

The RSA logo consists of the letters 'RSA' in white, sans-serif font, centered within a bright orange square with slightly rounded corners. The square is positioned in the upper right area of the page, overlapping a dark purple background.

RSA

# Submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

7 February, 2018

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

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## **Submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland**

### **Executive summary**

The context for this submission by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to the Commission is the series of controversies which have beset An Garda Síochána over recent years. These controversies in the main have related to matters of road safety enforcement, such as the maladministration exposed in the cancellation of penalty points, the overstatement by An Garda Síochána of the number of mandatory intoxicant tests (MIT) carried out at checkpoints, and the prosecution and wrongful conviction of persons in respect of offences which should have been disposed of by An Garda Síochána by way of a fixed charge notice.

Arising from these controversies which resulted in political and societal concern, the Policing Authority commissioned Crowe Horwath to carry out a review of policing performance, and its final report was published on 31 October 2017. The RSA was consulted for the purposes of this review and would support the findings and recommendations in that report. Those findings and conclusions included the identification of 'inadequate and inconsistent performance management and a deficit of accountability throughout An Garda Síochána that created an environment in which these issues arose and remained undetected'. The report also concluded that management failed to ensure that adequate processes, training and supervision were in place to prevent such issues arising.

Of particular relevance to road safety enforcement, the report identified a 'culture that displayed a casual approach to data' and a lack of appreciation of its value, and that this culture enabled unethical behaviour by members who falsified checkpoint data; the report also identified poor or inadequate IT systems and technology. All of these themes about management and supervision repeat findings of the Garda Inspectorate, Mr Justice O'Higgins and others, and point to the need for root and branch reform of An Garda Síochána. Such reform is vital to restore confidence among the public and among critical stakeholders in road safety. Of all agencies that rely on An Garda Síochána, the RSA is particularly dependent. The gardaí are the main collaborators and partners in the implementation of the road safety strategies as set out by government. Since the government has repeatedly expressed its commitment to reducing road deaths and serious injuries, the reforms outlined in the Crowe Howarth report and in the most recent report of the Policing Authority must be implemented as a matter of priority.

The RSA notes one of the functions of the Commission is to carry out a fundamental review of the role, structures, leadership and management, ethos and culture of policing. Such a review will also encompass the functions of the bodies that have a role in providing oversight and accountability of policing activity. One area of concern for the RSA relates to the inadequacy of

powers and resources allocated to An Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC.) The RSA is of a view that GSOC lacks the investigators and resources to deal with whistle-blowers and that it needs to be resourced and legally empowered to provide an adequate police oversight mechanism.

This document sets out reforms the RSA believes should be implemented to achieve an accountable, efficient and effective performing police force which would assist in achieving the targets set out in the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013 -2020). It also includes other recommendations in relation to the allocation of resources to road safety enforcement, the civilianisation of the force including recruitment of specialist skills, and the consideration of a graduate entry programme. Finally, it is important that adequate support mechanisms are in place within An Garda Síochána for the families and victims of fatal and serious injury road collisions, in particular in the sharing of information, and the provision of support in the immediate aftermath and during the formal legal proceedings that follow a fatal road collision.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Increase garda numbers**

An increase in the number of gardaí allocated to road traffic and road safety enforcement by 10% year on year until the year 2020. This would bring the number of gardaí focusing on road safety enforcement up to 1,000. The RSA is to be kept informed on the recruitment of additional road policing officers and overall road policing garda numbers on a quarterly basis.

### **2. The need for a dedicated Garda Traffic Corps**

The re-establishment of a dedicated Garda Traffic Corps which incorporates a separate command structure (operationally and strategically) reporting directly to the assistant commissioner. It should be staffed by personnel dedicated to road traffic and road safety enforcement, who are trained and regularly upskilled on complex road traffic legislation, and the use of alcohol and drug screening devices.

