



## IMPROVING TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION IN EUROPE



European Transport Safety Council



The LEARN! project (Leveraging Education to Advance Road safety Now!) by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), Fundación MAPFRE and the Flemish Foundation for Traffic Knowledge (VSV), aims to improve the quality of traffic safety and mobility education in Europe by providing information, tools and resources to education experts as well as policy recommendations to decision makers.

The project focuses in particular on the education of children and youngsters, as they have a right to grow up safely, and traffic safety should therefore be an important and natural part of their everyday life.

This document provides a summary of the LEARN! project's main publications and their key recommendations to improve (the provision of) traffic safety and mobility education.

## 1. DEFINING TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION

For the purpose of the LEARN! project, the following definition has been established:

Traffic safety and mobility education covers all measures that aim at positively influencing traffic behaviour patterns, with an emphasis on:

- Gaining knowledge and understanding of traffic rules and situations;
- Developing and improving skills through training and experience;
- Strengthening and/or changing attitudes and intrinsic motivations towards risk awareness, personal safety and the safety of other road users to contribute towards a safety-minded culture;
- Providing the tools necessary for a well-informed choice of transport mode.

The project concerns education for children and youngsters up to the age of 18 years old, with a focus on primary and secondary education (6 - 17 years old) as that is the target group of the vast majority of educational activities.

Road safety statistics would have justified looking at children and youngsters up to 25 years old, as young road users between 15 and 24 years old are overrepresented in death and serious injury statistics. As many youngsters gain access to powered two wheelers and passenger cars during this period, this would require the inclusion of driver and rider education in this project as well. While vital to the safe

participation of young drivers and riders in traffic, given its specialised focus, driver and rider education is better addressed separately.

Even though the vast majority of educational activities are targeted at children and youngsters, it is nevertheless important for road safety education to be seen as a lifelong learning process, encompassing all age groups from young children to the elderly. Each age group may face different challenges, yet all could benefit from gaining more knowledge, improving their skills and contributing towards a safety-minded culture.

## 2. EDUCATION AS PART OF THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

As the LEARN! project has a complete focus on effective traffic safety and mobility education, this document sets out recommendations to improve the provision of such education in Europe, as one tool to improve the safety of children and youngsters on European roads. However, traffic safety and mobility education should never stand alone, but be combined with other measures that address the underlying factors of road safety.

Collisions, as well as road deaths and injuries, are almost always the result of a combination of factors. Human error is often a weak link, but underlying errors in the design of the traffic system such as poor infrastructure or unclear regulations also play an important role. A “safe system” approach, which focuses on mapping out and eliminating all factors that increase the risk of collisions or increase the severity of collisions, is therefore considered to be international best practice in road safety by the World Health Organisation<sup>1</sup>, the European Commission<sup>2</sup> and the International Transport Forum.<sup>3,4</sup>

In the Safe System approach, the vulnerability of humans is recognised, as is the fact that they make mistakes and do not always adhere to rules. This applies even more to children and youngsters, who also have a number of physical and psychological limitations that can compromise their safety. A safe system takes these characteristics and limitations into account (“safety by design”). This means that the traffic environment must be in line with the road users’ capacities, and with the impulses that humans have by nature.

While the recommendations in this document focus on improving education, one should not forget that improving road safety for children and youngsters should be achieved through a combined set of measures addressing the behaviour of all road users, upgrading the road environment, designing vehicles that better protect both their occupants and those outside the vehicle, enforcing traffic laws, promoting the correct use of appropriate child restraint systems, improving traffic safety and mobility education and awareness raising.

The use of a combined set of measures is especially important given that the safety of children is more often than not in the hands of other road users.

