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The dramatic deaths at the end of traffic jams must stop. The Max Eighty Europe Campaign



The current accident trend on German transit routes

The accident statistics for 2020 show 2,719 road deaths. That is 10.7 % (-327) less than in 2019. The number of traffic fatalities thus reached the lowest level since the statistics began more than 60 years ago. At first glance, this is extremely pleasing, but it is by no means reassuring. Despite the pandemic-related reduction in traffic volume on German transit routes, the group of professional drivers was unable to benefit from the positive trend of declining accidents. Over the year, 152 occupants of goods road transport vehicles died. Against the trend, however, at least 48 drivers lost their lives in rear-end collisions - more than ever before.

And in 2021 it goes on even worse. Shortly after the end of the first half of the year, there were already 51 dead occupants of goods vehicles who lost their lives at the end of a traffic jam. Almost daily, more serious truck accidents occur at the ends of traffic jams on the highly congested transit motorways, and to date fifteen more drivers have lost their lives. As of today, there are 66. And even this number may be too low, as it comes from the press releases on the respective accident. There were dozens of seriously injured, quite a few of whom were considered to have life-threatening injuries when they were taken by rescue helicopters to the various accident clinics. Statistically, they are considered accident fatalities if they die within 30 days of the accident. However, this is rarely reported and the accident fatality is included in the general statistics of the local police. So more than 66 drivers may well have lost their lives. However, we have to add a few more accident fatalities whose vehicles got caught between two heavy goods vehicles and were crushed and killed by the force of the unbraked impact of up to 40 tonnes of mass, as if in a scrap metal press. Shockingly, there are no nationwide accident statistics that record such accidents. Thus, it is not possible to immediately quantify how many car occupants were actually killed. However, it was significantly less than the number of professional drivers killed.

The search for the causes

First of all, it should be noted that no truck driver in the world deliberately hits the end of a traffic jam. If you read the comments in driver forums, driving in neighbouring countries is much more relaxed and safer. The main reason given for this is the significantly higher fines for accident-prone traffic violations such as failing to maintain a safe distance, overtaking in an overtaking zone or speeding. The authorities and the police would also intervene much more consistently. This probably results in a perceived higher risk of detection on the part of the drivers, and people consciously abide by the rules. But can that be the only justification? What is the persecution situation in Germany?



Traffic morale:

As an example, I will let a driver from a Facebook thread have his say:

Zauberwort - Rücksichtnahme



Auch ein noch so
großes Ego
kann die Physik
nicht besiegen



It is almost impossible to keep the distance of a "healthy" 70 metres! They overtake at minimum speed and sometimes they pull in at 4 metres, even in the no overtaking zone there is no peace at 70 metres, because they don't overtake sometimes, but regularly despite the ban, and even then the special drivers usually only have an excess speed of 1 to 2 km/h! And, as I mentioned, they already pull in when the bumper has passed my cab! Fortunately, I have absolutely no time pressure, and would like to drive with enough distance and mostly according to the rules, but as I said, it's not possible! And that's where I unfortunately have to criticise the fact that far too little comes from the police! It doesn't matter who's to blame, but if I drive the A6 from Heilbronn to Nuremberg, for example, and have a colleague behind me for 90 minutes with a distance of less than 10 metres, am constantly being overtaken despite the ban, and am afraid to brake every time I pull in because the colleague behind me might not be paying attention, then something is wrong! In Germany, you don't drive a kilometre without paying the toll, but you drive around like a lunatic for weeks (most likely without being punished)! We can think about that now.