### **3. Targeted visible enforcement focusing on the killer behaviours**

The implementation of a best practice approach to road safety enforcement, specifically preventative targeted and visible enforcement of road traffic laws by An Garda Síochána. This must be supported by investment to adequately provide relevant resources, training, data recording, analysis and review. Enforcement should focus on the main

killer behaviours of speeding, impaired driving, mobile phone use while driving, and non-wearing of seat belts.

#### **4. Dedicated head of the Garda Traffic Corps**

The role of the assistant commissioner should be a dedicated position as head of a reconstituted Garda Traffic Corps and not as part of another functional area with additional competing priorities as has been the case in the past.

#### **5. The full implementation of the recommendations of the Crowe Horwath report as a priority**

- The accurate recording and auditing of MIT checkpoint data, and other killer behaviour enforcement data.
- At a minimum 20% of drivers to be breathalysed per year. There is a large body of international academic research that supports the life-saving benefits of implementing targeted visible preventative enforcement strategies.

#### **6. Auditing of enforcement data**

All road traffic and road safety enforcement intervention data by An Garda Síochána should be independently audited and published on a regular basis. Appropriate mechanisms for audit and governance of the road safety enforcement activity of An Garda Síochána must be put in place.

#### **7. Training and resourcing**

Implementation of the recommendation and observations of the Policing Authority in relation to the need for ongoing training and continuous professional development of the force. A ramping up of training and provision of resources/equipment to existing and, in particular, new members of An Garda Síochána dealing with road traffic and road safety enforcement. This needs to be achieved immediately. It includes adequate vehicles, technology and supports.

#### **8. Political engagement**

The minister for justice and the minister for transport to have more political involvement as to the allocation of police resources to focus on road safety enforcement rather than it being left at the discretion of the garda commissioner. This delegation of authority has not served road safety well to date.

## **9. Introduction of increased civilianisation of the force**

The intended drive for civilianisation of administrative roles currently being filled by trained Gardai within An Garda Síochána be prioritised.

## **10. Specialisation**

The recruitment of professions such as lawyers and accountants to senior ranks to enhance the skills of administration governance and financial control. Bringing to the force more specialised skills such as ICT, data analytics, etc. and allowing the freeing up of enforcement resources.

## **11. Graduate entry programme**

Consideration should be given by the government and the Commission for a graduate entry programme similar to other public service organisations and an officer/cadet style entrance as in the defence forces.

## **12. Victims' families**

Timelier sharing of information with road safety victims' families to enable, inform and prepare them for the main legal proceedings following a road death.

## **13. Policing oversight and accountability**

- The Commission should consider in the context of reform the recommendation that GSOC be provided with the necessary resources and legal powers to deal with whistle-blowers as formally requested by the chair of GSOC.
- That the Policing Authority also be given the necessary legal powers in its role to oversee the performance of An Garda Síochána.

## **Introduction**

The Irish government through the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013–2020) has set the country the task of making Ireland’s roads as safe as the best performing countries in the European Union. The target set is for Ireland to close the gap on the countries with the most progressive road safety records (Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands).

The aim of the RSA is to save lives and prevent injuries by reducing the number and severity of collisions on our roads. The RSA has responsibility in accordance with the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 for producing and formally reporting on the implementation of the Government Road Safety Strategy. In implementing the Government Road Safety Strategy the RSA relies on a number of critical actions by other key departments and agencies, in particular An Garda Síochána. The Government Road Safety Strategy clearly identifies a number of critical success factors necessary to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads. One of these factors is the need for the required enforcement capacity and capability to achieve increased compliance with road traffic law. It identifies the need to maintain sufficient numbers of gardaí in road safety enforcement to act both as a deterrent and to apprehend drivers who break road safety laws.

