



ROADPOL Pan-European Cross Border Operations

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Abstract

ROADPOL -European Roads Policing Network was (re)established in 2020 in order to improve road safety and law enforcement on European roads. The network is committed to reducing deaths, serious injury and traffic/road crimes. The most important operational activity is to execute Pan-European Cross Border Operations. PECBOs are a new instrument for road safety, able to develop an effective road policing strategy, with a framework vision focused on road crashes reduction. PECBOs constitute a significant effort for road safety and first results show that the joint efforts from participating countries produce an increase of road safety indexes. Evidence recommends continuing to organise PECBOs in the future, involving all road safety authorities, international agencies and stakeholders, also adopting the “mutual trust holistic approach” and evaluating the possible outcoming best practices.

Keywords: ROADPOL; Road Safety; Road Policing; Police Cooperation; Cross Border Enforcement

Introduction

ROADPOL is the *European Roads Policing Network*, the political successor since 1 January 2020¹, to the TISPOL Ltd. Organization (1996-2016) and TISPOL Network (2017-2019)², established in

¹ Because of this, many of the references used in this study to support the claims made about ROADPOL pre date the establishment of the new network and must be related to the pre-existing TISPOL

Dublin (Ireland) on 26 September 2019 after approval by the Member States during the General Council of the documents *Convention for the Constitution of ROADPOL – European Roads Policing Network* and *Statute of ROADPOL – European Roads Policing Network* (ROADPOL 2020; www.roadpol.eu).

ROADPOL (European Roads Policing Network) is now legally defined as an international association and it is open to all the States members of the Council of Europe. ROADPOL's main priority is to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on European roads. The activities of ROADPOL contribute to shaping some legislation and policies on a European, regional, and international level, as they provide authorities with expert advice based on current practices of law enforcement in different EU Member States.

In 2020, ROADPOL was recognised as the “*monopolist*” or the key Organisation responsible for road safety by the European Commission DG MOVE (Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport).

One of the flagship activities of (TISPOL)ROADPOL is constituted by its Pan-European Cross Borders Operations (PECBOs), a specific example of how police cooperation in Europe can work and obtain results. In all EU Countries for a whole week, the same type of check and controls are made (DUI, heavy vehicles, truck and bus transport, speeding, etc.) and common criteria and data collection are determinate (Frisani, Zamboni & Monteiro, 2016; Scala, 2017; TISPOL, 2018).

PECBOs aim to fight the four main causes of fatalities on the road, namely speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI), misuse of seatbelt and/or restraint systems, and distraction while driving (Council of the European Union 2017; Elvik et al. 2009, Gössel 2015; TISPOL 2018).

In organising and operating PECBOs, ROADPOL members use a *holistic approach*, based on trust in the police. This is the view of executive police officers responsible in each State for cooperating and working at a European level in the road safety field (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2018).



Figure1: Members of ROADPOL (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

² The organization was instituted by Document no. 4010391, dated 8 June 2000 *Memorandum of Association of TISPOL Organization*, Companies House, Cardiff (United Kingdom) and the name was changed to TISPOL Network in September 2016.

Methodology

The subject of this study is to describe and analyse the effectiveness of ROADPOL PECBOs to date.

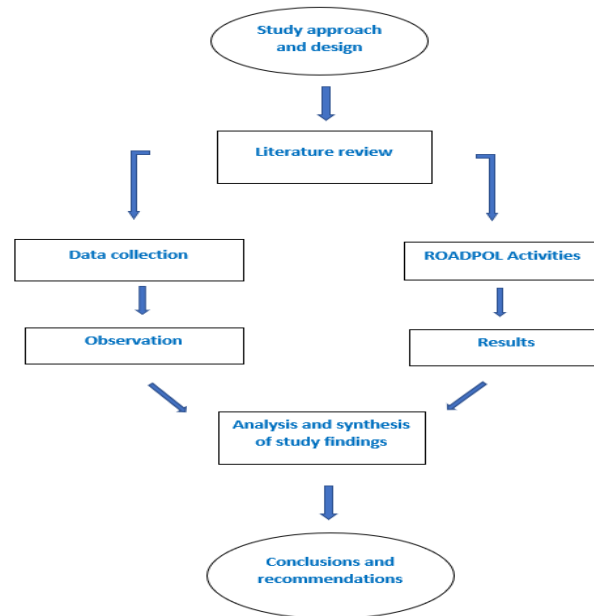


Figure 2: Study methodology overview

Descriptive and analytical methods have been used, focusing attention on current literature, data, ROADPOL and other road safety network documents and reports produced by participating police officers responsible in each State for (TISPOL)ROADPOL operations (Cestra 2015, 2019, 2020; Townsend 2018).

As illustrated in figure 2, the study is based on a quantitative research, focused on the hypothesis that ROADPOL has a key role on the road safety strategy and the aim of present study is to demonstrate the specific effectiveness and the possible positive added value of PECBOs on road safety.

Literature Review

The analysis commenced with a literature review to identify evaluation methods (Soltanifar & Ansari 2016) with respect to the data provided, parametric indices and quantitative figures on road safety campaigns and PECBOs.

The first analysis focused on scientific articles and reviews (Bao et al. 2012), to ensure results were used correctly according to the aim of the study.

According to Prezelj (2013) and Popescu (2015) it appears that PECBOs in general are a useful instrument in the road policing field. Adminaite et al. (2021), Gössel (2015) and Terziev, Petkov & Krastev (2018) underline that in the field of road safety, police cooperation is very important.

The presence of a common strategy and well-defined targets at the EU level constitute the basic starting point for effective cooperation (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2018; Cestra, 2019; ETSC 2019).

In this context, trust is very important to cooperating at the best level (Cook, Hardin & Levi 2005; Guille 2013; Van Craen 2016)

Data Collection

A quantitative comparative methodology was used, focused on an empirical analysis of road fatalities data and road safety performance indicators (RSPIs) within the 2001-2020 period, especially in EU MS. All relevant data in the official road safety databases and from international organizations and other associations in charge of road safety were identified (Hirose et al. 2016; Sparrow 2015).

Was collected data from the European Transport Security Council (ETSC) database, to illustrate absolute figures of road accidents on EU roads, as well the number of fatalities occurred yearly and the number of serious injured persons, per year, as consequence of road accidents using the EU MAIS+ matrix.

Observation

The data were observed to an absolute extent, without using filters relating to age groups or the population density of the individual country, as well as making no reference to the number of kilometers of existing roads. The observation of the statistical data relating to fatal accidents and serious injuries occurred to an absolute extent and made it possible to draw a strictly scientific picture of the relative trend. No update after the entry into EU of Croatia in 2013 and the exit of UK in 2020.

ROADPOL Activities

The study analyses (TISPOL)ROADPOL activity results from 2008 to 2021, having the aim to identify possible evidences of positive outcomes of these activities regarding the road safety. The basic parameter used is strictly connected to the relations of specific factors as the total number of PECBOs scheduled and performed by (TISPOL)ROADPOL and the related particular typology (overspeed, alcohol and drugs, heavy vehicles checks, use of seatbelts, operation “Focus on the Road”, “Speed Marathon”, “Safe Holidays” and ROADPOL Safety Days). Also evaluated is the total number of checkpoints and vehicles controlled during PECBOs.

Another performance indicator for PECBOs evaluation is the total number of (TISPOL)ROADPOL member States participating in operations.

Results

The study evaluates, in analytic way and using an absolute quantitative comparative methodology, the total number of registered infractions during PECBOs performed by (TISPOL)ROADPOL trying to draft a possible trend related to specific fields of intervention and focusing on the possible relations between member States participation and operations final results.

Available data suggests a specific role for PECBOs organised by ROADPOL in the road safety field (Adminaite et al. 2021; Dadashova et al. 2016; TISPOL, 2018).

Analysis and Synthesis of Study Findings

Moreover, a SWOT analysis (Soltanifar & Ansari 2016) has been conducted on ROADPOL PECBOs, to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and to identify the internal and

external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving the best results, putting mutual trust as a *cornerstone*.