**“Improving road safety for children and youngsters should be achieved through a combined set of measures addressing the behaviour of all road users, upgrading the road environment, designing vehicles that better protect both their occupants and those outside the vehicle, enforcing traffic laws, promoting the correct use of appropriate child restraint systems, improving traffic safety and mobility education and awareness raising.”**

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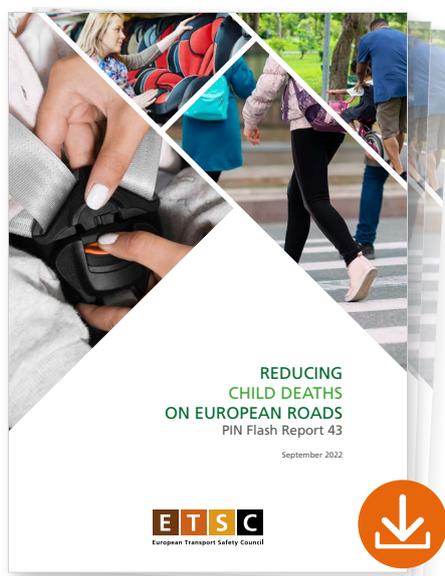
<sup>1</sup> WHO (n.d.), Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. <https://bit.ly/3W5ZGRR>

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2020), EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030. Next steps towards ‘Vision Zero’. <https://bit.ly/3RD97FJ>

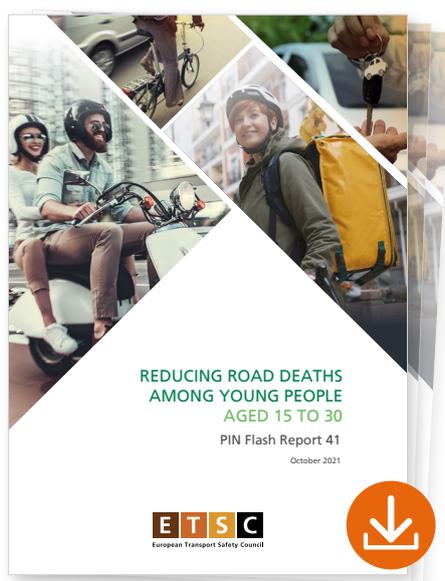
<sup>3</sup> ITF (2008), Towards Zero: Ambitious road safety targets and the safe system approach. <https://bit.ly/3dwfKpp>

<sup>4</sup> ITF (2016), Zero road deaths and serious injuries. Leading a Paradigm Shift to a Safe System. <https://bit.ly/2QF2shw>

Recommendations on improving the safety of children (<14 year olds) can be found in ETSC's PIN Flash Report 43 on reducing child deaths on European roads.<sup>5</sup>



Recommendations on improving the safety of youngsters and young adults can be found in ETSC's PIN Flash Report 41 on reducing road deaths among young people aged 15 to 30.<sup>6</sup>



## RECOMMENDATION TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

- Considering that every child should have the right to grow up in a safe environment, adopt a separate target for reducing road deaths and serious injuries among children and develop accompanying measures.
- Set indicator targets for child road safety in national road safety strategies.
- Provide traffic safety and mobility education as part of the implementation of the Safe System approach, and ensure it is provided as part of the continuum of lifelong learning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU INSTITUTIONS

- Within the framework of the 5th EU Road Safety Action Programme mid-term review, and considering every child should have the right to grow up in a safe environment, adopt a separate target for reducing road deaths and serious injuries among children and develop accompanying measures.

<sup>5</sup> ETSC (2022), PIN Flash Report 43. Reducing child deaths on European roads. <https://bit.ly/PINFlash43>

<sup>6</sup> ETSC (2021), PIN Flash Report 41. Reducing road deaths among young people aged 15 to 30. <https://bit.ly/PINFlash41>

### 3. THE NEED TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION IN EUROPE

A LEARN! report on the status of traffic safety and mobility education in Europe showed that at least some basic road safety education is provided to children in primary education all over Europe.<sup>7</sup> However, this is not the case for other levels of education. For the large majority (81% of states), road safety education is also given at secondary schools, while in a slightly smaller majority (69% of states) it is given in pre-primary education. In tertiary education (colleges, trade schools, universities, etc.), road safety is only given in five European states.

The report showed that there are great differences between the amount of education the children receive as well as the content of the lessons. These differences were significant not only between the countries, but also between the levels of education.

While a majority of countries may provide traffic safety and mobility education in secondary education, the overview revealed that it was generally only sparsely addressed there. In addition, while road safety education generally consists of both theoretical and practical lessons in primary education, in secondary education there is a noticeable shift towards only theoretical lessons.