The current Government Road Safety Strategy (2013 – 2020) has set a target of a reduction in fatalities from 162 in 2012 to 124 or fewer by 2020 and a provisional target of a reduction in serious injuries by 30% from 472 in 2011 to 330 by 2020. We are currently over halfway through the eight year strategy period and unfortunately Ireland has seen a deterioration in performance over the period 2012 to 2016, both in terms of fatalities (up 14% from 163 deaths in 2012 to 186 deaths in 2016) and serious injuries (up from 472 in 2011 to a provisional figure of 954 in 2016). Note that while there was a change in methodology for the recording and validation of serious injury figures introduced in 2014, which has affected the trend data, international research acknowledges that serious injuries are generally under-reported. The latest figure of 954 serious injuries in Ireland in 2016 is likely to more accurately reflect the true prevalence of serious injuries from road traffic collisions (RTCs) in Ireland.

Provisional data for 2017 has shown a reduction in fatalities. There were 144 fatal collisions, which resulted in 159 fatalities on Irish roads. This represents 17% fewer collisions (–30) and 15% fewer deaths (–27) compared to provisional garda data for the full year of 2016. This improvement must be viewed in the context of a mixed performance over recent years and does not indicate a downward trend, nor grounds for complacency. Indeed if compared with the fatality figures for 2012 (the baseline for the Government Road Safety Strategy) there is only a marginal improvement of 2.5%. The fact remains that in order to meet Ireland’s target of no more than 124 fatalities, a further 22% reduction in deaths must be achieved on this figure of 159 deaths by 2020.

It is important to state that the implementation of best practice enforcement activity of the main killer behaviours will have a positive effect not only in reducing fatalities, but also in reducing serious injuries. Of note, over the last three years there have been four people seriously injured, on average, for every person killed on Irish roads. Given that the estimated cost of one fatal RTC currently stands at €2.58 million (2016), while the cost of one serious injury collision stands at €370,800, the human and financial cost savings for the State in the successful implementation of best-practice, effective, targeted and visible enforcement of road traffic laws by An Garda Síochána is an investment that must be prioritised.

## **Mid-Term Evaluation of the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013–2020)**

The conclusion of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013–2020) was that the recent deterioration in Ireland’s road safety performance was unacceptable and that increased, targeted and visible enforcement by An Garda Síochána is critical to reverse this deterioration. Furthermore the evaluation process strongly recommended a back-to-basics approach in tackling the killer behaviours, namely speeding, impaired driving, mobile phone use while driving, and non-wearing of seat belts. Reducing the number of collisions and casualties caused by these killer behaviours is the single most important means for Ireland to achieve the target of no more than 124 fatalities by 2020. The RSA is particularly concerned about two specific aspects of road safety enforcement:

1. The perception among a majority of motorists that there is an absence of garda/garda checkpoints on our roads. A survey conducted on behalf of the RSA in 2017 highlighted the following:<sup>1</sup>
  - 68% of Irish adults believe that there are not enough/not nearly enough gardaí currently enforcing traffic laws on our roads.
  - 67% of Irish adults believe that there are not enough/not nearly enough gardaí currently enforcing drink-driving laws on our roads.
  - 68% of Irish adults believe that there are not enough/not nearly enough gardaí currently enforcing mobile phone laws on our roads.
  - Only one in three Irish adults recall passing through a garda checkpoint on an at least monthly basis in the past six months.
  - 51% of Irish adults say that there has been no change in the level of enforcement of road traffic laws by An Garda Síochána in the last 12 months; 29% say it has decreased.
2. The need for high levels of targeted, visible, research-led road safety enforcement which ensures a greater focus on the main killer behaviours of speeding, impaired driving, mobile phone use while driving, and non-wearing of seat belts.

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<sup>1</sup>RSA Garda Enforcement National Survey 2017  
<http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Road%20Safety/Garda%20Enforcement/RSA%20Garda%20Enforcement%20National%20Survey%202017.pdf>

## **Garda numbers**

The RSA is concerned about the greatly depleted numbers of gardai allocated to road traffic and road safety enforcement. The number one priority action in the recently published Mid-Term Review of the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013–2020) is to increase garda numbers dedicated to road safety, from a baseline of 681 members, by 10% year on year up to 2020 (749 in 2017, 824 in 2018, 906 in 2019 and 997 in 2020), or further, should targets in road safety not be achieved. The targeted deployment of these resources is to be informed by research.

