

SAFETY OF SENIORS IN TRANSPORT

Please describe the main road safety challenges/problems you have addressed or are addressing

Seniors, or people aged 65+, account for 18% of the European Union's population. Because of long-term low birth rate, ageing baby boomers and prolonging the average life expectancy, their share will increase to 24% by 2030 and to 28% by 2050. This is also connected to expected increase in share of seniors in the total number of road accident victims. While it is currently 28 per cent, it can raise to 33% by 2050. The problem also affects the Czech Republic. By the end of 2015, the share of seniors in the total population of the Czech Republic was about 18%, by the end of 2021 it was already 21%, by 2030 it will be 24% and by 2050 a whole third. The share of seniors in the total number of accident victims is growing in the same trend. In 2011, it was 16 per cent; in 2021, it was 26 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of severely injured seniors has increased from 14 to 18 per cent over the last ten years. In the future, it can be expected that the proportion of seniors in the total number of accident victims will continue to increase.

Within the European Union, seniors are the second most vulnerable group of road users, in close pursuit of the 18- to 24-year-olds. Statistical data clearly shows that young people aged 18 to 24 account for 7% of the total population of the European Union, but their share of the total number of accident victims is 12%. The second most vulnerable group of road users are the elderly. Their share of the total population is 18%, but they account for 28% of accident victims. In contrast, adults aged 25 to 49 make up 35 per cent of the European population and account for 36 per cent of accident victims. Roads are safest for children under the age of 15. They account for one-sixth of the total population, and only 3 per cent of the total number of people killed because of a traffic accident.

What is the cause of tragic accidents among seniors? The elderly people are threatened by their increased physical vulnerability as well as gradual decline of their mental and physical abilities. In the final consequence, with increasing age the risk that an injury sustained in an accident will be fatal increases. When the same force is applied, people over the age of 75 are three times more likely to suffer a fatal injury than 18-year-olds. Seniors are more vulnerable than cyclists and are significantly less vulnerable when transported by car. In general, people over the age of 65 are twice as exposed to the risk of death in a traffic accident, and the risk increases significantly from the age of 75 when the risk is more than 16 times higher. However, it is worth remembering that current mental and physical fitness are very individual matters.

Individual countries are trying to improve the safety of seniors on the roads by making adequate adjustments to the transport infrastructure, and cars are then equipped with sophisticated assistance systems. Unfortunately, however, there is a lack of comprehensive, high-quality, nationwide educational programs on how to behave in road traffic, specially designed for seniors. Our long-term national educational program, introduced already in 2018, can rightly be considered unique worldwide.

Project activities

Please describe the project activities you carried/are carrying out and the time period over which these were implemented.

The main goal of the long-term educational program SAFETY OF SENIORS IN TRANSPORT is to familiarize our elderly citizens with how to safely navigate the roads. Our audience are not just seniors, but younger age groups too. They are also regularly informed about how to behave properly towards elderly people in road traffic. And it is not only about safe conduct, but also about friendliness and mutual decency. After all, roads are a social environment where at least the basic rules of ethics and etiquette should be maintained. In the first round of the campaign, which ran in the years 2018–2019, 304 educational lectures were held throughout the Czech Republic in form of attractive theatrical short scenes combined with expert commentary and audio-visual presentations. This form of lectures ensures a high level of transfer of necessary information wrapped in an attractive and pleasant form. The creed of the lecture creators and all the speakers is to educate, entertain and delight the audience. Currently the second round is underway, this time with 200 lectures and an expected participation of about 20,000 seniors. The third round of the campaign will run from autumn 2022 to December 2023. In towns and municipalities where the lecture tour did not take place, educational packages were distributed to educate seniors with help of local governments or senior clubs. Moreover, the project also includes a media campaign. To reach most seniors, we are using various channels such as television, radio stations, press and online.