It is important to underline that the overwhelming majority of European countries have signed the UNECE's Convention on Road Traffic (also known as the "1968 Vienna" Convention) and have thereby committed to provide road safety education.<sup>8</sup>

**"Article 3(5bis). Contracting Parties will take the necessary measures to ensure that road safety education be provided on a systematic and continuous basis, particularly in schools at all levels."**

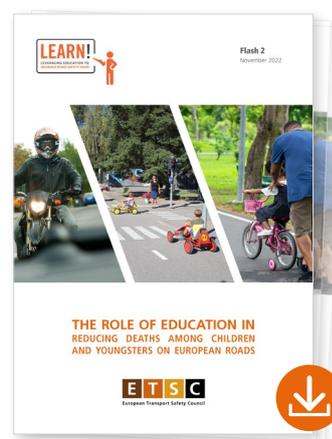
The LEARN! report overview showed that, in practice, most European countries do not follow through on their commitments in full, and they should therefore do more to improve the provision and quality of traffic safety and mobility education, in particular in secondary education.

The second LEARN! Flash report showed that the road safety of children and youngsters has improved considerably in almost all European countries over the past decade.<sup>9</sup>

And yet 809 aged 0 to 17 (inclusive) were killed in the EU in 2020 alone and over 11,000 were killed during the previous decade. Therefore, more needs to be done to improve the road safety of children and youngsters in Europe.

This LEARN! Flash also showed that traffic mortality steeply increases after 13 years of age, with one in every five deaths of youngsters aged 17 results from a collision on the road.

Where on average in the EU, child road deaths represent 6.5% of all child deaths, road deaths of youngsters account for 18% of all deaths for that age group. This furthermore underlines that more should be done to improve the safety of youngsters in particular, and that those children and youngsters in high schools therefore could benefit from receiving road safety lessons structurally as a core part of the curriculum.



<sup>7</sup> ETSC (2019), The Status of Traffic Safety and Mobility Education in Europe. <https://bit.ly/LearnStatus>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Economic Committee for Europe (1968/2006), Convention on Road Traffic (2006 Consolidated Version). <https://bit.ly/2RRMKOb>

Cyprus, Iceland, Ireland, Kosovo and Malta have not signed the Convention on Road Traffic.

<sup>9</sup> ETSC (2022), LEARN! Flash 2 – The Role of Education in Reducing Deaths among Children and Youngsters in Europe. <https://bit.ly/LEARNFlash2>

#### 4. IMPROVING TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)<sup>10</sup>, the EU may only carry out actions which support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States and it has to respect their responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of the education systems.

While this explains why – unlike for vehicle and infrastructure safety – there are no dedicated EU laws on traffic safety and mobility education, it does not mean that the issue cannot be addressed at all at the EU level. The EU has funded several Europe-wide projects in the past, such as the ROSE 25 project in the early 2000s, which developed a good practice guide for the implementation of road safety education in Member States<sup>11</sup>. The EU continues to support educational programmes through the Erasmus+ fund, such as the “Moving Stars” project.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, traffic safety and mobility education are only sparsely addressed by the EU when compared to other areas of road safety. This is reflected in the 2018 European Commission’s Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety, which set out actions to improve road safety, including regulatory measures and the launch of studies.<sup>13</sup> However, for education, it merely sought voluntary commitments from the education sector (for example by making traffic safety and mobility education part of regular curricula) without outlining any specific action points. Similarly, actions to improve the quality and provision of traffic safety and mobility education in Europe have not been included in the European Commission’s EU road safety policy framework 2021-2030.<sup>14</sup>

This underlines that more can and should be done at EU level to improve the quality and provision of traffic safety and mobility education in Europe. The European Parliament recognised this in a resolution setting out their recommendations on the next steps towards “Vision Zero”<sup>15</sup>, in which it requested the European Commission as well as EU Member States to take action with regards to improving traffic safety and mobility education.

Firstly, the European Parliament has asked the European Commission to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) on the provision of traffic safety and mobility education in the Member States, similar to how the European Commission has already set out KPIs for other road safety issues, such as speeding, safety belt and child restraint usage as well as drink-driving and distracted driving.