The SWOT analysis was performed in several meetings between all the member States representatives in ROADPOL, who usually have specialist knowledge and supporting data. Each of these individuals brings own particular perspectives and skills to the discussion. The end result of such a series of meetings is a complete SWOT matrix under the guidance of the ROADPOL General Secretary who is familiar with the SWOT process and successfully manage the discussions, drawing the key points and encouraging participants to contribute to discussions and possible brainstorming in order to identify as many SWOT factors as possible.

This is especially important considering opportunities and threats, as these are things that members and representatives often have certain preconceptions about or may struggle to admit to exist.

At the same time a PESTLE matrix (Barba, Sanchez & Segui 2016; Lamas-Leite & De Brito-Mello 2017) has been explored to evaluate especially the political, economic and legal impact of PECBOs, specifically referring to increase of trust between participant States.

The process was based on brainstorm and list key issues beyond the ROADPOL General Secretary control, identifying the implications of each problem and valuating its relative importance to the organization (e.g.: critical, broad, important, significant, moderate, or insignificant), as well as valuating the likelihood of it occurring (e.g. certainty, extremely probable, probable, potential, remote possibility or will not).

ROADPOL Approach

Trans-European police cooperation plays an important role in addressing cross-border prevention and in road safety improvement (DGHome 2013; EUROPOL 2017). In this framework, ROADPOL has a fundamental role.³

ROADPOL approach is standardised according to the different best practices, where there is not a specific model to follow but the ROADPOL roundtable is totally open to effective brainstorming. The result is creation of a common vision, starting from the outcome of field activities, statistics, and European database findings and improving a common follow-up. The cornerstone (Caless & Tong, 2017) of the system is *trust*.

At a strategic level, the *Road policing* vision, as operating in ROADPOL, can be summarised as “*one nation, one voice and one vote*” (Cestra, 2020; Hellemons, 2009; Scala, 2017). Everyone has the same value. Everyone has the same power. Everyone has the same importance.

The scope and nature of the traffic police activity carried out by ROADPOL appears significant when compared to the specific requests of civil society. The activities are carried out at a Pan-European level, developing: a) specific synergy between all participating Countries; b) common approach to controls; c) adoption of a common system for detecting and recording infringements; d) common analysis of the results; e) adoption of common contrast strategies.

³ ROADPOL member are actually: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey. Dubai (UAE) is observer. UK and Ireland left the network on 2020.

Trust Holistic Approach

The co-operative efforts of ROADPOL have resulted in the *road policing mutual trust holistic approach* (Cestra 2020; Gössel 2015; Scala 2017).

The road safety holistic approach is focused to work for the implementation of a system that can minimize death and serious injury, while admitting that accidents with minor outcomes may still occur. The intervention on the safety system is obviously aimed at all elements of the system that affects road traffic: infrastructure, vehicles, the medical emergency system, the technical and cognitive training of road users.

An holistic approach establishes the need to intervene on the road safety through several parallel levels, but with a single purpose: a real improvement of road safety. There are three ways of access that lead to this goal: law enforcement, vehicle safety and the infrastructures security. The holistic approach is aimed at achieving the global result operating on all these fields. To do this, different activities are done, with the full participation of all the road safety stakeholders.

A holistic approach should not be seen as exclusive and distant from the other visions on road but demonstrates an important preventive dimension.

Road Policing Vision

Road Policing is a modern, international method of policing which, as at least the European experience has proved, effectively contributes to the prevention of road collisions and to tackling crime more broadly. In this framework the new idea is a unique field of activity with a specialized branch of MS police forces able to mix “*capabilities*” on *traffic policing* with “*authority*” in the field of *vehicle crime prevention*.

Road Policing is a new totally concept, implying that the reduction of the number of road victims and the guarantee of safety and security on the roads, considered as “*linear cities*”, is a shared responsibility, with several different actors having the same target (Cestra, 2019; Gössel, 2015).

Road Policing is a new vision and can contribute to fight against road and transport crime, because criminals use the roads for their illegal activities and the new different approach to integrate enforcement combines road safety and road crime enforcement. In this framework Traffic Police Forces can detect and deter criminals and deny them the use of the road whilst undertaking road safety actions.

Synergy and Knowledge Sharing

When a road safety initiative is proposed, it is only because of a unanimous decision by all ROADPOL representatives. This way to work is very important because it is the first exercise at an international level to start with the idea of having real equality between all the members of an organisation or a network, within a real synergic framework, sharing common knowledge.

At the operational level, ROADPOL provides a *flexible non-hierarchical, bottom-up platform* for operational cooperation (Gössel 2015), on a voluntary basis. The informal and strictly operational nature of the network is highly valued by its members. The level of trust in the network is very high and communication is very fast and easy.

Joint cross-border controls, at Pan-European level, organised by ROADPOL, involve an effective and full international exchange of information.

ROADPOL synergic approach is much appreciated because they find practical solutions to operational problems (exchange of information, knowledge sharing, etc.), and police officers, as well as EU Authorities, trust them (Adminaite et al. 2021).

Cooperation

Strictly cooperation between all ROADPOL members is another specific cornerstone of the new vision. Primary aims include:

- (a) bringing together and facilitating the collaboration between members of traffic services from within and outside Europe;
- (b) enhancing road safety and reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries;
- (c) facilitating the more effective enforcement of traffic laws.

Moreover, another important function of ROADPOL is the organization of various traffic-related campaigns through which it aims to educate members of the public about different aspects of road safety. For instance, each week there is a different campaign across Europe (so called PECBOs), the aim of which is to inform members of the public about the various traffic-related offences, such as failure to wear a seatbelt. Furthermore, ROADPOL encourages and facilitates research regarding the more effective implementation of road traffic policies. To this end, ROADPOL not only allows its members to share best practices, but it also provides them with educational courses relating to road traffic safety and policing.

In ROADPOL meetings and on the website forum experience and best practice are exchanged, everyone at his best trying to support and learn from all others. At a yearly ROADPOL Roads Policing Seminar participants of all ROADPOL countries have the opportunity to exchange views and share the latest information on road safety.

Common Strategy

ROADPOL is currently implementing its 3 years strategy 2022-2024, based on four pillars:

Safer roads

Safe System approach to road engineering involves matching road function, design, layout and speed limits to accommodate human error in a way, that crashes do not lead to death and serious injury. European police forces keep a record of causes of accidents when recording them and they are therefore in a good position to give advice to members of the public about how to prevent these from happening in the first place. All ROADPOL members work together across Europe to achieve a safer road network for all road users, engage with key stakeholders, exchange experience and results and engage road safety authorities regarding safe road design.

Safer Vehicles

ROADPOL works to have safer vehicles through effective and intelligent-led enforcement, and by engaging with and educating citizens about making safer vehicle choices, and through the adoption of an internal Technology Working Group that identifies technology that can support the delivery of safer roads. The network is also active in the field of Tacho Web Technology through the Tacho Web Group. At the moment there is an ongoing study on the post-incident response and investigation, and ROADPOL also supports Safety *at Work* initiatives.

Safer Roads Users

The safety behaviour of road users (speed, wearing seatbelts and helmets, driving without alcohol and other drugs, driving, riding and walking without distraction) and its enforcement are also key in the prevention of fatal/very serious accidents under ROADPOL vision and strategy. The effective enforcement of the law is the main objective of the member police forces.

Safer Speed

ROADPOL activity is also focused on the fight against overspeed and on the enforcement of speeding offences on rural and urban roads. To obtain specific results on this field, annually is proposed an operational calendar and a “*Speed Marathon*” day.

ROADPOL Pan European Cross Border Operations

ROADPOL activities are aligned with the best practices of the traffic police, developing through control and law enforcement actions as expressly indicated by the European Union, focusing on the verification of compliance with the rules, on education and training, as well as on the activities research and with close relationships with stakeholders and road infrastructure managers.