Of serious concern to the RSA is the fact that the commitment in the Garda Policing Plan 2017 to ‘incrementally increasing resources in roads policing units by 10% across all regions by the end of Q4 2017’ has not been delivered on, whereas, in fact, the changing economic landscape indicates that the original commitment should be further strengthened.

International research has identified that economic activity plays a role in collision trends, i.e. that as employment rates increase, so too do the number of vehicles using the roads, and the distances that people have to drive to their place of employment/college, ultimately leading to greater risk exposure, and a potential for an increase in casualties. As the economy continues to recover here, it is anticipated that there will be increased activity/traffic on our roads over the coming years necessitating a corresponding increase in the level of road safety enforcement.

As no additional numbers were deployed to roads policing in 2017 An Garda Síochána has committed to an additional 150 new members being allocated to roads policing in 2018. Assistant Commissioner Michael Finn, Garda National Roads Policing Bureau has said, ‘An Garda Síochána will continue to target those that put others in danger on the roads, and the additional 150 Garda Traffic Corps members being recruited in 2018 will greatly assist us to target and intercept those that cause risk to you and I on the road.’ The RSA is calling for these additional resources to be deployed as a matter of urgency and at the earliest opportunity.

Anything less than a 20% increase on the baseline figure of 681 (the figure of 681 was the reported figure as of the Policing Plan 2016. Alarmingly, current Garda Traffic Corps numbers being reported are that this number has dropped even further to 640) before the end of 2018 will be completely unacceptable to the RSA. Furthermore the recruitment programme must be frontloaded for 2018, as any inroads in reducing the number of people being killed or injured on our roads will be dependent on concentrating efforts in the first six months of the year. The RSA must also be kept informed of the success of the recruitment process and updated on a quarterly basis on roads traffic policing numbers.

The RSA must be able to trust the commitments given by An Garda Síochána, a key stakeholder in the Government Road Safety Strategy (2013–2020) in relation to the deployment of roads policing resources. It is also important that the additional resources are not deployed to offset natural attrition of roads policing resources.

### **An Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016–2021/The risk of dilution of the impact of a dedicated Garda Traffic Corps**

An Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme recognised that having a dedicated traffic corps had played a key role in reducing road fatalities. The Renewal Programme also outlines the need for the Garda Traffic Corps to be strengthened and redeveloped to merge road safety and crime prevention and detection on the roads. The Renewal Programme indicated that the function of the Garda Traffic Corps would be redeveloped to take in more roads policing functions, i.e. non-road traffic road safety functions under a new name, the Garda Roads Policing Unit. This new unit was to work with non-traffic personnel to deprive criminals the use of the road network through high-visibility policing and intelligence-led enforcement operations.

The RSA is opposed to this change of emphasis and has previously made known its concerns that the Renewal Programme under the aegis of the Garda Roads Policing Unit will dilute the impact of a dedicated traffic corps whose essential mandate is solely road safety enforcement. It is also of the view that the Garda Traffic Corps should retain its title and that the changing of its title to Garda Roads Policing Unit is a degradation of the core functions of the Garda Traffic Corp.

The main concern is the fact that members of the Garda Roads Policing Unit will be tasked not only with road traffic and road safety enforcement duties but also other duties linked to the prevention/detection and prosecution of crime (non-road-safety related). Another concern is the balance that must be struck between road policing and other policing duties and the fear that roads policing gardaí will spend much of their time preserving scenes of crime, arresting criminals, pursuing follow-on investigations, prosecuting these cases in court and indeed sitting in court awaiting the opportunity to give evidence. This will have a significant negative impact on the number of gardaí available for road safety enforcement duties.

It will undoubtedly result in a reduction in the number of hours that will be dedicated to road safety enforcement of road user killer behaviours. As such the positive impact of the promised increase in Garda Traffic Corps numbers, if delivered, will ultimately be negated by the restructuring of policing duties away from road safety.