Secondly, the European Parliament has requested the European Commission to develop EU tools to design, implement and evaluate traffic safety and mobility education. The importance of this was recognised by the previously mentioned EU-funded ROSE project in the early 2000s, which stated that “a structured exchange on [road safety education] RSE practices at European level could lead to significant value added for RSE practitioners across EU Member States. Common understanding of evaluation designs will lead to increasingly comparable results of RSE evaluations. This could deepen the knowledge about differences in programme outcomes due to socio-cultural differences between countries. The results would provide an increased understanding of the actual effects of strategies and mechanisms in RSE interventions.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> European Union (2012), Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). <https://bit.ly/TFEU2012>

<sup>11</sup> ROSE25 (2005), Booklet Good Practice Guide On Road Safety Education. <https://bit.ly/2GeDjgi>

<sup>12</sup> More information on the Moving Stars project is available on the project website: [www.movingstars.eu](http://www.movingstars.eu)

<sup>13</sup> European Commission (2018), Europe On The Move - Sustainable Mobility for Europe: safe, connected and clean. Annex I. <https://bit.ly/2RtiqZN>

<sup>14</sup> European Commission (2020), EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030. Next steps towards ‘Vision Zero’. <https://bit.ly/3RD97FJ>

<sup>15</sup> European Parliament (2021), European Parliament resolution of 6 October 2021 on the EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 – Recommendations on next steps towards ‘Vision Zero’. (2021/2014(INI)). <https://bit.ly/3ARr3GZ>

<sup>16</sup> ROSE25 (2005), Booklet Good Practice Guide On Road Safety Education, p. 24. <https://bit.ly/2GeDjgi>

Based on extensive discussions and deliberation by the LEARN! Expert Panel, consisting of some of Europe's leading experts on traffic safety and mobility education, the LEARN! project has developed the LEARN! Key Principles<sup>17</sup> and the LEARN! Manual<sup>18</sup>, which could serve as starting points for the development of, respectively, the EU KPIs and EU tools as requested by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament furthermore encouraged all EU "Member States to ensure the provision of high-quality road safety education, which should begin at school and form part of continued lifelong learning".

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU INSTITUTIONS

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- Develop EU tools to design, implement and evaluate traffic safety and mobility education.
- Enable a structured exchange on traffic safety and mobility education practices at European level, e.g. by organising such structural exchange or by funding existing structures of exchange.
- Continue providing funds for projects on traffic safety and mobility education through EU funds such as Erasmus+.

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<sup>17</sup> ETSC (2020), The LEARN! Key Principles for Traffic Safety and Mobility Education. <https://bit.ly/LearnKeyPrinciples>

<sup>18</sup> ETSC (2021), The LEARN! Manual for Developing and Evaluating Traffic Safety and Mobility Education Activities. <https://bit.ly/learn-manual>



## 5. IMPROVING TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION AT NATIONAL, LOCAL AND SCHOOL LEVELS

In order to improve the quality and provision of traffic safety and mobility education in European countries, the LEARN! Expert Panel drew up the LEARN! Key Principles: 17 recommendations that should be implemented in all European countries in order to ensure that everyone – especially children and youngsters – receives high-quality traffic safety and mobility education.<sup>19</sup>

These recommendations are, in the first instance, aimed at policymakers at the national, regional and local levels. However, most of the recommendations are directly applicable to schools and therefore head teachers and (traffic contact) teachers can easily use them in their schools as well.

The 17 Key Principles are set out in greater detail in the report, where they are also accompanied by best practice examples illustrating how they can be applied in practice. The principles are categorised in five key groups.

The first group of recommendations focus on the **right to education**. Traffic safety and mobility education is a lifelong process and everyone, regardless of age, should therefore have access. Road safety education is especially important for children and youngsters up to the age of 18 years old at kindergartens and schools, in order to learn what is safe and what is hazardous and to grow up to become safe and responsible road users.

Traffic safety and mobility education should therefore be integrated into the curricula for schools at all levels as well as kindergartens. Specific goals should be set for traffic safety and mobility education, notably at the national level, as minimum learning requirements. And, in order to achieve the educational goals, a specific number of teaching hours should be dedicated to traffic safety and mobility every year, and

sufficient resources – in terms of financial, time and human resources – should be allocated at all levels (from national to local to school budgets) to allow for sufficient possibilities to give lessons on this subject.

