development of the main road network will be continued, aiming particularly at reducing head-on collisions on single-carriageway main roads. In 2006 a plan will be drawn up, and finance possibilities examined, concerning the use of median barriers to separate opposing lanes in dangerous road sections. The separation of opposing lanes will be given more weight when speed limits are being set. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finnish Road Administration)

16. The use of "feed-back" road markings will be increased. Winter maintenance, and the dissemination of information about weather and road conditions and other exceptional circumstances, will be improved by taking more advantage of new technologies. Surveillance of traffic behaviour will be increased on the stretches of roads with the most accidents. (Finnish Road Administration, Ministry of the Interior)

Reducing pedestrian and cyclist accidents in population centres

17. Measures to slow down traffic in built-up and residential areas will continue to be implemented. Plans for speed limits in population centres should be based on limits of 40 km/h and, in residential areas, 30 km/h. Higher speed limits will be allowed only if lanes for pedestrians and cyclists are sufficiently separated. In order to curb driving speeds, drivers' compliance with speed limits will also be improved through structural solutions. (municipalities, Finnish Road Administration)

18. Traffic information and control systems will be developed that make it possible to provide drivers with traffic information, such as the current speed limit, through devices inside their vehicles. It will be ensured that such systems also cover municipal road and street networks. (Finnish Road Administration, municipalities)

19. To improve the safety of children going to school, attention will be paid to road safety education in line with official study plans and in practice. In addition, safety campaigns targeted at particular schools will be conducted as part of the municipal traffic safety measures. (Finnish National Board of Education, schools, municipalities, Finnish Road Administration, the Central Organisation for Traffic Safety in Finland)

20. The use of cycle helmets and reflectors will be promoted through publicity, including specific publicity campaigns. The need for sanctions for neglecting to use safety equipment will be assessed on the basis of other countries' experience.

(Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Central Organisation for Traffic Safety in Finland, Ministry of the Interior)

Speed control

21. Automatic speed surveillance will be increased so that fixed automatic surveillance will cover about 3,000 km of main roads by 2010. In addition to this, mobile traffic surveillance based on new technology will be extended so that there will be a total of at least 25 mobile surveillance units. The benefits of the simplified small-fine procedure, which entered into force on 1 April 2006, will be realised in practical surveillance work. The system of sanctions will be further developed, and possibilities for extending the scope of application of fixed fines will be investigated. In addition to the increase in speed surveillance, more information about surveillance and speeds will be disseminated. (Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Road Administration)

22. Alternative methods of financing the development, implementation and upkeep of the surveillance system will be examined. Possibilities of carrying out municipal traffic surveillance aided by the development of automatic surveillance system and technology will be studied. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior)

23. The general guidelines on road-specific speed limits will be checked in spring 2006, in order to ensure that speed limits support the improvement of road safety as effectively as possible. Development trials of adjustable speed limit systems will be continued on suitable road sections, and basic principles and guidelines for the limits will be developed. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finnish Road Administration)

24. The threshold for intervention by speed surveillance officials will be lowered to reduce speeding and keep speeds within the legal limits. (Ministry of the Interior)

25. Applications of various new technology-based speed control systems will be explored and developed. A trial based on travel-time surveillance will be started, as will a trial related to automatic vehicle identification. (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Transport and Communications)

Reducing accidents involving intoxicants

26. Prevention of accidents caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be continued, and alcohol and drug-screening devices for traffic surveillance will be further developed. (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice)

27. The use of the alcolock will be extended. Widespread use of the alcolock among professional drivers will be promoted by voluntary and legislative measures. It is especially important that when the public sector purchases transport services it should specify the alcolock as a competitive factor or even as a requirement. The use of the alcolock in transporting school children and other special groups will be promoted by examining whether it should be made compulsory for those types of

transport services. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, State Provincial Offices, municipalities)

28. The possibilities of decreeing the use of the alcolock to be compulsory for repeat drunken driving offenders will be investigated. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Vehicle Administration)

Reducing accidents in professional transport

29. Surveillance of heavy-vehicle traffic will be tightened up with the aim of ensuring better compliance with regulations, for example with regard to driving and rest periods, driving speeds, overloading, and securing of loads. It will be ensured that the special competences required for heavy-vehicle traffic surveillance will be available as needed. Public information and other preventive measures will be intensified. With regard to compliance with driving and rest periods and heavy-vehicle loading, the responsibilities of the party ordering the transport and of the shipper will be emphasised, in accordance with the respective government proposal. Furthermore, efforts will be made to increase the use of action to interrupt the trip in cases where driving and rest times are not observed. (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Transport and Communications)

30. Surveillance of cross-border traffic will be intensified. Possible ways of increasing the impact of surveillance on international transport operators will be explored, in order for it to be at the same level as that which applies to Finnish operators. This will be a particular consideration for the working group that will be established to deal with the expiration of the transition period for cabotage transport. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finnish Customs)

31. In autumn 2008 and 2009 the requirements of the EU directive on the initial and further training of professional heavy-vehicle drivers will be adopted. At the same time, improvements will be made in the driving instruction required to obtain a licence and in the examinations for heavy-vehicle drivers. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education)

32. The possibility of controlling driving speeds by means of tachographs will be examined. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Interior)

33. Both the number of resting places for heavy vehicles and drivers and the number of places suitable for heavy-vehicle surveillance will be increased. (Finnish Road Administration, Ministry of the Interior)

34. Professional drivers' occupational health care will be promoted, and broader measures to maintain and improve drivers' health will be supported by means of general publicity and campaigning and by increasing research and development in this field. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, professional organisations)

More effective driving tuition and licence sanctions

35. Basic driving tuition will be reformed by increasing the number of controlled and supervised driving lessons, by standardising driving tuition for difficult conditions, and by promoting the use of professional tuition to back up private instruction. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finnish Vehicle Administration)

36. Special attention will be paid to safety problems in motorcycling. Possibilities of raising the age limit, other than for light motorcycles, within the limits of the future driving licence directive will be considered, and driving tuition and examination requirements will be made stricter. The amount of practical tuition required to obtain a motorcycle driving licence increased from 1 March 2006. Preparations will be made for motorcycle driving instruction to become a two-stage process as is the case for driving licences for cars. People who have acquired the right to drive a motorcycle before 1991, in connection with a car driving licence, will be given information about the requirements for driving motorcycles properly, and preparations will be made to introduce further training in motorcycling, the first target group being the motorcyclist group just mentioned. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Finnish Vehicle Administration)

37. The system of sanctions linked to driving licences will be developed such that a “points system” of sanctions on driving licences will be introduced and applied to repeated offences. The new system will enable more attention to be paid to neglect to use safety devices, and various other offences. Possibilities to link training requirement sanctions to the points system will also be examined. (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Vehicle Administration)

Requirements for implementation and follow-up

The Government expects the administrative sectors to take the aims of this Resolution into consideration in their own action plans, and to implement the proposed measures in their own fields within the framework of the national budget.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications will coordinate national road safety work and will report to the Government, when necessary, on the progress of the Programme and the achievement of the road safety objectives.