## **Targeted visible enforcement and improvement in road safety outcomes**

It is also evident from the recent O'Sullivan and Crowe Horwath reports that senior garda management does not fully understand the direct link between visible random breath testing and improvements in driver road safety outcomes. There is no doubt that the exaggeration of road safety enforcement metrics led to the continued under-resourcing of Garda Traffic Corps numbers over recent years. This is because garda enforcement was presumed to be at a high level despite reduced garda manpower and resources. Furthermore, the massive over reporting of breath tests and the low detection numbers of intoxicated drivers suggested that drink driving was not a significant problem among Irish drivers, and this may have determined or influenced the allocation of garda resourcing away from road safety enforcement.

The RSA is concerned that this could have negatively impacted on the number of people killed and seriously injured on Irish roads, given the recent evidence published by the RSA that 29% of all fatal collisions over the period 2008–2012 involved a driver or motorcyclist who had consumed alcohol.<sup>2</sup> This is the single most important fact that must not be lost in the analysis of the Crowe Horwath report. The RSA believes it is critical that all of the recommendations of the Crowe Horwath report be implemented as a matter of priority, as the accurate recording and reporting of MIT checkpoint data, and in particular percentage fail rates for breath tests, will be critical in assessing Ireland's performance in relation to drink driving, which, in turn will provide the necessary evidence to develop appropriate road safety interventions to reduce the number of people being killed and seriously injured on our roads due to drink driving.

### **Supervision/resources/accountability**

The supervisory structure in road safety enforcement has diminished in recent years and while the appointment of the dedicated assistant commissioner to roads policing is welcomed, there is a need to ensure that the governance and operational structure ensures that individual members have the necessary supervision, oversight, training and guidance in the performance of their road safety enforcement duties and are held accountable. The protocols around who makes the decision to divert road safety enforcement gardai away from that duty to other roads policing activity is of concern. The criteria that will determine whether this is to happen or not is of critical importance to the success or otherwise of the future of road safety enforcement and roads policing in Ireland, and whether or not it proves effective in terms of reducing road trauma.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Press%20Office/Fatal%20Collisions%202008-2012\\_Alcohol%20as%20a%20Factor.pdf](http://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Press%20Office/Fatal%20Collisions%202008-2012_Alcohol%20as%20a%20Factor.pdf)

The RSA recommends that in addition to the re-establishment of the Garda Traffic Corps there should be a separate command structure (operationally and strategically) reporting directly to the assistant commissioner. It should be staffed by personnel dedicated to road traffic and road safety enforcement, who are trained and regularly upskilled on complex road traffic legislation, and the use of alcohol and drug screening devices.

The role of the assistant commissioner for road policing should be a dedicated position and not be part of another functional area with additional competing priorities as has been the case in the past, e.g. Roads Policing and Western Region. This could conflict with decision-making on resource allocation. The role of assistant commissioner is a pivotal role underpinning the direction of the national road safety enforcement function within An Garda Síochána and must have reasonable longevity to ensure that long-term strategic goals are met.

The availability of training and resources/equipment for existing members of the Garda Roads Policing Units and in particular for new members of An Garda Síochána who will undertake road policing duties in the coming years needs to be clearly identified, prioritised and measured. This includes adequate vehicles, technology and supports.

## **Alcohol**

As previously noted, 29% of fatal collisions over the period 2008–2012 involved a driver or motorcyclist who had consumed alcohol. There is a direct link between the levels of drink-driving enforcement conducted and compliance with drink-driving laws.

The absence of credible and reliable activity and enforcement metrics such as the numbers of drivers who have been breath tested, and the corresponding pass/fail rate, makes it impossible to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of drink-driving safety interventions. This is especially valid in the context of the rising road deaths over recent years.