The second group of recommendations focus on **engaging and supporting schools and teachers**. The management of schools and kindergartens should be encouraged by national and local policymakers to implement national policies in their schools, ensure that the pupils are educated in road safety, that they develop and implement a traffic safety and mobility policy and that they enable support for teachers on the topic. Schools should furthermore appoint a teacher that is responsible for and acts as the central point of contact for the school's traffic safety and mobility education.

The focus of the third group of recommendations is **ensuring high-quality education**. Traffic safety and mobility education should not only be about gaining knowledge and understanding of traffic rules, but also about developing and improving skills, as well as strengthening and changing attitudes and motivations. The education should be: kept up to date (with regards to both mobility and pedagogical trends); quality standards should be used; evaluations should be a central part of it, and it should allow for assessments to ensure that pupils have gained the right knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes.

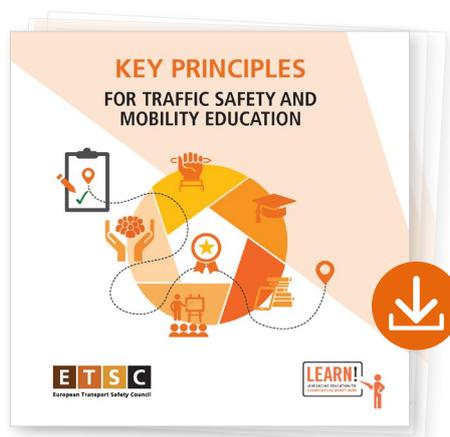
It is important that high-quality education is ensured, as the principle "there is no harm in trying" should not be applied to traffic safety education. Projects that are poorly designed can have an adverse effect, and there have been projects that, despite their best intentions, actually seem to have increased the safety risks and the unsafe behaviour of its participants. Moreover, schools do not have unlimited resources in both financial budget and time. And their money and time is better spent on well-designed, tested and evaluated material.<sup>20</sup> (See the next section on improving traffic safety and mobility education at activity level).

<sup>19</sup> ETSC (2020), The LEARN! Key Principles for Traffic Safety and Mobility Education. <https://bit.ly/LearnKeyPrinciples>

