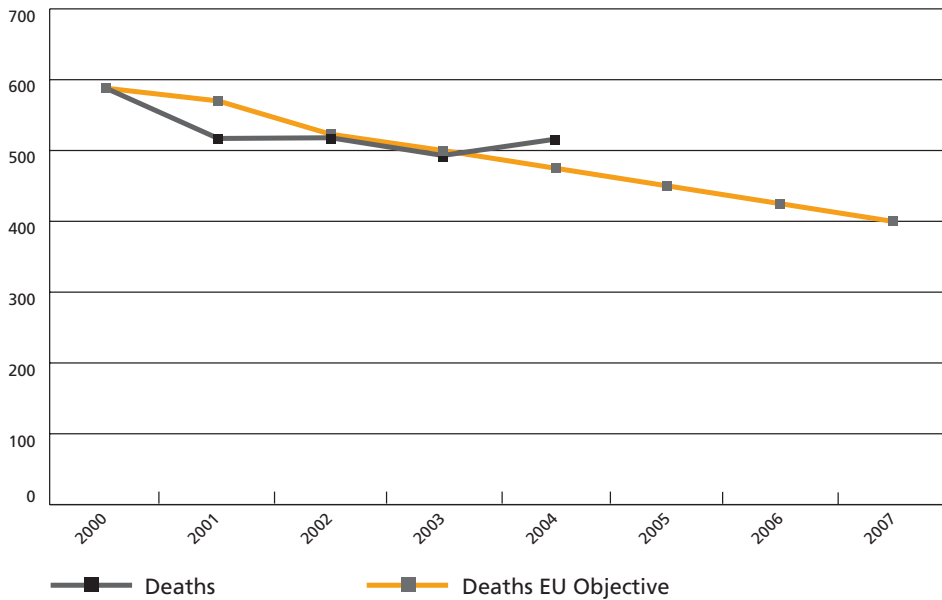


## 6.14 LATVIA




**General Road Safety:** Latvia fatality levels have dropped over the past years, although the average deaths per million were still 220, one of the worst in the EU. Preparation is underway for a follow-up Road Safety Plan for 2007-2010. Latvia also has a Road Safety Council which meets regularly to plan joint activities relating to campaigns and enforcement on road safety. It is made up of the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the traffic police. Latvia currently does not prepare an annual enforcement plan for speeding, drink driving and seat belt enforcement.

**Speed:** The new penalty point system (2004) introduced two offences for speeding. If a driver is found to be speeding at 20-30 km/h above the allowed limit they will be fined 30 EUR and will receive one penalty point. In case a driver is found to be speeding at 40-50 km/h above the allowed limit they will be fined 60 € and will receive three penalty points. The State Police use video cameras and mobile speed detection devices.

**Alcohol:** The maximum permitted blood alcohol level for novice drivers was reduced to 0.2 mg/ml in 2004. The level for other drivers remains at 0.5 mg/ml. Scooter riders and cyclists can have up to 1.0 mg/ml. Police use roadblocks and breathalyser tests as enforcement tools. Large-scale actions are run during public holidays (Midsummer Festivity, Fishermen Festival, Christmas, New Year, etc). Two breath tests are carried out at an interval of 15-20 minutes. If the driver does not accept either test or result, a blood test is carried out.

**Seat belts:** Penalty points can also be withdrawn for non seat belt wearing. Seat belt wearing is checked regularly by the police. Existing data only for the capital town of Riga show an impressive increase from an 18% wearing rate for front seat occupants in 1997 to 54% in 2005. Seat belt wearing rates for other areas are not yet available.

**Follow-up of offences:** A penalty points system was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004. The main aim of the system was to eliminate the practice of traffic policemen imposing fines and collecting them on the spot. The penalty point register is kept by the Road Traffic Safety Directorate (RTSD), which also maintains the car register and driving license register.



The maximum number of penalty points is 10 for novice drivers and 16 for other drivers and leads to a one year disqualification. The maximum number of penalty points for a single offence is 8 for the most serious offences such as drunk driving or leaving the scene of an accident. Penalty points last for 2 years or in the case of serious offences (8 points) for 5 years.

If, within a 10-year period, a driver reaches twice the maximum number of penalty points, he/she receives a life-long disqualification, but has the right after 5 years to apply for a driving license as a novice driver. There are opportunities for drivers to reduce the number of penalty points by participating in driver improvement courses or theory tests.

**Information:** The Road Traffic Safety Directorate regularly organizes traffic safety advertising campaigns, during which attention of the society is concentrated on the three priority issues and include campaigns entitled: Speed Fascinates, Hassle-free Holidays, The Week of Politeness for Drivers. During the last two years, the number of injuries and casualties during the national Ligo holidays was drastically reduced thanks to a national campaign Save Your Friend - Don't Let Him Drink and Drive! The state police is involved in the planning and evaluation, and it organises specific actions in accordance with the campaign's topic. Campaigns make use of data relating to the number of lives lost due to speeding, drink driving and not wearing their seat belts. Campaigns are made up of publicity work using TV spots, radio, brochures, posters, the Internet and press conferences. The campaign run in 2003 entitled "Survives, who uses seatbelts", led to a 25% increase in the seat belt wearing rate.

In conclusion, due to the patchy set of data it is difficult to evaluate the impact of enforcement activities in Latvia. For drink driving, checks are not collected but offences and fatality rates dropped between 2003 and 2004. It is not possible to draw an analysis for speeding or seat belt wearing as there is neither compliance data nor are levels of offences available.

**Recommendations:**

- Extend the automatic speed enforcement network.
- Conduct separate blitz seat belt wearing checks linked to further campaigns.
- Collect and analyse seat belt wearing and speed compliance data to support enforcement planning and evaluation.