It must also be noted that similar metrics around speeding, mobile phone and seat belt enforcement interventions are used to inform policy direction and allocation of resources which is a cause for concern. It is vital that all data prepared by any state agency and in particular by An Garda Síochána is credible, accurate and reliable so the public can retain trust and exhibit compliance. The RSA recommends that the gathering of all enforcement intervention data by An Garda Síochána should be independently audited and published on a regular basis.

The introduction of mandatory alcohol testing checkpoints in 2006 contributed to the reduction in the number of deaths on Irish roads and improved compliance with drink-driving laws. However, there has been an increase in

the numbers killed and seriously injured over the period 2012 to 2016, and alcohol remains a significant contributory factor in fatal collisions. In light of the recent events regarding the number of breathalyser tests conducted over the past number of years, the RSA is concerned that the commitment to increase the number of mandatory alcohol checkpoints by 10% from 70,000 can no longer be valid. This area of the Modernisation and Renewal Programme needs to be revisited, and realistic meaningful targets are required.

The impact of this area of roads policing in terms of saving lives cannot be underestimated and must be a key priority for An Garda Síochána. The prevailing view among senior gardaí appears to favour alcohol enforcement activity primarily led by ‘forming an opinion’, breathalysing at the scene of crashes and breathalysing if a road traffic offence is committed. While these forms of enforcement are important, and have their place, they must not replace regular visible enforcement checks as provided for in the context of MIT. The first is only useful in detecting those seriously over the drink-driving limit and the latter two, while important in their own right, are not preventative measures. MIT checkpoints are internationally proven to be the most effective methods of preventing drink driving.

### **International evidence**

There is a large body of international academic research that supports the life-saving benefits of implementing targeted visible enforcement strategies. Extracts from some relevant research reports have been set out below. Of particular note, international research indicates that the true number of alcohol-related casualties is likely to be higher than reported in official statistics, and secondly Irish road users expectations of encountering enforcement was much lower than their European counterparts.

### **The role of enforcement (extract from ETSC PIN Flash Report 31: *How traffic law enforcement can contribute to safer roads*)<sup>3</sup>**

Exceeding speed limits, drink or distracted driving and failure to wear a seat belt are still the leading causes of death and serious injury on EU roads. Enforcement of road traffic laws is an essential component in preventing death and injury. Enforcement is based on giving drivers the feeling that they are likely to be caught and punished when breaking the rules. The frequency of police checks determines the objective chance of being caught. Based on the objective chance, and what they read in newspapers or hear from friends or colleagues, drivers estimate their own chance of being stopped for a traffic offence. When drivers perceive this chance as being sufficiently high they will avoid committing traffic offences.

The effectiveness of enforcement is better if police controls:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://etsc.eu/how-traffic-law-enforcement-can-contribute-to-safer-roads-pin-flash-31/>

- are accompanied by sufficient publicity
- take place regularly over a long period
- are unpredictable and difficult to avoid
- combine highly visible and less visible activities
- focus on traffic offences that have a direct, proven relationship with collisions or their severity
- take place at locations and times where violations are expected to have the most effect on safety
- are followed by a sanction that is effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

Improvements in traffic law enforcements should be part of an integrated road safety policy and have been shown to lead to rapid reductions in deaths and injuries when applying best practice.

Consistent enforcement activities that are well explained and publicised also have a long-lasting effect on driver behaviour. The results of the latest Eurobarometer survey on road safety show that Europeans not only recognise the danger of the main risky behaviours in road traffic, but also expect more policy actions to address them. The majority of citizens polled would like to see more action on enforcement of drink driving and speeding as priority issues.

Traffic law enforcement is a very cost-effective means of enhancing road safety. The benefits of applying existing best practice to the whole of the EU exceed the costs by a factor of four in the case of drink driving and ten in the case of seat belt use.