<sup>20</sup> SWOV (2017), Factsheet Verkeerseducatie. <https://bit.ly/3c7tFGb>

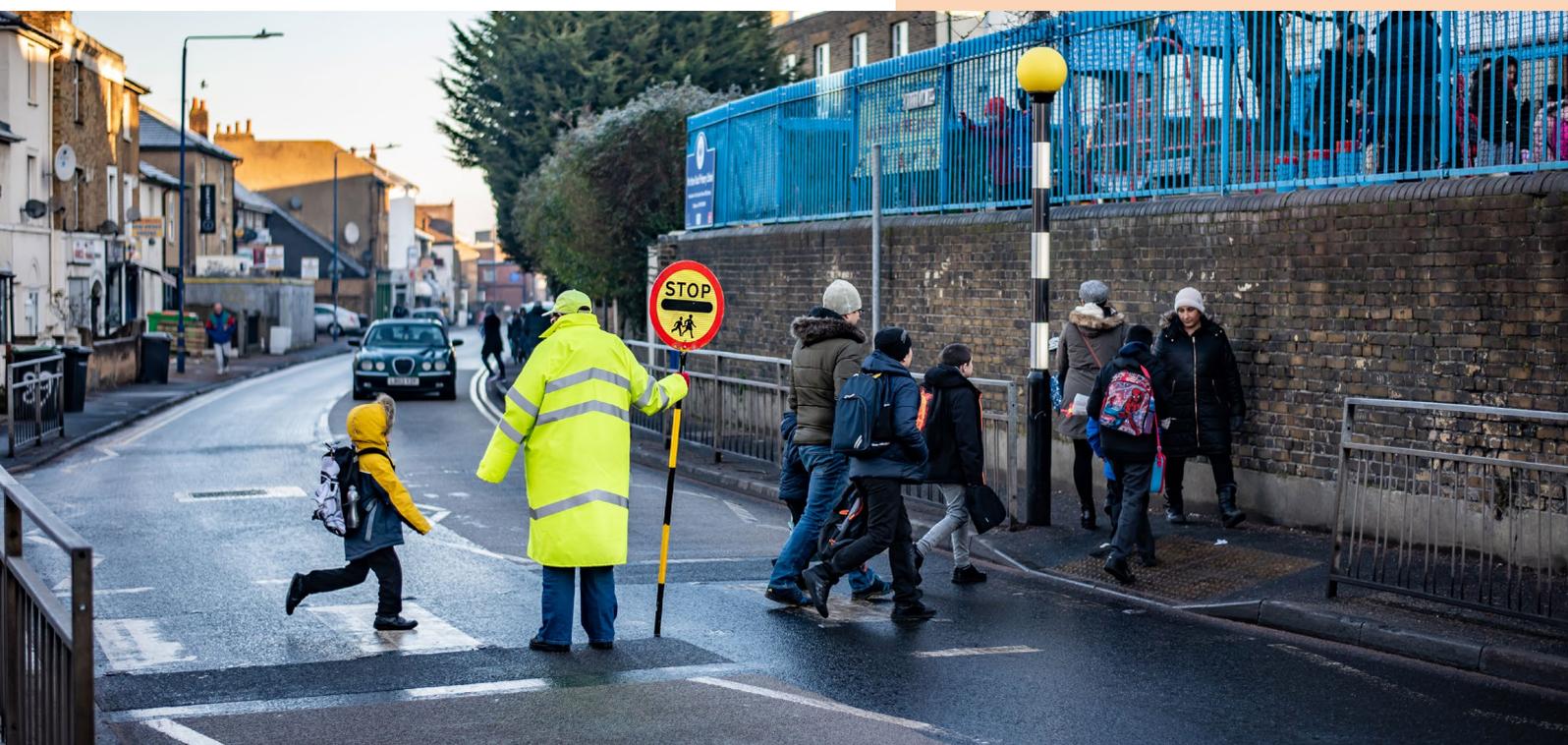
The fourth group of recommendations focus on **facilitating the framework conditions** for traffic safety and mobility education. These recommendations underline that student teachers should be educated about giving road safety lessons during their training to become a teacher, that national and local authorities should follow up with schools to ensure that traffic safety and mobility education is given, and that road safety lessons can also be given as part of other subjects (such as maths and physics), especially in secondary schools.

And finally, in line with the safe system approach, the LEARN! Key Principles recommend **involving pupils, students, parents and all relevant stakeholders**. Traffic safety and mobility are shared responsibilities and all relevant stakeholders should therefore be involved in education related to this topic.



## RECOMMENDATION TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND SCHOOLS

- Implement the 17 LEARN! Key Principles.
- Ensure, in particular, that high-quality traffic safety and mobility education is not only given at primary schools but also at secondary schools.



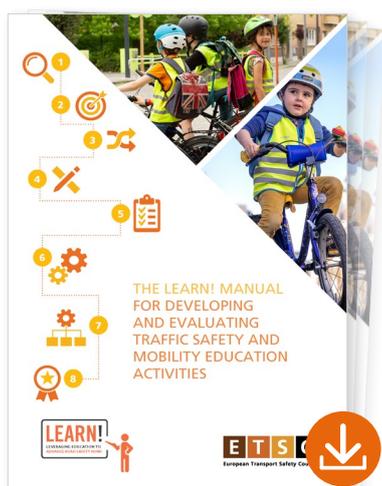
## 6. IMPROVING TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MOBILITY EDUCATION AT ACTIVITY LEVEL

The quality of traffic safety and mobility education materials can vary greatly. However, as mentioned previously, it is important that high-quality educational material is used to teach children and youngsters about traffic safety and mobility, given that schools only have limited resources available, and given that poorly designed material can unintentionally have adverse effects. The same quality standards that are expected for maths, languages and other subjects taught in schools should be applied to traffic safety and mobility education material as well.

The LEARN! Manual provides a common methodology for the development, testing, implementation and evaluation of material for traffic safety and mobility education.<sup>21</sup> It sets out – in an accessible way – recommendations, criteria and guidelines that should ensure qualitatively sound educational activities as well as the incorporation and implementation of the LEARN! Key Principles on ensuring high quality education.

The LEARN! Manual consists of three parts. The first part contains the guidelines, which set out the key requirements for each of the Manual's eight steps (see box). The second part is the handbook, which provides detailed information and explanations of the steps as well as additional aspects to consider. And finally, the third part shows how the manual's model can be used by providing best practice examples from across Europe.

