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Vision Zero goes global.

Vision Zero is a policy for traffic safety. The overall idea is not only a long term vision for the eradication of deaths and serious injury, but also an approach to safety philosophy, responsibility sharing and driving forces for change.

The long term target is based on ethical standpoint rather than an economical balance between mobility, safety and the benefits of investments into safety. With an ethical standpoint, the road transport system adopts principles from other sectors of the society where there are risks associated to human life and health. The workplace is a good example where there is no room for trading off safety to the economical bottom line. In the road transport system, unlike the other transport modes, this has not been the tradition, often with the underlining (false) argument that it would be too costly to go too far in safety.

Traffic safety has been defined as maintain human life and health, not to eradicate all crashes or injuries. This is also an example where the policy is based on human values rather than economical values.

The safety philosophy in VZ is that the system design and functionality must absorb human error to an extent where they don't lead to health losses. This is a very challenging requirement, as the current system only to a minor degree fulfill this kind of approach. The dominating part of the system is based on that the user does not make any mistakes or violations, and only a small mistake might lead to death or serious injury. Many roads are built in a way that there is only a 1-2 m wide gap between cars in opposite directions with a relative velocity of 50 m/s (180 km/h). This is of course a very unstable situation.

The responsibility of the safety in VZ shifts to a divided responsibility. The user is responsible for following basic rules, while the providers of the system are responsible for the design and operation, and to take the user's ability and limitations into account. While this is still a policy, the meaning is that regulations and standards in the long run should accommodate this principle.

In recent days, the major driving force for change was the benefit of the community of improved safety, i.e. the collective benefit, often expressed in economic terms. In VZ, it is rather the needs and demands from each citizen that is the driving force. In the Tylösand Declaration, that was undersigned by many in 2007, it is expressed as a "right of the citizen" to safe traffic, and that it is expected that each provider of the road transport system to work systematically to deliver this "right".

After a period of a rather lukewarm attitude to VZ across the globe, many jurisdictions have now VZ (or safe System or Toward Zero) as the guiding policy. Today, The EU COM has set up a long term target that EU should be "close to zero" by 2050. Also WHO, OECD and others recommend VZ. What is equally interesting and positive is that some car manufacturers have VZ as their vision, and Volvo Cars have the most far reaching target of all stakeholders. By 2020, no one should be killed or seriously injured in a Volvo car.

ISO will by the end of the year (hopefully) launch the new ISO 39001, a management standard for traffic safety, where it is said explicitly that the standard is only for organizations

that wish to eliminate death and serious injury. This standard can in the long run have dramatic effects on products and services in the transport sector, as well as the use of the system.

In reality, the consequences of VZ are developing over time. In Sweden, there are a number of initiatives and actions that can be traced back to VZ, but it should be noted, that some of these actions could have taken place without an ambitious policy. On the whole, the momentum built up by VZ has been invaluable. Road design, speed limit system and the concentration on working with vehicle safety are all directly linked to VZ, as VZ as a consequence leads to a system's approach where the components of the system must be seen together. In doing so, models have been developed to understand how they are interrelated.

The models developed for a system's approach have now been used to project if and how we can reach another halving of the road deaths until 2020. While this very advanced analysis show that this is possible, it has also shown that the future challenges are quite different from the historical ones. Using historical data seems in the light of the new analyses not only inadequate but also directly misleading.

In summary, VZ is now really a global policy, and not only an issue for the national policies, but also for the private sector. This is indeed very promising.