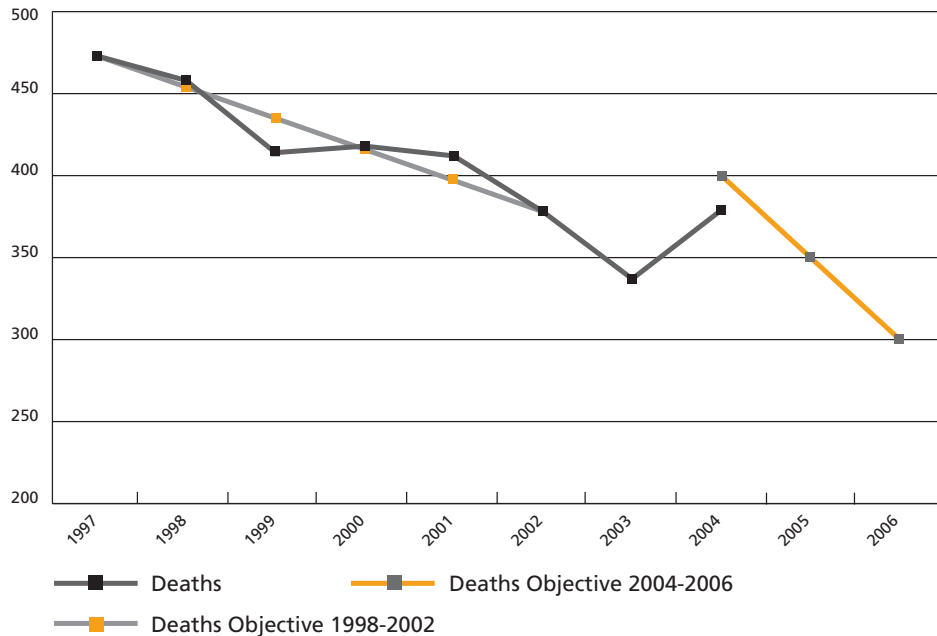


6.12 IRELAND




General Road Safety: Ireland was able to decrease the number of deaths in the 1990's but is facing an increase from 335 (2003) to 399 (2005). Ireland's "Road Safety Strategy 2004 – 2006" aims to reduce the number of deaths to no more than 300 by 2006. The strategy was developed by a High Level Group on road safety which was set up under chairmanship of the Department of Transport. It was also made up of National Safety Council, National Roads Authority, Garda National Traffic Bureau (police) and the Departments of Justice, Environment and Health. Counties also develop their own road safety strategies. Moreover, the former "Road Safety Strategy 1998-2002" formulated the target to reduce Irish road deaths by 2002 by a minimum of 20% of their 1997 level.

Traffic law enforcement is undertaken by the Garda National Traffic Bureau and carried out by operational Traffic Units based in each Garda Division in each region. In November 2004 the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Justice announced the creation of a new Traffic Corps to replace the former Traffic Unit. A total of 700 new officers would be recruited to join the current 500 officers who are part of the Traffic Unit bringing the total up to approximately 1,200 by 2008. Enforcement planning is carried out by annual plans of the Garda and mid term programmes like the Garda Síochána Corporate Strategy 2005-2007.

Speed: Only very few fixed cameras are used at a small number of locations. The focus is primarily on the installation of mobile units in Ireland. Since January 2005 the measurement of speed limits has been changed from miles to kilometer per hour. As a result of these changes, speed limits have seen a slight increase. Speeding remains the main cause of fatal accidents, whereby an exact number is not available.

Alcohol: At present random breath tests are not carried out in Ireland. Police can only request a preliminary roadside breath test from a driver if they have the suspicion that he/she has committed a road traffic offence or has been involved in a collision. Ireland has the second lowest number of drink-driving checks within the EU, and exact numbers are not available.

Seat belts: Seat belt checks are carried out separately and in combination with other checks.



Follow-up of offences: In October 2002 Ireland introduced a penalty point system on a phased basis with speeding being the first offence to be covered. Other offences fined by the point system are seat belt offences, careless driving and driving without insurance. Under the system a driver accumulating 12 points within a 3-year period will automatically lose their driving license for 6 months. Penalty points remain on the license record for a period of 3 years and an accumulation of 12 points at any time within the 3 years will lead to an automatic disqualification for 6 months. Since the beginning of the introduction of the penalty point system the impact of the system is waning. At present there are plans to reinforce the system by expanding it to more road traffic offences.

Information: Campaigns on speed, alcohol and seat belt use are run by different actors in Ireland; These include the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of State at the Department of Health and Children, Garda National Traffic Bureau, the National Safety Council, the Automobile Association and the Drinks Industry. Campaigns are mainly made up of radio and TV advertisements.

Recommendations:

- Random Breath Testing should be implemented in Ireland.
- Penalty point system should be expanded to more road traffic offences.
- The number of fixed speeding cameras should be increased to ensure an effective enforcement mix of both mobile and stationary equipment.
- Due to the fact that Ireland has the second lowest number of drink-driving checks within the EU, enforcement should be strengthened by assigning more police officers to the Traffic Corps for alcohol checks.