Many drivers describe their daily experience on the highly congested transit routes simply as Wild West behaviour. And yes, the traffic morale of some of these drivers leaves much to be desired. Although the EU Framework Decision from 2005 on the mutual recognition of fines was implemented in Germany in October 2018, only amounts of 70 euros or more are covered. Due to this minimum limit, violations by drivers from Eastern European countries are sanctioned almost exclusively during stop checks. For the most part, only German lorry drivers are prosecuted during digital mass monitoring. For example, speeding lorries do not count at all and distance violations are treated very differently by the fining authorities of the federal states. Violations of the no-overtaking rule, on the other hand, require a stop-and-frisk check, which is very rare. The number of checks carried out by the state police is negligible in relation to the annual mileage of around 54 billion toll kilometres. Slightly more than 40 per cent of this is done by Eastern European lorries. According to the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), 800,000 lorries are on toll routes every working day. The control bodies can only pin pricks here. Neither the traffic experts of the state police nor the inspectors of the Federal Institute for Goods Transport (BAG) manage to build up the control fear described at the beginning. The number of checks is negligible compared to the volume of traffic. During driver training, the majority of drivers, not surprisingly, answer the question about a check in the last year with "no". Only if one looks at a three-year period do a few say yes to having been checked. In the case of digital mass monitoring of distance and speed, Eastern European data records are either deleted at the fine authorities. Some fine authorities write to the owners who can be identified via the European vehicle information system EUCARIS and hope that they will pay within the limitation period. Up to half of those contacted in this way actually do so and transfer the fine. Successful, formal investigations are costly and time-consuming. However, there are bilateral agreements for Germans and drivers from the old EU. It is true that, with the exception of Austria, the 70 euro minimum limit also applies here. On the other hand, the fine rates in the countries of the old EU are significantly higher. In any case, drivers receive fines and possibly points and risk losing their driving licence. This creates an additional locational disadvantage and quite a few among the Eastern European drivers learn from their negative success and whistle at the traffic rules regarding speed, distance and no overtaking. This in turn increases the risk of accidents at the end of traffic jams on highly congested routes.

Infrastructure and traffic load

The motorway road network in Germany is a single case of renovation. The massive increase in truck transit traffic after the fall of the Wall and the opening of the Eastern Bloc is now taking its toll after three decades. Motorways like the A6, which run from east to west, have more than 100,000 vehicle units per day on weekdays. More than a quarter of these are heavy goods vehicles and articulated lorries. No road surface can withstand this continuous load in the long term. The Federal Highway Research Institute (BASt) keeps statistics on the condition of the 40,000 motorway bridges. About 5,000 structures are rated "insufficient" or worse, more than 700 even "unsatisfactory". According to the BASt, however, the rating "inadequate" is not to be equated with a danger of collapse. However, urgent action is indicated in the case of considerable deficiencies. If the official inspectors award an "unsatisfactory" rating, the authorities immediately set construction teams in motion and, in serious cases, impose immediate measures such as closures, lane narrowing and speed limits. With such demoralised structures, only a new construction and ongoing maintenance work on the old bridge until it is demolished can help. This will take decades. Such construction sites, which are often set up over several months, but usually over several years, lead to lane reductions and bottlenecks through which the high volumes of traffic have to squeeze. Backups occur several times a day at peak times. Along the main routes throughout Germany, the danger of traffic jams will therefore remain high for decades to come. And death lurks at the end of the traffic jam.

Driver-related causes of accidents

Some accident factors can only be explained psychologically. Many drivers are constantly stressed by just-in-time contracts and inflexible, non-digitised ramp management to miss their assigned timeslot at the ramp or even the closing time. In addition, the daily search for a parking space for the night begins as early as around 3:30 pm. Quite a few therefore suffer from insomnia and run the risk of falling into microsleep during the journey.