ROADPOL organise and hold annual ROADPOL Pan European Cross Border Operations, nominally:

- (a) truck & bus (4 per year);
- (b) seatbelt (1 per year);
- (c) speed (2 per year, including Speed Marathon in April);
- (d) alcohol & drugs (2 per year, including an alcohol & drug marathon in May),
- (e) Focus on the Road (1 per year);
- (f) Safe Holidays campaign (during the summer season);
- (g) ROADPOL Safety Days (16/22 September, every year, during the European Mobility Week).

In times when economy and money seem to be the only matters of importance in politics and the media the ROADPOL PECBOs are trying to make the public and the national police forces in Europe aware, that everyday life, health and security of people are at stake on our roads. By enforcing rules during Europe-wide operations the national traffic police forces and other stakeholders are pulling together for the common goals of safety and security on European roads.

All operations are at the same time directed against traffic offenders and criminals using public roads, as every traffic check offers the opportunity to look for hints and evidence of crime.

Truck & Bus

The operation held in February, May, July and October every year.

Commercial busses and heavy goods vehicles are stopped and checked at the roadside by Traffic Police Officers together with other relevant enforcement agencies.

Road safety checks are carried out, such as the technical condition, dimensions and weight of the vehicles, and whether the drivers are authorized and adhere to European driving times. A check of the tachograph is part of this. The cargo and accompanying documents are also checked.

Results from 2008 to 2021 are referred in figure 3 (no operations in year 2020 due to the European lockdown because of the pandemic of *covid 19 coronavirus*).

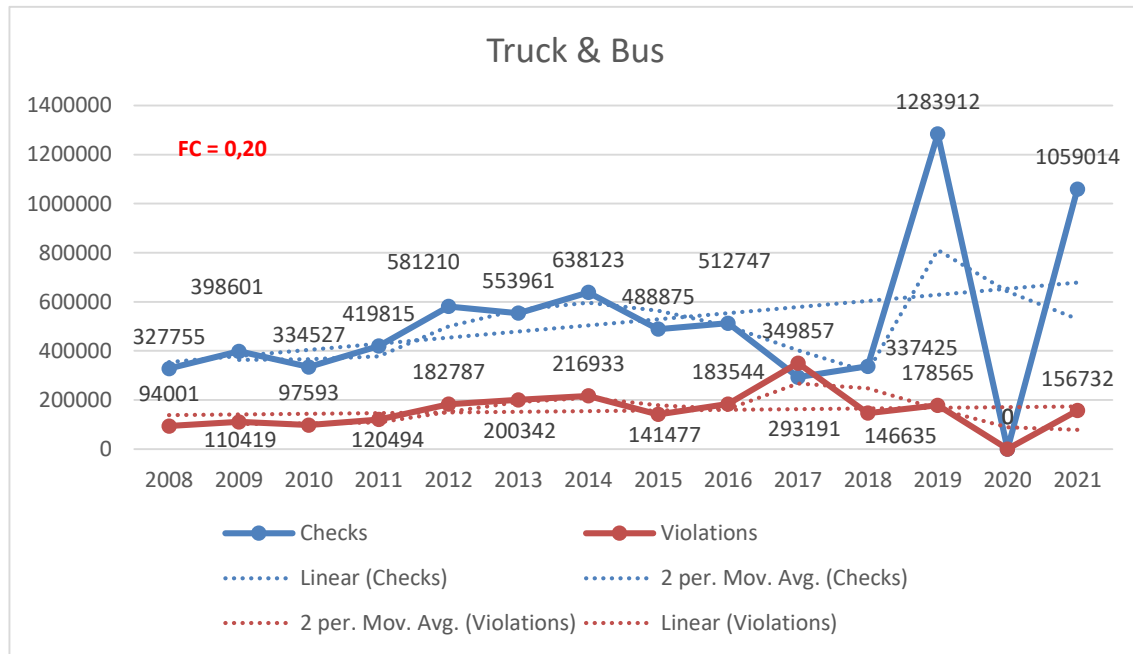


Figure 3: Truck & Bus operations yearly results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Seatbelts

The operation herd every year in March

ROADPOL Seat Belt Operation is raging across Europe for enforcement is still needed and seat belt usage is unfortunately still far from 100%. During the week checks are un misuse of every kind of restraint systems, not only for drivers and front passengers, but also for rear passengers and children.

Results (in terms of discovered violations) from 2008 to 2021 are referred in figure 4 (no operations in year 2020 due to the European lockdown because of the pandemic of *covid 19 coronavirus*).

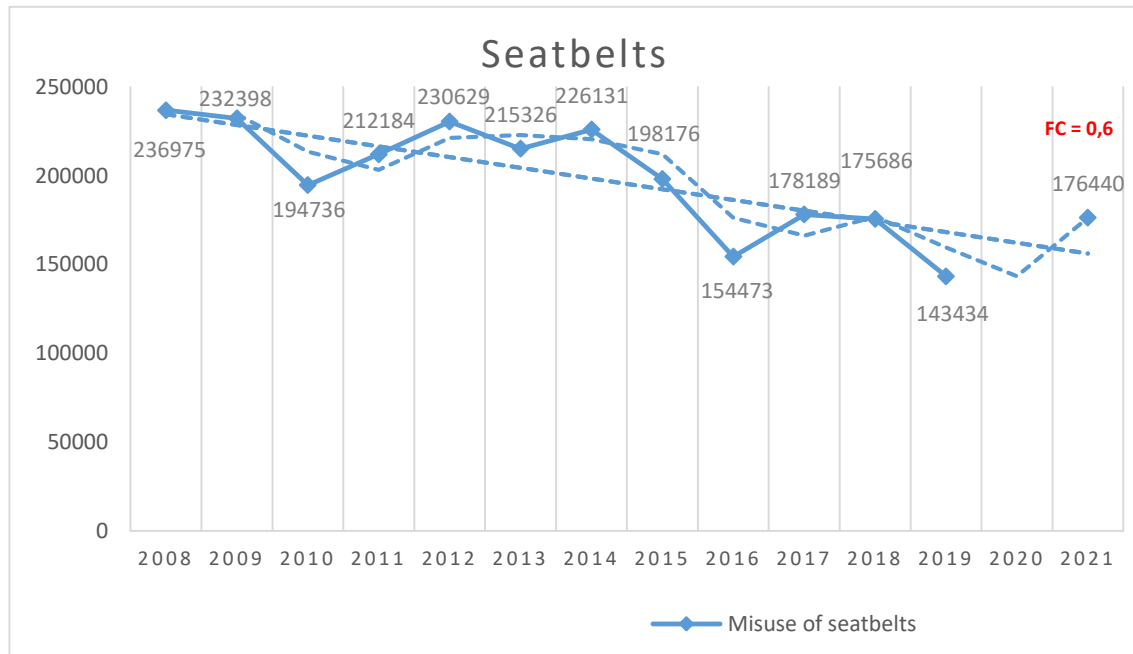


Figure 4: Seatbelts operations yearly results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Speed

The operation held in April and August every year.

During the operation, member Countries are asked to enforce the speed limits as set in their own country by officer intervention i.e. the physical presence of a police officer checking the speed of a vehicle using an approved method and device and then stopping and reporting the driver, and also by the use of fixed automatic devices such as fixed cameras at the roadside.

Results (in terms of discovered violations) from 2008 to 2021 are referred in figure 5 (no operations in year 2020 due to the European lockdown because of the pandemic of *covid 19 coronavirus*).

