

The European Road Safety Charter

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The European Road Safety Charter was launched by the European Commission in 2004 as part of the third European Road Safety Action Programme. The Action Programme called for coordinated action at local, regional, national and European levels and, among other, for the creation of a European Road Safety Charter. Since then, significant progress in terms of road safety has been made, and European roads are still the safest in the world.

During these years, the Charter has created a community of members (companies, automobile clubs, associations, research institutes, universities, NGOs and schools – to name but a few –). They have a significant impact in the different sectors of society, generating a network to foster exchanges of best practice and expanding progressively throughout Europe. The Charter's strengths lie in its capacity to incorporate smaller communities in its EU-wide scope, adding value to their work through the provision of an international knowledge exchange platform. It provides opportunities for knowledge sharing, exchange of ideas and mutual learning. These members take specific, measurable actions in their areas of responsibility with the aim of contributing to the common goal of improved road safety in Europe. Some of these best practices have been awarded and recognised by the European Commission as clear examples where the whole local community collaborates, focussing on safe cycling as an integral part of the future mobility system: planning and designing for a safe interaction between road users.

The Romanian Școala Gimnazială Tompa László received a European Award for Excellence in Road Safety in 2019 and has 20 years' experience in educating children to behave safely and smartly in different traffic situations. The focus of activities is on learning traffic rules, both on the roads and on pavements. Since 2000, the school has organised different courses and road safety related competitions. Classes are given in collaboration with local police officers. Other activities include afterschool lessons and targeted road safety days, as well as theoretical tests and practical lessons. The project has had a significant impact despite limited resources, covering different kinds of activities related to the safety of children. The project is based on voluntary participation from the police to encourage independent and responsible behaviour, stemming from a better understanding of the importance of traffic rules and their enforcement.

The Hungarian Institute for Transport Sciences - KTI received an Award in 2018. Two-wheelers (bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles) are more and more common in traffic in Hungary. They are increasingly involved in accidents too. The Two-Wheelers School programme of the Hungarian Institute for Transport Sciences aims to stop and change this trend. Based on the concept of life-long learning, it provides interactive training from experienced driving instructors. By simulating dangerous situations, students put into practice what they have learnt on accident avoidance. The project was rewarded for its professional educational approach: it is based on scientific accident analysis and developed with the help of experienced trainers. An additional merit of the programme is that while covering an entire country, it is always adapted to local circumstances so that students can get lifelike and helpful advice to avoid accidents in their everyday life.

The Department for Education of the Spanish city of Narón developed an experimental series of measures in local schools, including as much as possible the whole community of the city. The project was rewarded by the European Commission in 2018 for its innovative character, using participatory methods to improve the safety on the roads of a whole community. The main strength of the project and the guarantee of its sustainability is a community-based network, where several generations are working together for safer roads. It is also worth noting the positive environmental impact of the project reducing both CO₂ emissions and noise.

These are clear examples where the European Road Safety Charter is supporting the exchange and dissemination of good practices, engaging civil society to take real action, and focussing on safe cycling as an integral part of the future mobility system. The new call for good practices will be opened in June, inviting the road safety community to share their knowledge, experiences and lessons learned with other stakeholders in civil society. Award winners will be announced in November 2021.