Added to this is the monotony of driving in a column. If you always have the same rear end of the vehicle in front of you, this literally cries out for distraction. In addition, quite a few people think they are in a kind of competition. If you leave a safe distance of 50 or even 70 metres between you and the car in front, one of the cars behind you will surely be eager for this gap and start an elephant race. In the process, he often pulls in again with far too few metres to spare, and the adaptive cruise control (ART) in the vehicle equalises the distance again. The game is repeated regularly and the driver concerned has the serious feeling that he is constantly being passed to the back of the queue and is losing his position and thus also time. So the ART is switched off and less distance is deliberately kept from the driver in front so that one can maintain one's position. Added to this is the often aggressive and inconsiderate overtaking behaviour of some drivers, but also car drivers who overtake just before an exit and brake into the exit, so that the ART sometimes brakes harder. All of this increases the risk of accidents because it triggers unnecessary braking processes that lead to so-called swing jams when traffic volumes are high.

But that alone does not lead to an accident. Only when someone has not kept their eyes on the road at the wrong time, i.e. they are distracted or have fallen into a microsleep, is there a risk of a collision. The reasons for distraction are manifold. However, monitoring results show that in more than 80 percent of cases, the SMART phone is the root of all evil. Either drivers are on the phone with colleagues, friends or family, or they have the device on the steering wheel hub and are busy with social media channels. The vast majority of them drive faster than the permitted 80 km/h and cover 25 metres per second while flying blind.

Every day, more than 300,000 international, mostly Eastern European vehicles are on the German transit routes. The problem of accidents can therefore only be solved on a European level. Founded on 30 November 2018, as a registered association "Hellwach mit 80 km/h" (Wide awake at 80 km/h), we are fighting against the death at the end of traffic jams together with transport companies, HGV associations, professional associations and HGV insurers. Due to the dramatic increase in accidents with international involvement, we have expanded to Europe since March 2021.

International appeal First of all, we published a multilingual appeal in March, which can be downloaded by interested drivers in their mother tongue on our homepage:

Hello long-distance driver - food for thought on emergency braking: You like to drive at 89 km/h. To make sure no one gets in your way, you sometimes leave a distance of only 30 m. In the event of emergency braking by the vehicle in front, you can just about manage it if you have a good reaction time and full braking effect, or you can hit the vehicle at a very low differential speed. Fender bender - that's trouble with the boss.

Die Max-Achtzig-Europakampagne



Das Sterben am Stauende muss enden!

Nur der Fahrer kann dies sofort und unmittelbar.

Wir brauchen hierzu:

- Eine Selbstverpflichtung der Transportwirtschaft
- Verantwortungsbewusstsein von Industrie und Handel

Willkommen bei den Max Achtzigern!



www.hellwach-mit-80-kmh.de



If you are inattentive for one second longer, a differential speed of 43 km/h on impact is already sufficient to crush a car and kill the occupants. At a distance of 50 m, a reaction time of 2 seconds is just about enough. At three or more seconds, the thrust of your load will kill you on impact. The firefighters then have to cut your crushed body out of the cab wreckage. This is very stressful for the first responders. It's not the lack of distance. It is the lack of attention and thus the high differential speed on impact that kills you. 15 drivers have already died in Germany in 2021. You don't want to be next! For those who are still not completely convinced: four people died in an accident on Rosenmontag 2018 on the BAB A5 because the 60-year-old experienced driver was inattentive and hit the car at 81 km/h without braking. The only survivor, daughter of a family of 4, will probably suffer for the rest of her life. Every fatal accident causes stress disorders in an average of 113 people. Who wants to be responsible for that? Join the Max Eighty idea. On congested stretches of road, consciously drive with foresight and with regularity.

For Labour Day, on 1 May 2021, we then launched our European campaign.