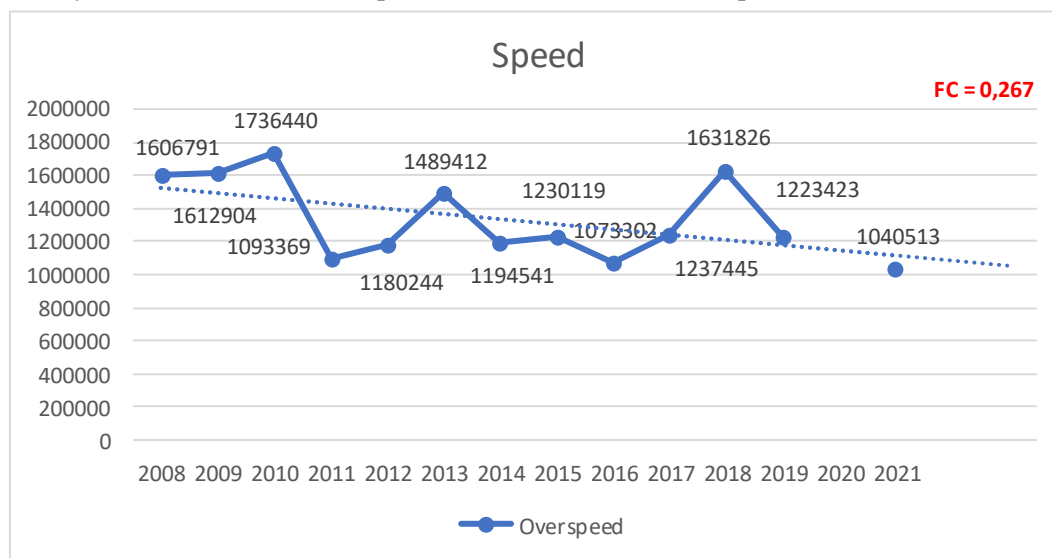


Figure 5: Speed operations yearly results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Speed Marathon

This specific PECBOs operation held every day in March or April, and consists in a 24 hour Pan-European activity dedicated to preventing speeding.

The *Speed Marathon* concept was devised in 2013 in Germany, inviting members of the public to identify locations where they believe speeding is a problem. From 2018 it has been adopted in 26 ROADPOL Countries. It is an extensive operation over the duration of 24 hours in which a maximum of police personnel and resources focus on speed enforcement. As it has a high public profile, the operation includes activities for community involvement and media support. The (TISPOL)ROADPOL Speed Marathon has successfully held each year.

The Speed Marathon 2022 took place on March 24th, being carried out in 19 countries and during the operation member States maintained the speed limits set in their own countries. Police officers checked the speed of vehicles using an approved method and device and then stopped and reported the driver, as did automatic devices such as fixed cameras on the roadside,

Results (in terms of discovered violations) from 2018 to 2021 are referred in figure 6 (no operations in year 2020 due to the European lockdown because of the pandemic of *covid 19 coronavirus*).

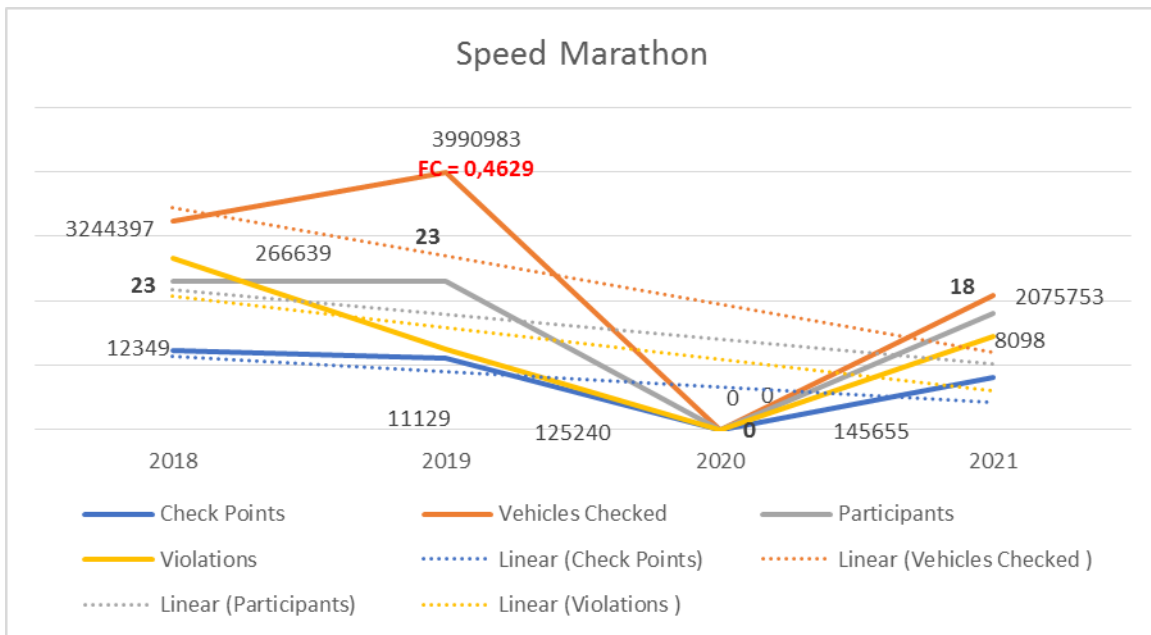


Figure 6: Speed Marathon results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Alcohol & Drugs

The operation held in June and December every year.

This PECBOs is a coordinated action by traffic police officers from each ROADPOL member Country and takes place on Europe's roads during the summer and Christmas periods in addition to the daily national Traffic Police enforcement activities to combat driving whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In the operation held in June, one day is chosen to be a 24 hours control on the use of alcohol and drugs in traffic. This is called the *Alcohol & Drugs Marathon*.

The purpose of ROADPOL *Operation Alcohol & Drugs* is not only to repress driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs but also to attract media attention to the subject.

The operations show the resolve of police forces across Europe in tackling this issue and to demonstrate that the chances of being caught when driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be greatly increased. Such operations also make a valuable contribution to achieving the aim of European and National Road Policing Strategies in reducing road deaths and injuries.

Results (in terms of discovered violations) from 2008 to 2021 are referred in figure 7 (no operations in year 2020 due to the European lockdown because of the pandemic of *covid 19 coronavirus*).

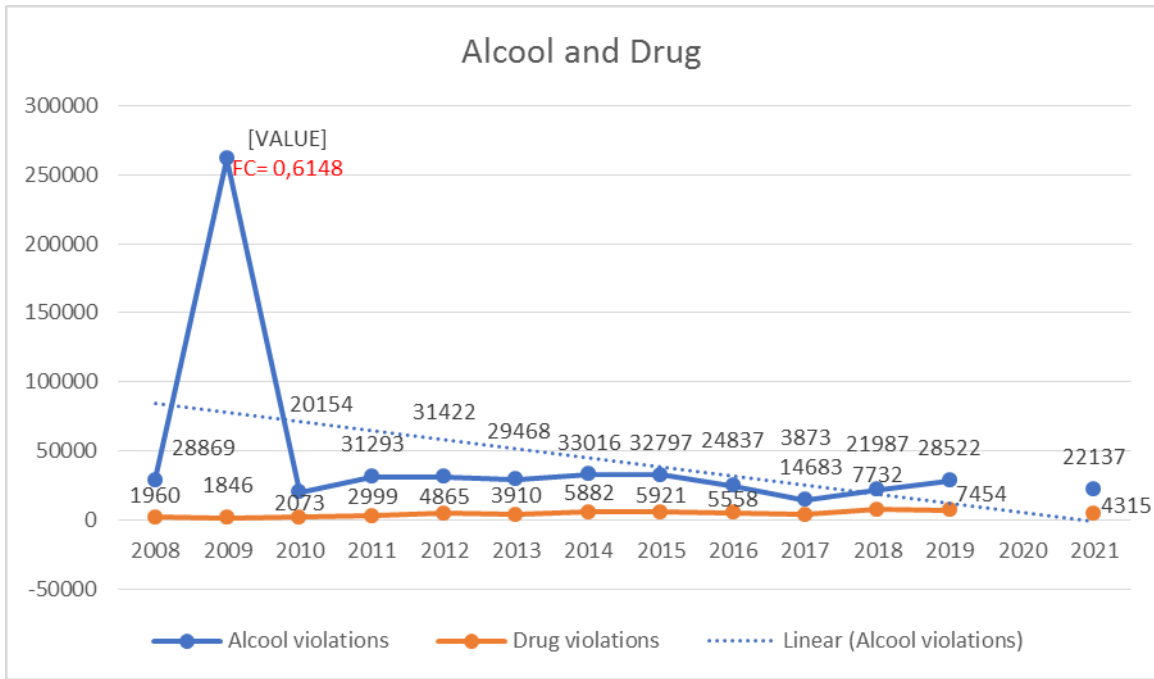


Figure 7: Alcohol & Drug operations yearly results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Focus on the Road

ROADPOL Operation Focus on the Road started on 2018 and cares about distraction in road traffic. The operation takes place every year in September during the ROADPOL Safety Days.

