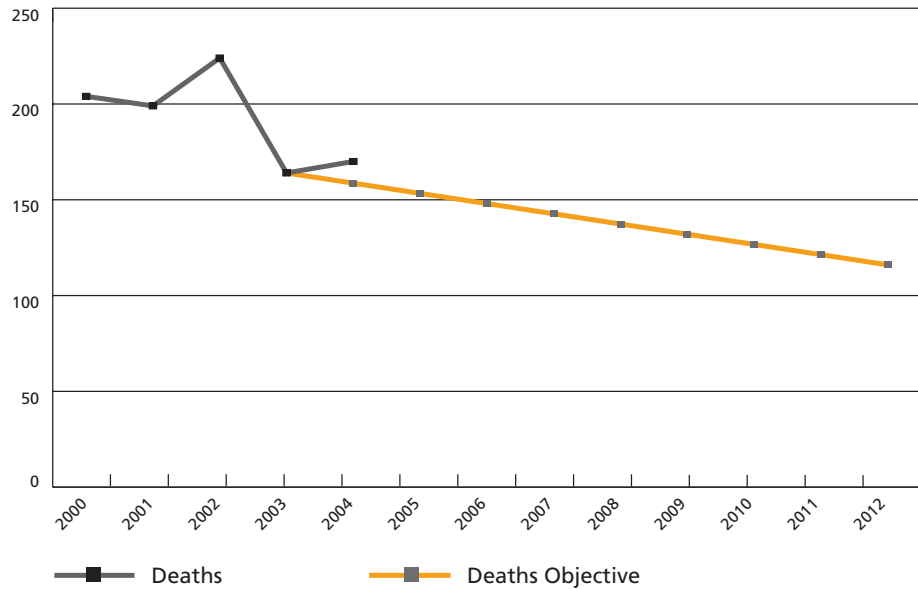


## 6.6 ESTONIA



**General Road Safety:** Estonia's fatality rate is dropping although there was a slight rise between 2003 and 2004. Its fatality rate is above the EU average at 124 deaths per million. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is responsible for the development of legislative acts for road safety and road safety policy at a national level. The Road Administration covers the management of national roads and traffic. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic and Communications the Road Administration is responsible for information dissemination for public use including campaigns. A Road Safety Programme was established in 2003 presenting a strategy covering 2003-2015. The County level government supports road safety organisation, planning and activities at the regional level, whereas the local (municipal, parish) administration supports road safety organisation, planning and activities at the local level.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the police and its police board is responsible for enforcement and surveillance of traffic law and the Traffic Code. A separate traffic police force was phased out in 2000 and road policing became the responsibility of every policeman. In August 2003, a special Traffic Enforcement Unit was established within the police to co-ordinate alcohol and speed enforcement. In 2004, a new Traffic Department was set up with the goal of increasing traffic policing on the roads. This was supported by public opinion.

A national enforcement plan is agreed by the Minister of Interior. There are two planning periods: one year and three month period. The priorities set cover the road, traffic management and signs, technical condition of the vehicles, road traffic and participants, passenger and goods; public events stated by the Plan and planned state-wide operations. The State plan includes no more than 50% of time amount for the traffic control workforce.

**Speeding:** Speed limits were raised on some stretches of road in Estonia from 90 to 100 km/h, during the summer months between May and September. First, limits were raised on all roads based on a Parliamentary decision. When accidents increased, the responsible minister issued a decree to introduce seasonal limits only for some low-risk roads. The decision is made annually as to which roads have the higher summer speed limit based on the previous year's accident data.

Speed enforcement is undertaken according to a plan on national roads, on roads with high traffic density and on roads where traffic accidents with deaths have occurred. Enforcement focuses on built-up areas and on high risk stretches of road. Checks are intensified during the bad road and weather conditions. Pursuant to the national plan, supervision of speed limit compliance takes up at least 20%

of the working hours of traffic supervision. Undercover traffic supervision is also undertaken, using vehicles without police identification.

Estonia does not yet have automated speed measuring devices. An agreement was signed between the police and Road Administration to set up the first cameras in 2005, based on a feasibility study. Following a delay, a public tender will be held at the beginning of 2006 and the cameras could be operational no earlier than the second half of 2006. A pilot project should be undertaken with the automatic speed measuring devices. At present there are about 90 hand-held radars. The state has no separate data about the traffic density and speed profiles.

**Alcohol:** In Estonia the legal blood alcohol level is 0.2 %. As a rule, all drivers who have been stopped for a traffic offence are checked for alcohol. Alcohol enforcement is based very much on the Finnish experience. Enforcement covers all types of roads. Large-scale random breath testing entitled "Everybody is blowing" is also undertaken. Testing is often done where and when people are likely to drink, and on public holidays, e.g. New Years Day. At the moment Estonian police don't use the precision breathalysers but the interest is still persisting.

**Seat belts:** In general, seat belt enforcement is not very strict. Checks are usually combined with other enforcement activities. Only in case of a campaign is the use of seat belts checked individually. The number of seat belt checks and offences are not collected separately.

**Follow-up of offences:** A new penalty point system is planned to be introduced as part of the new Traffic Act. Drivers pay their fines upon receiving a ticket at their home address. All drink driving and speeding offences are strictly followed up, whereas warnings are often issued for the non-use of seat belts. In the case of speeding offences, drivers have to be stopped. In the case of automated speed enforcement (planned for next year), the driver will be held liable on the basis of the photographic evidence.

**Information:** The national Road Administration under the administration of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications is responsible for the campaigns carried out at a national level. Campaigns are planned in co-operation with the police who then carry out increased enforcement activities during this time. Annual information dissemination and public campaigns have covered drink driving and seat belt use and will also include speeding in the future. Past campaigns include: 'Drive hard headed!' which aims to target drink driving with a chain of actions on the big festivities in summer time: it focuses on the places of alcohol consumption and is supported by the media and police enforcement. It is also accompanied by a private initiative entitled "Sober group leader". Another campaign entitled 'Buckle up!' targets drivers, car users, parents and whole population to increase the number of seatbelt wearing and children restraint use in the cars. It also uses the outdoor media, radio, TV spots and police enforcement. For seat belt use, there are also advertisements, information folders, stickers "Fasten seat belt", "Fasten seat belt on back seat, too". In 2004 from March to April there was a 3 week promotion period for seat belts usage in urban areas.

Regarding random breath testing actions, drivers are not always informed. However, the media are informed of the results. All the names and birthdates of punished drink driving offenders are displayed on the homepage of the police.

In conclusion, speeding offences dropped between 2003 and 2004. Seat belt checks are not collected nor are the offences. Seat belt wearing rates especially on the rear seat are well below the EU average. Drink driving enforcement has doubled, offences increased slightly and drink driving deaths have decreased from 25% to 15% of the total between 2003 and 2004.

**Recommendations:**

- Further extend automatic speed enforcement with owner responsibility for follow up of offences.
- Introduce road side evidential breath testing.
- Conduct separate seat belt checks and increase enforcement and sanctioning of non seat belt wearing.
- Prepare frequent campaigns to reduce speeding.