Fatal truck accidents at the end of traffic jams on German transit routes almost doubled in 2021 and already surpassed the record mark of 2020 shortly after the end of the half-year with 51 dead drivers. Trucks crash into each other every day. Every day there are drivers injured, some seriously. Every week, two drivers die in rear-end collisions because their eyes were not on the road at the wrong time. Death does not ask about nationalities. That is why the problem can only be solved internationally. We are building a network of supporters who help directly and indirectly to end unnecessary dying. Despite all the technical aids in the vehicle or through telemetry, only one person can end the dying immediately: THE DRIVER. And he can do this safely and routinely if he commits himself to the Max Eighty idea and the observance of the Max Eighty rules. We dedicate the campaign to the group of 15 million professional drivers in Europe with a view to their 800,000 colleagues who are on the road in Germany every day. It serves to protect the systemically important group of professional drivers. Our special focus is on those who have to face the danger of rear-end collisions anew every day on the overloaded and congested transit motorways. This is exactly what our Europe campaign is about. Death rides along every day and already too many drivers in commercial freight transport lost their lives. Yes, they made mistakes, but none of them wanted to die. Once again: each one of them triggers, on average, severe stress disorders and deep grief in 113 people. Let us take these deaths and the many drivers injured at the end of traffic jams, but also the victims crushed guiltlessly in their

vehicles, as a reminder and an occasion for a solidarity pact. Unite behind our European Max Eighty idea. To this end, we have illustrated and explained our 10 Max Eighty rules in a brochure. Translated into almost all European languages, we appeal to drivers: *Distribute and send our brochure. Read the messages. No driver deliberately drives into the end of a traffic jam. So death is not inevitable either. Let this Max Eighty Europe campaign go viral. Don't berate others, live the idea and show solidarity. Be noble like the old captains of the road and roadworthy like the Max Eighties. Change starts with you and me. Max Achtziger routinely clarify their daily route with regard to permanent road works.*

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Max Achtziger drive exactly there, looking ahead, faithful to the rules and considerate. Yes, Max Achtziger are the new captains of the highways.

In addition to MEP Ismail Ertug, Vice-President for Transformation, Innovation and a Strong Digital Europe, we were able to win over other international players such as E.L.V.I.S AG (European Load Association of International Freight Forwarders) as well as European media partners such as trans.iNFO to successfully and steadily expand our network. We deliberately act as an NGO because we have not had good experiences with government agencies over the years of our existence. At all levels, the administrations and executive bodies are so integrated into the German administrative rationale that innovations and necessary immediate measures fall victim to the sluggishness and inertia of German administrative rationale and appear unattainable.

The best examples are improvements in congestion protection or the regulations on the Driver's Licence Ordinance (FEV) to effectively combat imported alcoholism among non-German truck drivers.



Intelligent congestion warning systems

Telemetry measures could reduce the attention deficit. The congestion warning systems in front of permanent road works must become smarter and it must be technically possible to issue a warning in real time. The Federal Highway Authority should therefore use intelligent congestion warning systems (uStWA) with dynamic speed displays as standard in road traffic technology. It would be optimal to digitally couple these with autonomous speed flashers (e.g. enforcement trailers). On the one hand, with real-time warnings, speed reductions are better accepted by road users than orders in time windows with metal signs. And on the other hand, drivers who are distracted and therefore driving too fast at the time of the congestion warning could be given a visual "wake-up stimulus" in the form of a speed flasher in real time and thus warned of the danger. The device coupling requires approval by the Physikalisch Technische Bundesanstalt. Our innovation proposal to Department B, Construction and Traffic Engineering, of the FBA has been available since the beginning of 2021. The BMVI replied that such a development could take up to five years and that the applicant would have to bear the development costs. Words fail us at times.

Imported alcohol hazard

The German transport industry and professional drivers are under constant competitive pressure from companies from low-wage Eastern European countries. According to the ETSC, up to 800,000 trucks are on the road in Germany every day. According to the toll statistics of the BAG, Eastern European hauliers perform about 40 per cent of the total kilometres. The profit margins for German companies are in the very low single digits. Wage dumping also affects driver qualifications. The shortage of drivers, which has existed for years, has led to the recruitment and licensing of an estimated 350,000 drivers from outside the EU in the last five years. Polish companies account for 50 per cent of this, but Lithuania is catching up strongly.