The activities aim to raise awareness among all categories of road traffic participants of the risks to which they are exposed, in the event of non-compliance with road rules, in order for them to adopt responsible behavior when traveling on public roads.

Traffic police will hold talks with road users to raise awareness of the importance of complying with traffic rules, especially those related to driving under the influence of alcohol or psychoactive substances, compliance with the legal speed regime, illegal crossing, mobile phone use or wearing a seat belt.

Results (in terms of checks and discovered violations) from 2018 to 2021 are referred in figure 8 .

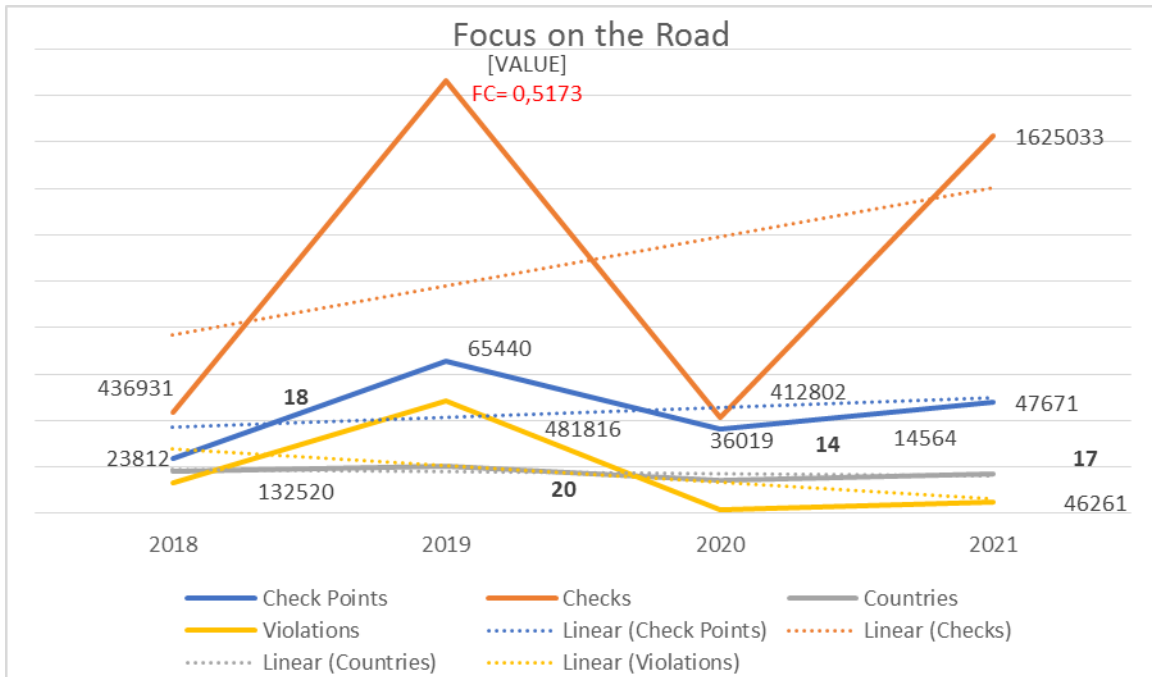


Figure 8: Focus on the Road operations results. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Safe Holidays

According to the ROADPOL, “*Safe Holidays*” Operation is taking place from the 1st of July until 31st August every year. It is considered as a useful tool to increase the road safety in the roads of every country during summer on the occasion of massive tourist displacements. It is also considered that this Operation would increase road safety in the rest of the European roads and Traffic Police actions is supported by media campaigns and delivery of brochures among involved drivers so as to inform drivers before the start their trips, so they can get the information and prepare the car and the journey properly.

ROADPOL Safety Days

ROADPOL Safety Days, under the slogan: *stay alive and save lives!*, is the flagship annual campaign with the support of the European Commission, having:

- (a) The vision to promote ROADPOL's values of road traffic enforcement and cross-border police collaboration as key approaches to enhancing road safety in Europe
- (b) The mission to reduce the number of road fatalities in Europe which is now an average of 70 per day
- (c) The objective to reduce this number to zero for at least one single day
- (d) The strategy to create numerous road safety and traffic enforcement activities across Europe as well as police forces directly engaging with the public and advocacy to road users.

The ROADPOL *Safety Days* initiative is an excellent demonstration of how basic research followed by its dedicated application can provide the basis for a successful and highly cost-effective means of improving road safety (Cestra 2020).

The planning of the initiative has been based on the scope of *Stockholm's Declaration on Road Safety* of 2020 acting to put measures in place to save lives and meet the target to halve road deaths and serious injuries by year 2030.

An extensive program of work has arisen from this, and later large-scale evaluation activities will hopefully demonstrate the benefits of this good example of a well-researched intervention.

Public and private institutions, national and international, as well as road safety NGOs and educational institutions are all encouraged to support the campaign by organizing events to promote its messages to the broader public.

Activities are different across countries but are centered on enforcement and prioritize direct engagement with and advocacy to road users, organizing national events and activities and sharing the road safety outcomes. Everyone can participate in the campaign by signing the road safety *pledge* and making others aware of the ROADPOL *Safety Days*.

The ROADPOL Safety Days highlight the key principle that road safety is the responsibility of all road users and raise awareness of the crucial role of enforcement as part of the Safe System approach to the road safety, as well as about laws, effective post-crash response, young people becoming safe road users, and controls about standards for vehicles, drivers, and roads.

The first edition was successfully carried out in September 2020 with 16 of the participating Countries achieving zero fatalities in the main campaign day, accompanied by widespread communication actions (press releases, social media, etc.) along with a least one major conference style event.

In 2021, the second edition, mobilized more individual actions registered on the campaign website than in 2020 (238 registered actions) with a wider geographical spread, as well as by enhanced communication efforts (e.g., press releases translated into members languages, interviews in major media, enhanced involvement of other stakeholders, such as road safety NGOs, motorways operators, mobile phones companies, etc.).

PECBOs Results

The good operational results obtained by PECBOs in the framework of existing police networks, is a major factor of the improvement of police cooperation. The joint operability of police networks like ROADPOL contributes to the strengthening of operational cooperation between MS police forces in cross-border threat prevention, and to improving the security of the EU (Council of the European Union 2011; DGHome 2013; TISPOL 2018; Townsend 2018). Technical and operational knowledge as well as best practices are now available to be shared on a common platform, also contributing to mainstreaming of behaviors. Participation in the networks helps to change the way members perceive their objectives (Adminaite et al. 2021; CARPOL 2017; Cestra 2015). In particular, this is the case concerning the safety/security issue, where the principle of intelligence-led policing, as opposed to enforcement at random, is now being recognized as a priority in many EU MS (Block 2008; DGHome 2013; Frisani, Zamboni & Monteiro 2016).

Cooperation in the field of road safety contributes to shaping legislation and policies at the European, regional and national levels also to monitoring and evaluation practices in order to better demonstrate added value, a key objective of current European police cooperation (Spapens, Huffnagel & Mc Cartney 2017; Van Craen 2016).

The asset of common traffic policing and vehicle crime prevention activities on the roads contributes to the strengthening of cooperation between European police forces in cross-border threat prevention, and to improving the security of European transport. This also leads to the detection of criminal activities (document fraud, illegal employment, illegal migration, human trafficking, stolen

goods and drug offences) that would not have been detected without the international exchange of information in the past (Adminaite et al. 2021; Block 2008; Cestra 2020; DGHome 2013; TISPOL 2018).