**Extract from *Managing the role of alcohol in road crashes: an Australian perspective*, Dr Barry Watson, Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety, Queensland<sup>4</sup>**

International research indicates that random breath testing (RBT), underpinned by deterrence theory, is the primary enforcement tool for drink driving. Evaluations have confirmed that RBT has produced long-term reductions in alcohol-related crashes. Australia is a best practice example in this regard, and some states in Australia conduct the equivalent of one breath test per licensed driver. Research shows that RBT is most effective when it is unpredictable, unavoidable and ubiquitous. This requires:

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Road-Safety/Seminars/Current-road-safety-seminars/Alcohol--tackling-the-crisis-on-our-roads/Presentations/>

- sustained high levels of testing, which is highly visible, threatening and rigorous
- that all drivers stopped should be tested
- that priority be given to highly visible, stationary operations
- that operational police be educated about the deterrence principles underpinning RBT
- operations be reinforced by public education.

Sources: Homel, 1986, 1988, Watson et al., 1994; Travelsafe, 1996; Hart et al., 2004; Bates et al., 2012.

### ***Report on Alcohol-Related Road Casualties in Official Crash Statistics (IRTAD)***

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 1.25 million people die in RTCs every year. Collision statistics have widely established that alcohol consumption prior to road use is an influential factor in a substantial proportion of RTCs. It has also been recognised, however, that the true numbers of alcohol-related road casualties are typically much higher than those reported in official RTC statistics. The International Transport Forum (ITF) conducted a study to examine the issue of under-reporting of alcohol-related RTC data. Some of the results from the 45 countries surveyed (e.g. Australia, Canada, Ireland, Nigeria and Russia) indicated that **5–35%** of RTC fatalities are alcohol-related. All of these statistics likely **under-report** the true nature and prevalence of alcohol-related RTC fatalities and serious injuries. Reasons for police officers not conducting alcohol tests include, for example, not suspecting alcohol consumption among the involved road users, their views on the guilty party and cause of the collision, the medical condition of the casualty, or lack of equipment.

### **ESRA**

In 2015 the E-Survey of Road users' safety Attitudes (ESRA)<sup>5</sup> conducted an online survey of approximately 1,000 respondents in each of the 17 participating European countries, including Ireland. In total, ESRA gathered data from over 17,000 road users, including almost 11,000 frequent car drivers. The report outlines overall trends in relation to the known killer behaviours and compares results across the 17 participating countries. Key themes are speeding, driving under influence of alcohol or drugs/medication, distraction, fatigue, and seat belt use.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.esranet.eu/>

### **Some of the key findings for Ireland (compared to EU average)**

- In the past 12 months 19.7% of Irish road users said they have driven after drinking alcohol at least once **(EU average 30.9%)**.
- One of the areas where the greatest divergence in opinion emerged for Ireland versus the EU average was in the area of enforcement:
  - 9.5% of Irish road users surveyed stated that there was a high chance of being tested for alcohol **(EU average 18.2%)**.
  - 26.6% of Irish road users stated that there was a high chance of being checked for speeding **(EU average 36.2%)**.
  - 10.7 % of Irish road users stated that there was a high chance of being checked for seat belt wearing **(EU average 18.8%)**.
  - 7.2% of Irish road users stated that there was a high chance of being tested for illegal drugs **(EU average 11.3%)**.
  - 9% of Irish drivers were subjected to a breathalyser test in Ireland in the last 12 months **(vs EU average at 18.7%)** and 1.9% were checked for drugs/medication while driving **(vs 3.9%)**.

### **Utilisation of data and technology for more effective enforcement in the application of penalties for non-compliance**

The RSA believes that there is a significant opportunity for An Garda Síochána to further develop its approach to the utilisation of mobile technology and systematic data capture and analysis. This would support a more strategic, targeted and effective deployment of Garda Traffic Corps' resources at checkpoints for the overall benefit of road safety. Consideration should be given to the use of big data expertise and specialist data analysis in order to maximise the outputs from the analysis of garda data. The success of this approach is already evident in the roadside enforcement of commercial vehicles and drivers where the RSA and An Garda Síochána have jointly achieved significant progress.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the following recommendations are necessary and key to the establishment of the essential reforms and steps to resource and ensure a best practice approach to road safety enforcement. In particular the RSA believes these recommendations will equip An Garda Síochána with the necessary training, management, oversight and governance structures to fulfil its road safety enforcement role. The RSA believes that it is critical that all of these recommendations be given serious consideration by the Policing Authority and be implemented by An Garda Síochána as a matter of priority to reduce fatalities and injuries on Irish roads.