There has not infrequently been a failure of control in the granting of licences, and so German clients have unwittingly contributed to an imported alcohol hazard from the East. Drivers with very high blood alcohol levels are noticed every day. During departure controls in the states of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Hesse, breath alcohol concentrations of well over 1.6 per mille up to a peak of 5 per mille are not uncommon. The control statistics indicate that at least two percent of the drivers are alcoholics. With 40 per cent of Eastern European drivers, that means more than 6,000 driving a 40-tonne truck under the influence of alcohol every day. The competent driving licence authority can



send a German licence holder to an MPU if he or she has a blood alcohol level of 1.6 per mille or more, even if he or she was not driving. The local driving licence authority could also send non-German driving licence holders for an MPE upon notification by the poli-

ce. They would have to set a deadline for the MPU to be carried out and, after expiry, they could, according to common administrative court decisions, prohibit the holder from driving a motor vehicle in Germany. Since there is no exchange among the German driving licence authorities for preventive measures due to a lack of networking, non-German drivers who are found to be driving under the influence of alcohol are prohibited from continuing their journey until they have sobered up. Many reach blood alcohol levels close to 5 and must be considered alcoholics according to established administrative jurisprudence. Nevertheless, according to current administrative practice, they are allowed to continue driving heavy goods vehicles. A dramatic accident with many fatalities must occur before all those responsible are shocked and demand a change in administrative practice.

The driver in focus

The most important link in the supply chain is the driver - but he has 40 tonnes of responsibility. We need more Max octogenarians at the wheel, in the transport industry, in the executive chairs, in dispatching, at the ramps, in industry and in trade. With all the experience we have gained, we firmly believe that the transport industry, the manufacturing industry, trade, road authorities, lobby groups and associations and politics must make a concerted effort to reduce the enormous risks of accidents.

We have therefore submitted five election test questions to the parties willing to govern. You can download the answers in the original, but also as a synopsis on our homepage. There are some surprising answers from the coalition parties, which make us confident about the improvement of road safety and the burdensome situation for drivers.

We further fuelled the Max Eighty Europe campaign at the regional commercial vehicle trade fair NUFAM from 30 September to 3 October 2021 in Karlsruhe with our own exhibition stand and a panel discussion¹ on the unnecessary death at the end of traffic jams. We have raised the profile of the initiative, met with broad approval and received further pledges of support from the transport industry, from associations, from the field of driver qualification training, but also from manufacturers of trucks and trailers. It feels like we are "circling death at the end of the traffic jam" and have laid the foundation for a very broad movement of industry, trade and goods logistics as well as the transport trade. And the willingness to support this movement is also increasing on the part of politicians. As I said, death at the end of a traffic jam does not ask about nationality! It is up to all of us to get closer to Vision Zero.

Let's push back against accidental death. Join us and share the call with supply chain stakeholders. Fatalities and injuries exacerbate the driver shortage. This hits us all hard. Just look at the British.

It's time for change - time to stay alive!



Max Achtzig Wahlprüfsteine



Wie wollen Sie zur Unfallvermeidung die **Verkehrsmoral** auf deutschen Autobahnen heben und den **Standortnachteil** deutscher Transportunternehmen und Fahrer beseitigen?

Wie wollen Sie der durch den andauernden Fahremangel verursachten **importierten Alkoholgefahr** begegnen?

Werden Sie zur Beseitigung des Unfallfaktors „Stress“ beim Fahrer politische Impulse an die Wirtschaft zur Erreichung **sozialer Nachhaltigkeit** geben? (Diskussion Just-in-Time)

Werden Sie zur Beseitigung des Unfallfaktors „Stress“ beim Fahrer politische Impulse an die Wirtschaft zur Erreichung einer georeferenzierten **Digitalisierung des Rampenmanagements** geben?

Werden Sie zur Reduzierung des Aufmerksamkeitsdefizits vor **Dauerbaustellen** die standardmäßige Installation von **intelligenter Technik** unterstützen?

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¹ <https://youtu.be/y0OdgWJeCYs>