Where road transport involves criminal activities, common actions at the operational level are also seen as beneficial to exchanging best practices and to aligning the activities of EU police forces. Within this framework, effective police cooperation at EU level in the field of road safety is focused on (DGHome 2013; European Commission 2010; European Parliament 2011):

- (a) Enhancing trust and facilitating communication through an informal bottom-up approach
- (b) Sharing technical and operational knowledge leading to mainstreaming of behaviors
- (c) Sharing expertise and best practices
- (d) Mediating the different interests
- (e) Finding practical solutions to road safety problems
- (f) Developing effective partnerships that contribute to maximize potential synergies.

At the operational level, national traffic police officers can benefit from synergies between operations and specific training, perceived as key activities leading to changes in practices or policies (CARPOL 2017; Gössel 2015; Hellemons 2009; Scala 2017, TISPOL 2018, Townsend, 2017, 2018).

In the case of ROADPOL, according to members, PECBOs are the key activity (DGHome 2013; European Commission 2014 & 2017).

PECBOs encourage an implementation of new techniques and strategies shared by other organizations, including the following:

- (a) Changes in tactics of national control operations
- (b) Development of a sense of common purpose providing new motivation for cooperation and innovation
- (c) Development of spontaneous, organic coordination and cooperation on joint operations and legislation between members, outside of the formal activities.

The activities of ROADPOL have contributed to shaping some legislation and policies, such as providing authorities with expert advice. Examples include involvement in the Transport Commissioner's activities and legislation regarding road safety matters (Adminaite et al. 2021; European Commission 2010, LEWP 2014; TISPOL 2018).

The average participation of ROADPOL member states in PECBOs appears to be constantly high in its maximum percentage and has reached 100% during 2021 (figure 10). This figure confirms the constant commitment of all ROADPOL members to road safety.

The constant increase in the participation average corresponds to an increase in the number of checks carried out during the various PECBOs and in the total number of traffic violations.

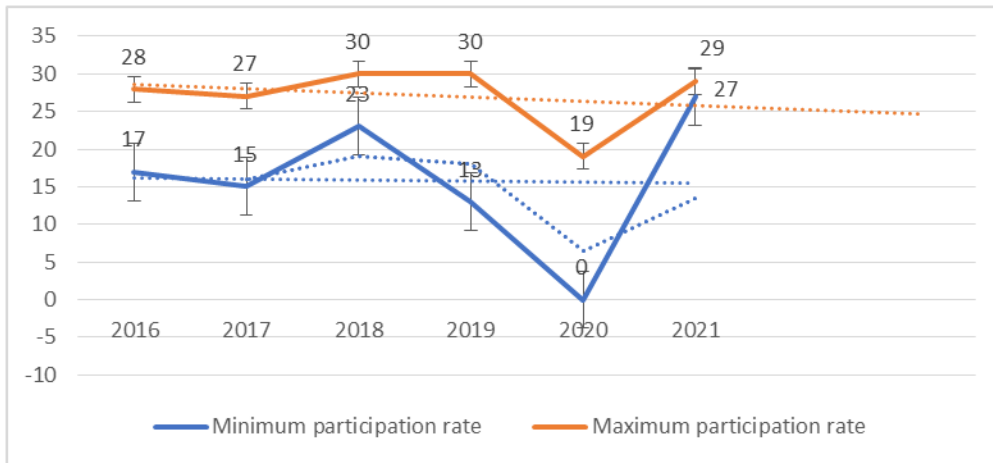


Figure 9: ROADPOL members participation in PECBOs. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

During the week dedicated to each PECBO operation, it has been reported that the number of patrols involved in activities increased by +12.25%, traffic violations increased by approximately. +7% with a special focus on driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI) and the total number of traffic accidents decreased by 21% (Adminaite et al. 2020; Cestra 2020; ROADPOL 2022).

During the PECBOs, a significant number of violations of specific regulations were recorded, attributable to the Road Policing Activity (RPA), an aspect of road policing linked more to road crime and not to traffic rule violations (figure 11). It is interesting to note that, as controls and participation in activities increase, the number of violations not specifically related to traffic, but more generally to crime, tends to decrease in recent years.

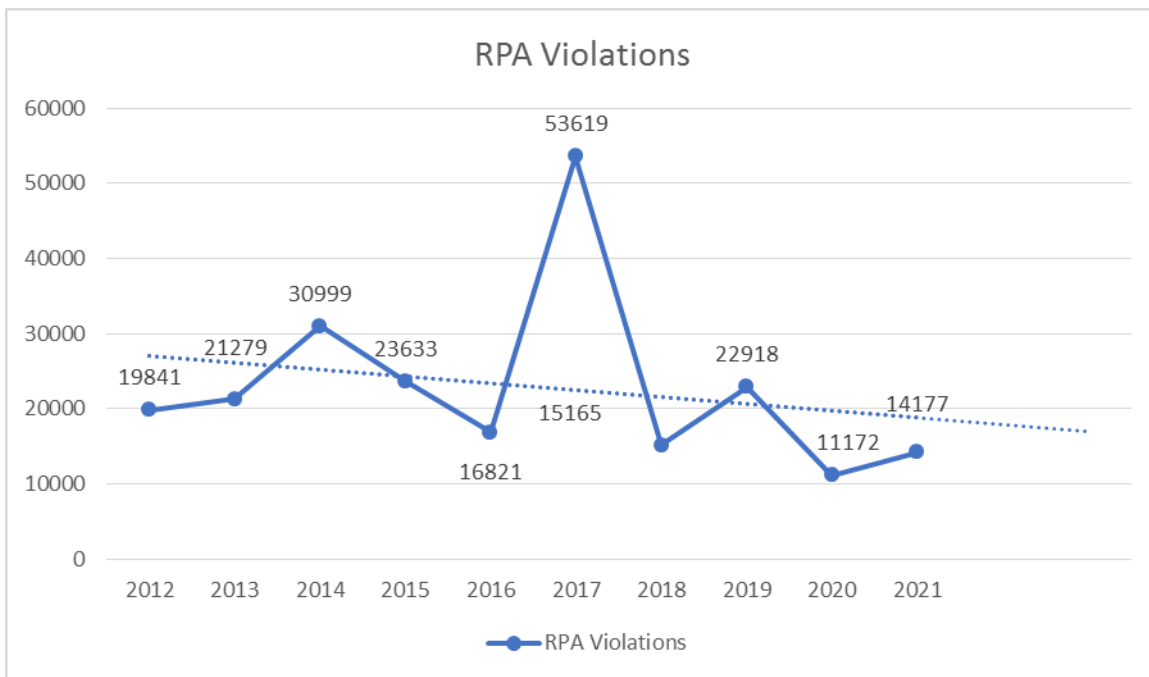


Figure 11: Road Policing Activities violations in PECBOs. (Source: ROADPOL website www.roadpol.eu)

Having regard to the effects of the ROADPOL flagship *Safety Days* initiative it is possible a preliminary qualitative and quantitative evaluation (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2018; Cestra 2019).

Data from the start of the initiative to date indicates that as a result of ROADPOL *Safety Days*:

- (a) The event was preceded and accompanied by a popularization social media campaign which resulted in 13,233,579 persons reached and 88,976 unique visits to the campaign website;
- (b) There was full media coverage and the term *road safety* was the most searched on Twitter and on the other socials.
- (c) In 2021, 26 countries took part in the campaign. This constituted a significant increase from the 18 countries that participated in 2020. 16 European countries recorded *zero* traffic fatalities on the main action day of the campaign. The 16 zero-death champions are Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia and Switzerland.
- (d) Overall 35 fatalities were reported on the day across the 25 countries which announced data. The number represents 43% of the average 62 road deaths, which occur everyday on the roads of the European Union and is a clear drop even when taking into account the difference in the number of participating countries.
- (e) Despite the COVID pandemic, 606 events were organized during the week in 18 European countries, with the aim of attracting public attention to the subject of road safety and safe mobility. There is an increase of 79% from the 338 during the 2020 campaign. Also there were 1290 pledges for responsible road behavior signed online. Additionally no less than 900 pledges were signed physically on the spot of numerous campaign events.

During the *Speed Marathon 2022* over 14,900 police officers checked more than 3,100,000 drivers for their speed on at least 10,500 checkpoints. They found 104,315 violations and pulled over 27,963 drivers to issue a fine and to explain why speeding is dangerous. An additional 76,352 drivers received a fine by mail, because their traffic violations were discovered by technical means. The driving license of several drivers was confiscated for excessive speeding.