## **The RSA's recommendations are as follows:**

### **1. Increase garda numbers**

An increase in the number of gardaí allocated to road traffic and road safety enforcement by 10% year on year until the year 2020. This would bring the number of gardaí focusing on road safety enforcement up to 1,000. The RSA is to be kept informed on the recruitment of additional road policing officers and overall road policing garda numbers on a quarterly basis.

### **2. The need for a dedicated Garda Traffic Corps**

The re-establishment of a dedicated Garda Traffic Corps which incorporates a separate command structure (operationally and strategically) reporting directly to the assistant commissioner. It should be staffed by personnel dedicated to road traffic and road safety enforcement, who are trained and regularly upskilled on complex road traffic legislation, and the use of alcohol and drug screening devices.

### **3. Targeted visible enforcement focusing on the killer behaviours**

The implementation of a best practice approach to road safety enforcement, specifically, preventative targeted and visible enforcement of road traffic laws by An Garda Síochána. This must be supported by investment to adequately provide relevant resources, training, data recording, analysis and review. Enforcement should focus on the main killer behaviours of speeding, impaired driving, mobile phone use while driving, and non-wearing of seat belts.

### **4. Dedicated head of the Garda Traffic Corps**

The role of the assistant commissioner should be a dedicated position as head of a reconstituted Garda Traffic Corps and not as part of another functional area with additional competing priorities as has been the case in the past.

### **5. The full implementation of the recommendations of the Crowe Horwath report as a priority**

- The accurate recording and auditing of MIT checkpoint data, and other killer behaviour enforcement data.
- At a minimum 20% of drivers to be breathalysed per year. There is a large body of international academic research that supports the life-saving benefits of implementing targeted visible preventative enforcement strategies.

## **6. Auditing of enforcement data**

All road traffic and road safety enforcement intervention data by An Garda Síochána should be independently audited and published on a regular basis. Appropriate mechanisms for audit and governance of the road safety enforcement activity of An Garda Síochána must be put in place.

## **7. Training and resourcing**

Implementation of the recommendation and observations of the Policing Authority in relation to the need for ongoing training and continuous professional development of the force. A ramping up of training and provision of resources/equipment to existing and, in particular, new members of An Garda Síochána dealing with road traffic and road safety enforcement. This needs to be achieved immediately. It includes adequate vehicles, technology and supports.

## **8. Political engagement**

The minister for justice and the minister for transport to have more political engagement as to the allocation of police resources to focus on road safety enforcement rather than it being left at the discretion of the garda commissioner. This delegation of authority has not served road safety well to date.

## **9. Introduction of increased civilianisation of the force**

The intended drive for civilianisation of administrative roles currently being filled by trained Gardai within An Garda Síochána be prioritised.

## **10. Specialisation**

The recruitment of professions such as lawyers and accountants to senior ranks to enhance the skills of administration governance and financial control. Bringing to the force more specialised skills such as ICT, data analytics, etc. and allowing the freeing up of enforcement resources.

## **11. Graduate entry programme**

Consideration should be given by the government and the Commission for a graduate entry programme similar to other public service organisations and an officer/cadet style entrance as in the defence forces.

## **12. Victims' families**

Timelier sharing of information with road safety victims' families to enable, inform and prepare them for the main legal proceedings following a road death.

### **13. Policing oversight and accountability**

- The Commission should consider in the context of reform the recommendation that GSOC be provided with the necessary resources and legal powers to deal with whistle-blowers as formally requested by the chair of GSOC.
- That the Policing Authority also be given the necessary legal powers in its role to oversee the performance of An Garda Síochána.

# Working To Save Lives

## Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre Road Safety Authority

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