The spectrum of communicated topics is wide. It is aimed not only at car drivers, but also at elderly passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport passengers. For example, statistics of traffic accidents and their causes, specifics of the behaviour of older drivers in road traffic, medical examinations of drivers, the influence of diseases or medication on driver performance, equipment of modern cars and how to use it properly, changes in road traffic rules and traffic signs are discussed in detail. It is also about how to behave properly as a pedestrian, about pedestrian priority at crossings, but also about safe and healthy cycling. How to travel properly on buses and trams is also important. Indeed, every visitor to our lecture will learn a lot of interesting and useful information. And in a very accessible and entertaining way. The faces of the project are Jaroslava Obermaierová, an actress, and Jiří Štedroň, a singer, who are popular especially among the elderly population.

If you work together with external partners, list the most important partners, and briefly describe their role. *

First, it is worth mentioning the Loss Prevention Fund of the Czech Insurers' Bureau, from which the campaign is financed. Furthermore, our long-term external partner Roman Budský (a representative of the VIZE 0 Platform), who was at the birth of our campaign, cooperated in the creation of professional documents and currently ensures the media coverage of the project and the safety of seniors on the roads. Cooperation is also established with the Police of the Czech Republic, which provides the necessary statistical data on traffic accidents as required, and in addition, the national chief of traffic police, Col. Jiří Zlý filmed one of the outputs presented at the lectures. The insurance company Kooperativa also cooperates especially in public relations in individual regions. The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and its individual members provide great support

in securing the venues where individual performances take place. Other partners are the Senior Citizens Council of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic.

Evaluation

What has been the effect of the activities?

The basis of the campaign is staged lectures. In total, over 500 events were held during the first and second rounds with nearly 40,000 seniors attending in total. In addition, educational packages were distributed to municipalities with a population of more than 2,000, which were not visited by the lectures, totalling 630. Mass media communication on the issue of safety of seniors on the roads was very important. It reached the vast majority of 1,900,000 seniors living in the Czech Republic in 2018. The TV campaign reached 90.5 per cent of seniors (about 1.7 million people), and 75.4 per cent of seniors (about 1.4 million people) repeatedly (i.e., more than 3 times). The survey conducted among a total of 1,784 participants of the lectures showed that 73.8 per cent will follow the obtained professional information in the future, 51.2 per cent will discuss road safety with their relatives or friends, 57.1 per cent will continue to educate themselves in this area and 90.5 per cent are of the opinion that even younger age groups should pay attention to the issue of road safety for seniors.

Please briefly explain why your initiative is a good example of improving road safety.

The campaign has undeniably sparked the interest of seniors and younger people in the issue of road safety. This is clear from the data above and below. We believe that our nationwide campaign is also making a positive contribution to reducing serious accidents among seniors. While in 2017, 118 seniors died on Czech roads and 456 others were seriously injured, in 2020, 105 people aged 65+ were killed and 347 seriously injured.

How have you shared information about your project and its results?

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Innovation

In what way(s) are your actions/measures innovative?

Until the end of 2017, there was no systematic and comprehensive information and educational program for seniors in the Czech Republic with a focus on road safety. Our project is therefore highly innovative – both at our national level and (after researching relevant expert sources) international level. A significant innovation can be seen in the fact that hundreds of lectures (theatrical performances) are held throughout our country, as well as it brings comprehensive information for seniors on how to behave safely on the roads, and finally the concept of lectures in the form of a theatrical performance with extensive use of audio-visual technology. Our program is easily transferable to other countries. We can provide our foreign colleagues with sophisticated technical background, program settings and advice on what really works for seniors during the lectures. Another great advantage of the project is that it is carried out in long-term cooperation with the most responsible partners – the Czech Insurance Office, the VIZE 0 Platform, the Police of the Czech Republic, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and the largest motor insurer in the Czech Republic, Kooperativa. We should also mention a systematic cooperation with selected national television and radio stations, print media and web portals. Such a systematic cooperation is unusual in the Czech Republic.

Further steps

What are your plans for the future?

Our plan is to provide this program for seniors on a long-term basis; continuously innovate it in terms of content and form. This also applies to cooperation with selected media. Moreover, we are considering a closer connection with the newly launched program of the nationwide non-profit organisation Platform VIZE 0, which focuses on the so-called value system, i.e., cultivating the mutual behaviour of road users. In any case, we are ready to establish cooperation with foreign entities that would like to systematically educate seniors in the field of road safety.