Compare to the previous year (2021) the average violation rate decreased from 6,8% to 3,4%.

With the accompanying social media activities on *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram* and *YouTube*, including boosting, were recovered about 6,000,000 impressions and about 2,700,000 reaches of individuals. Various press releases and interviews on national and/or local level were initiated by the representatives of member States.

In the period 2016/2020 during the 24 hours dedicated to the *Speed Marathon*, the average of detected speeding violations in participating member states increased by 27%. (Cestra, 2020).

Discussion

ROADPOL develops a 3 year strategic program in cooperation with DGHome as well as an annual report submitted to EU Institutions and it is the only road safety network recognised by the European Commission. It can speak the same language on traffic policing at the European level (Cestra 2019; European Commission 2017), it has real power to put legal pressure on national governmental bodies in charge of road safety and can provide a common point of view on problems (Council of the European Union 2014, 2016a, 2016b; EUROPOL 2017; Hellemons 2009; LEWP 2014).

Within this framework, PECBOs are today a reality on road policing with the task to improve the road safety (Castillo-Manzano et al. 2018; Dadashova et al. 2016).

As per methodology, preliminarily it is necessary to analyze the trend of fatalities and serious injuries road accidents (ETSC, 2021) during the period from 2008 to 2020 (figure 9).

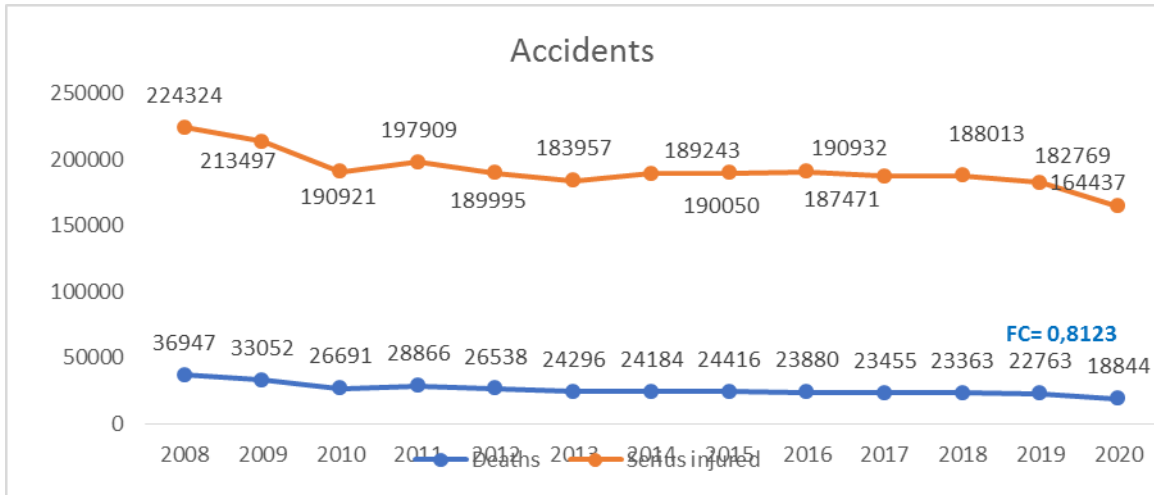


Figure 11: Deaths and serious injured for road accidents. (Source: ETSC, 2021)

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Data analysis is carried out analyzing road crashes statistics and specific data in order to study the causes of crashes, with particular reference to human beings, vehicles and infrastructure. Geographical analysis also makes it possible to identify and examine sections at risk of crashes and “black points” on the roads. Results are essential to inform the community and to make political decisions on the adoption, implementation and evaluation of measures to improve road safety, having regard to people, vehicles and infrastructure

It is possible to evaluate for specific operations the effort for road safety during the dedicated PECBOs weeks or days, using following indicators:

FC = fatalities coefficient; Tn = total number; Av = average number; Mn = Maximum number; mn = minimum number; λ% = absolute increasing/decreasing percentage 2008/2021; C/V% = PECBO incidence on absolute data

PECBO	FC	Variable	Tn	Av	Mn	mn	λ%	C/V %
Truck & Bus	0,2040	Checks	7.285.822	560.447	1.283.912 (2019)	327.755 (2008)	+291%	29,91%
		Violations	2.179.341	167.641	349.857 (2017)	94.001 (2008)	+272%	
Seatbelts	0,6294	Violations	2.396.588	184.352	236.975 (2008)	143.434 (2019)	-40%	N A
Speed	0,2671	Violations	17.250.330	1.326.948	1.736.440 (2010)	1.040.513 (2021)	-41%	
Speed Marathon	0,4629	Checks	9.311.133	3.103.711	3.990.983 (2019)	2.075.753 (2021)	-48%	5,77%
		Violations	537.534	179.178	266.639 (2018)	125.240 (2019)	-53%	
Alcohol & Drugs	0,6148	Violations	636.106	48.931	263.379 (2009)	18.556 (2017)	Data not comparable	NA
Focus on the Road	0,5173	Checks	4.340.094	1.085.023	1.865.328 (2019)	412.802 (2020)	Data not comparable	15,55%
		Violations	675.161	168.790	481.816 (2019)	14.564 (2020)	-22% average	

Figure 12: PECBOs road safety impact

- (a) PECBO *Truck & Bus* evidences a specific decrease of violations detected, quite triplicate, in front to an increase of three times of the checks
- (b) PECBO *Seatbelts* evidences a continuous decreasing trend of violations (-40%) in front to a specific action of law enforcement and control
- (c) PECBO *Speed* demonstrates a -40% decreasing of speed violations in front to a constant control action performed by ROADPOL member during last decade
- (d) *Speed Marathon* event (see figure 2) underlines a possible decrease of violations in presence of a clear actions during specific days
- (e) PECBO *Alcohol & Drug* demonstrates decrease of detected violation. In term of violations, it is possible evaluate a positive trend of 21% decreasing of alcohol related infractions during last 10 years
- (f) Operation *Focus on the Road* (see figure 3) underlines a decrease of detected violations caused by distractions during driving time (-22%) in case of specifically targeted checks
- (g) During the *Safety Days* initiative in 2021 was registered a certificated decrease of 43% of fatalities in the 24 hours event.

More in general, evidence indicate that:

- (a) It is an increase of ROADPOL members participation rate in PECBOs (see figure 4)
- (b) During PECBOs is consolidated a specific check increasing trend and a general decreasing of detected violations, demonstrating the deterrence related to the presence on the roads of more law enforcement officers
- (c) Pecbos claim the focus and the attention of public opinion on the road safety problem. During operations is much more the coverage of mass media on the problem
- (d) It is possible to suggest a relation between PECBOs and the improvement of road safety during the time of the specific day or week interested by the operation performance.

Parameters needed for evaluation are a) the number of road fatal crashes; b) the severity of injuries; c) the respect of traffic rules; d) the total number of traffic code violations; e) the adoption of

national road safety plans. These types of measures are called *safety performance* (or performance) indicators. They provide an indication of the level of safety in a Country, and can be used to evaluate the specific effect of a single road safety measure.

Taking in account the saving of lives on the roads, the registered decrease in fatalities on a specific day appears to be an effective result. The *Safety Days* initiative specifically and PECBOs more in general represent an possible saving in lost economic output, human and medical costs associated with road casualties and the police, insurance and damage costs.

A benefit/cost evaluation (Martensen, Dipiendaele & Daniels 2018; Stojanova & Blaskova 2018) of the initiative indicated that the greatest benefit was from the decreases in fatalities, and road crashes and related social costs. In fact very death as consequence of road crashes has an average social cost of € 2,115,000 (ETSC, 2019) in front of a European Union annual contribution to ROADPOL for the PECBOs management of only € 200,000 (ROADPOL, 2021).

Furthermore, ROADPOL PECBOs suggest that *common trust* (Cestra 2020; Spapens, Huffnagel & Mc Cartney 2017; TISPOL 2018) is the most useful tool for better police cooperation.