Although primarily aimed at developers of educational material, the LEARN! Manual can also prove useful to ministries, authorities, agencies and organisations when deciding on which (proposals for) activities and projects to fund, as the guidelines reflect a list of minimum criteria that should be included or be given thought to, in order to ensure qualitatively sound material. In a similar way, the LEARN! Manual can also be useful for head teachers, traffic contact teachers and regular teachers when they select which material to use or purchase.



### THE EIGHT STEPS OF THE LEARN! MANUAL'S MODEL

The starting point is an analysis of the problem and the possible solutions (Step 1), based on which the objectives for the activity can be specified (Step 2). The outcomes of these steps, combined with insights from behavioural change models (Step 3), will help designing the activity (Step 4). Pre-testing the activity (Step 5), and adapting the design, if necessary, is essential before starting the actual production (Step 6) and subsequent implementation (Step 7). Evaluating the activity (Step 8) will show whether the objectives for the activity were achieved or not, and which elements have contributed to these results, following which a final report can be written on the results and the lessons learnt during the activity.

The model is meant to be iterative, meaning that developers have to go back and forth between the different sections and steps if and when necessary. For example, the results of pre-testing the activity may require developers to go back to the design step, in order to implement changes based on the lessons learnt from pre-testing. Throughout the handbook, recommendations are included on when aspects of 'later' steps should already be considered, or when the results of a step may require an earlier step to be revisited.

<sup>21</sup> ETSC (2021), The LEARN! Manual for Developing and Evaluating Traffic Safety and Mobility Education Activities. <https://bit.ly/learn-manual>

## RECOMMENDATION TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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- Use the LEARN! Manual's guidelines as a tool when deciding on which (proposals for) activities and projects to fund or purchase.

## RECOMMENDATION TO SCHOOLS

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- Use the LEARN! Manual's guidelines as a tool when deciding on which activities and projects to use or purchase.

## RECOMMENDATION TO DEVELOPERS OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

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- Use the LEARN! Manual when developing, testing, implementing and evaluating educational material on traffic safety and mobility.



All the project's resources are freely available on the LEARN! website at:

[www.trafficsafetyeducation.eu](http://www.trafficsafetyeducation.eu)



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[www.trafficsafetyeducation.eu](http://www.trafficsafetyeducation.eu)

## LEARN! – Improving Traffic Safety and Mobility Education In Europe

Author: Frank Mütze

Photos: Liikenneturva / Johanna Kannasmaa, Kaisa Tanskanen & Nina Mönkkönen

### Expert Panel

ETSC, Fundación MAPFRE and VSV would like to thank the following experts for providing invaluable guidance and support for this project:

Eva Aigner-Breuss, Anita Eichhorn & Daniela Knowles, [Road Safety Board \(KFV\)](#), Austria

Alain Areal, [Prevenção Rodoviária Portuguesa \(PRP\)](#), Portugal

Jesús Monclús González & Susana de la Antonia Perez, [Fundación MAPFRE](#), Spain

Vassiliki Danelli-Mylona & Evangelos Makris, [Road Safety Institute Panos Mylonas](#), Greece

Lise Heiner Schmidt, [Danish Road Safety Council \(Rådet for Sikker Trafik\)](#), Denmark

Wilma Slinger, [CROW-KpVV](#), the Netherlands

Debbie Nicol, [Road Safety Scotland - Transport Scotland](#), United Kingdom

Kristin Eli Strømme, [Norwegian Council for Road Safety \(Trygg Trafikk\)](#), Norway

Satu Tuomikoski, [Finnish Road Safety Council \(Liikenneturva\)](#), Finland

Alena Danková, [Transport Research Center \(CDV\)](#), Czech Republic

Werner de Dobbeleer, [Flemish Foundation for Traffic Knowledge \(VSV\)](#), Belgium

### For more information

European Transport Safety Council

20 Avenue des Celtes

B-1040 Brussels

Tel: +32 2 230 4106

[frank.mutze@etsc.eu](mailto:frank.mutze@etsc.eu)

[www.etsc.eu](http://www.etsc.eu)

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