



## **Towards a European road safety performance indicator on safe urban areas: the role of Trendline**

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### **Introduction**

Lowering speed limits in urban areas to 30km/h has received a lot of political attention in recent years. More and more cities (e.g. Bilbao, Brussels, Paris, Zurich, Helsinki, Oslo and Amsterdam) have lowered or are (considering) lowering their speed limits, not only for safety reasons, but also to improve livability and to discourage the use of cars and promote more sustainable transport modes simultaneously.

The European [Trendline project](#) brings together EU Member states for collecting and analyzing data related to road safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and for using these within road safety policies. KPIs are indicators that provide information about factors that are associated with crash and injury risks. One of the new experimental KPIs that is being explored in Trendline is the share of 30km/h roads in urban areas. The rationale behind this KPI is that, according to the Safe System approach, speeds should be safe, given the conflicts that can occur at a certain location. In case vulnerable road users are mixed with motorized traffic, speeds of 30km/h or less are considered to be safe<sup>1</sup>.

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this part of the Trendline project is to propose a definition and an associated methodology for a KPI linked to a 30 km/h speed limit in urban areas. A Key Expert Group (KEG) led by SWOV (The Netherlands) and including experts from Belgium, Sweden, Finland, France, Greece, Bulgaria and Portugal was established to assess possible formulations and explore ways to determine the KPI. A number of alternative formulations are examined which

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<sup>1</sup> [Sustainable Road Safety \(swov.nl\)](#)



differ on the inclusion of the total selection of roads and the subset of roads that are considered safe, based on principles of “safe speed limits”.

A first pilot in the Netherlands was conducted at the end of 2023. Pilots in Sweden, Bulgaria, Finland and Lisbon (Portugal) are being conducted in 2024. In these pilots, different types of data sources – national databases, city databases, OpenStreetMap and commercial databases such as data from TomTom – are explored. The objectives of the pilots are 1) to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each type of data source, such as accuracy, completeness, and cost, and 2) to analyze the sensitivity of the KPI for alternative formulations of the KPI.

Based on the results of the pilots, the KEG will propose a common definition for the KPI and will draft methodological guidelines that aim to support countries, regions and cities to calculate the value of the KPI.

### **Results**

From the first pilot, it was concluded that about 70% to 75% of the urban road length in the Netherlands has a speed limit of 30km/h or less. This percentage seems quite high at first glance, given the recent plans in many European cities. However, it should be noted that the Netherlands already started implementing 30 km/h zones at a large scale during the Start Up program “Sustainable Safety” in 1998.

The results of the other pilots will become available in the course of 2024; the available results will be presented at the ICTCT conference.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Following the pilots undertaken it will be possible to: (1) propose a common definition of the KPI on 30 km/h; (2) understand the sensitivity of the KPI for alternative definitions; and (3) assess the advantages and limitations of different data sources. The latter is important, since the quality of databases varies across countries.

The activities and findings of the Trendline KEG on 30 km/h are likely to ease the application of a standardized method in Europe for measuring the share of 30 km/h roads in urban areas, allowing benchmarking at national, regional and city level.