Using a SWOT matrix (Prezelj 2013; Jamalnejad, Zangiabadi & Varesi 2014; Rozwadowski 2017) to analyse PECBO results, it is possible emphasise that the harmonisation of procedures, based on common trust, is typical of ROADPOL PECBO cooperation.

INTERNAL FACTORS	
STRENGTHS (+)	WEAKNESSES (-)
(a) Real efficiency	(a) Different procedures
(b) Common vocabulary	(b) Different legal basis
(c) Common results tables	(c) Different legal framework
(d) Best practices	(d) Different languages
EXTERNAL FACTORS	
OPPORTUNITIES (+)	THREATS (-)
(a) Lessons learned	(a) Lack of confidentiality
(b) Common strategies	(b) Redundancy
(c) Global vision	(c) Routinary
(d) Extra EU Cooperation	(d) Countermeasures

Figure13: SWOT analysis of ROADPOL PECBOs influence on road safety

At the same time a PESTLE (Political Economical Social Technological Legal and Environmental) matrix analysis (Barba, Sanchez & Segui 2016; Lamas-Leite & De Brito-Mello 2017) was also carried out that was able to demonstrate the strategic role of trust between PECBOs participants.

Political	Economic	Sociological	Technological	Legal	Environmental
EU Decision	No extra costs	Social high impact	EU Technical Platforms	EU Legal Framework	Crime decreasing

Figure 14: PESTLE analysis of ROADPOL PECBOs influence on road safety

Taking in account the saving of lives on the roads, the registered decrease in fatalities on a specific day appears to be an excellent result. The *Safety Days* initiative specifically and PECBOs more in

general represent an effective saving in lost economic output, human and medical costs associated with road casualties and the police, insurance and damage costs.

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Furthermore, ROADPOL PECBOs suggest that common trust is the most useful tool for better police cooperation (Cestra 2020; Spapens, Huffnagel & Mc Cartney 2017; TISPOL 2018).

The general assessment, including the analytical results, showed the added value and usefulness of PECBOs (including cost efficiency), as well as the difficulties encountered and lessons learned, establishing a possible link between trust, good relationships and common approach.

The ROADPOL approach confirmed that for best management of PECBOs it is fundamental to have a common vocabulary, clear and focused tasks (specifically focused on the four main causes of road fatalities) and an effective use of cross-border police cooperation instruments (Gherman 2015).

The capacity to assemble shared and common result forms is very useful when providing only one voice in reporting data for PECBOs.

Establishment of PECBOs is the result of an integrated common approach to road safety and the planning is done using the lessons learned from the expertise of all participants in traffic police forces (Gössel 2015; Hellemons 2009; TISPOL 2018).

This decision generates a capacity for trust among all participants (TISPOL 2018) showing a common intent to obtain real results in the fight against road fatalities, generating positive support amongst road users, citizens and authorities in general (Adminaite et al. 2021; Gössel 2015; Spapens, Huffnagel & McCartney 2017; Van Craen 2016).

Mutual trust allows quick exchange of data and the availability of real-time information and criminal records from national databases, making it possible to obtain immediate results in focusing activity on specific fields or on better-targeted tasks on the road (Caless & Tong 2015).

The joint effort and coordination mechanism between European law enforcement agencies makes it possible to track down new stolen vehicle trafficking routes and combat them (Popescu 2015).

The presence of the INTERPOL/EUROPOL *Joint Experts Task Force* is also a real added value and can be assessed for further cooperation in the field (Block 2008; LEWP 2014; Popescu 2015).

Ultimately, PECBOs manage to gather police officers to work together in order to facilitate the exchange of information, quick response and intelligence activity (Council of the European Union 2016; TISPOL 2018).

Conclusions and Recommendations

ROADPOL PECBOs are an example of how police cooperation in Europe can work and obtain very good results.

In ROADPOL PECBOs, the system is very clear and simple:

- (a) Each traffic police force participates with the same value as the others (*one flag, one vote*)
- (b) There are no particular or specific roles, and each police force has the same decisional power
- (c) The best practices are put together for a common aim
- (d) *Mutual trust* is the fundamental element, and all strategies are common and shared
- (e) The success of one body is everyone's success and everyone's success is the success of one body
- (f) The harmonization of procedures is the best outcome of the cooperation.

Another important result is an increase in the total number of traffic checks during the PECBO weeks.

Starting from this *cornerstone* and based on the positive outcomes, it is also possible to conclude that *mutual trust* between participants is an added value.

There is now an effective form of cooperation in police activity with the adoption of a standardised basic checking procedure (Directive 2011/82 (EU) Parliament and Council October 2011; Directive 2015/413 (EU) Parliament and Council, March 2015) with cross-border enforcement for several very serious infringements (Regulation 1071/2009 (EC), December 2011) and Pan-European control activities (EU Council Doc. 6883/3/16 COSI/ENFOPOL, June 2016) and common traffic patrolling at a European regional level.

To achieve this goal, it is fundamental that cooperating traffic police:

- (1) Obtain *mutual trust* through the acceptance of reforms, change of models and sharing of different cultural approaches
- (2) Obtain *effective trust* from citizens.

It is suggested to have a short/medium term evaluation of PECBOs capability to decrease traffic accidents and fatalities on EU roads.

Based on the evidence from ROADPOL PECBOs, the first and main recommendation is to continue the organisation of similar joint operations in the future.

During the planning of similar operations, participants are again recommended to adopt the *mutual trust approach*, especially referring to intelligence resources, before the commencement of operations, to have more effective management and better results.

It is necessary to have an effective common point of view in undertaking PECBOs.

It is recommended that a common result form continue to be used, with a short description in order to provide for harmonious and standardised interpretation of checks at the Pan-European level.

Future operations should have more involvement in intelligence activity, with an immediate and active exchange of information.

It is recommended that the participation of all EU MS in PECBOs as well as other law enforcement authorities and international agencies (Europol, Interpol, FRONTEX, CARPOL, etc.) be encouraged.

Results, best practices and lessons learned must be analysed to evaluate the possible impact of a harmonised future replay of specific PECBOs.

It is suggested a comprehensive quantitative comparison should be undertaken focused on an empirical analysis of road fatalities and road safety performance indicators (RSPIs) within the 2001-2020

period, especially in EU MS (Hermans, Brijs & Wets 2010; Hirose et al. 2016), to evaluate the real effect of ROADPOL PECBOs.

Study Limitations

This study was conducted only based on empirical data and results of PECBOs as in the ROADPOL official database. Evidence is absolute and not par metered on road safety performance indicators (RSPIs), as defined by the European Commission, because current RSPIs has been introduced only in 2020 and the present analysis started before.

Impact on road safety is evaluated only referred to PCBOs days or weeks data, in comparison with the average data referred to fatalities and serious injuries crashes per year.

There is also another limitation that need to be acknowledged. The *road safety* area has remained a largely unsearched area, where there is not a common point of view, able to start adoption of common guidelines for further evolution. Because of this “*the study validity refers to whether a measurement instrument actually measures what it is purported to measure*”.

Author Contributions

The article is the result of the common research and reflection of the Authors.

Paolo Cestra: conceptualization, writing -original draft, investigation, data curation, formal analysis writing -review & editing. Nicole Miriam Scala: writing—original draft, investigation, formal analysis, writing—review & editing. Eugenio Zaniboni: conceptualization, writing—original draft, methodology, supervision, validation

However, into specific, paragraphs “*Methodology*” and “*Conclusions and recommendation*” must be attributed to Eugenio Zaniboni, paragraph’s “*Introduction*” and “*Discussion*” must be attributed to Nicole Miriam Scala, and paragraphs “*ROADPOL approach*”, “*ROADPOL Pan European Cross Border Operations*”, “*ROADPOL Safety Days*” and “*Pan European Cross Border Operations results*” must be attributed to Paolo Cestra

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Human Research Ethics Review

The investigation is not involving humans but is based only on empirical data.

Data Availability Statement

All the data sources are referred into the article.

Conflicts of interest

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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