Thursday, July 23, 2020

Doctors For Road Safety (D4RS) statement in reaction to figures issued by the European Commission of the European Union (EU)

D4RS sadly takes note of the recent spate of road traffic accidents, especially those which have resulted in fatalities and would like to offer sincere condolences to the victim's families. Each loss is a tragedy and further strengthens the resolve of D4RS to do our utmost to continue with our work to avoid such terrible events.

The European Commission recently released statistics regarding EU member states' road safety record (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1003). Malta ranks 9th with respect to the number of deaths from road traffic accidents per million citizens. These statistics show that in 2019 there were 22800 deaths on EU roads. Although deaths on Maltese roads are below the EU average, D4RS notes with concern that only Malta and the Netherlands registered an increase in deaths on their roads in the last year as compared to 2010. In contrast, the EU overall registered a 23% decrease in deaths from road traffic accidents compared to 2010. Despite Malta having factors such as short driving distances and lack of highways in its favour with respect to risks for fatalities on the roads, the number of road traffic fatalities locally is significantly higher than in countries such as Sweden (which has been classified as the country with the safest roads in the union).

D4RS acknowledges the substantial improvement on Maltese road infrastructure over the past years and the reduction in drink-driving limit. Additionally, development in the medical field, with more training for healthcare workers and more investment in pre-hospital care has led to faster response times. Despite these advances, one cannot be satisfied with the trend of deaths on our roads, especially when the goal of the EU is to have 50% fewer deaths by 2030. Law enforcement on the road remains poor, leading to infringements of certain road traffic regulations being commonplace.

It is also important to note that the number of fatalities on the roads is not the only metric that should be considered when assessing road safety in a country. The number of road traffic accidents resulting in injuries, particularly grievous injuries, should also be considered. Accidents resulting in grievous injuries often have life-changing consequences for the road users involved due to the medical complications such as fractures, organ damage and amputations that they suffer in addition to the pain and psychological trauma caused by the crash. In 2019, there were 305 accidents on Maltese roads that resulted in grievous injuries.

It is imperative that strategies which address education and continue improving infrastructure, are coupled with a robust enforcement strategy. Malta's own Road safety strategy in 2014 had

aimed for a 50% reduction of fatalities by 2024. We are still a long way off from this result but could we be still in time?

D4RS is an NGO composed of doctors whose main aim is to minimise deaths and serious injuries on Maltese roads.

Dikjarazzjoni tat-Tobba għas-Sigurta fit-Toroq (D4RS) b'reazzjoni għaċ-ċifri maħruġa mil-Kummissjoni Ewropeja tal-Unjoni Ewropeja (UE)

D4RS b'dispjaċir tinnota is-serje riċenti ta' inċidenti tat-traffiku, speċjalment dawk illi kienu fatali, u tixtieq toffri l-kondoljanzi sinċieri lil-familji tal-vittmi. Kull telfa hija traġedja li ssaħħaħ l-impenn tagħna sabiex bħala D4RS inkomplu naħdmu sabiex dawn l-inċidenti terribbli jiġu evitati.

Il-Kummissjoni Ewropeja dan l-aħħar ippublikat statistika dwar ir-rekord tal-pajjizi membri tal-UE fuq is-sigurta' fit-toroq (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1003). Malta tikklassifika fid-disa' l-aħjar post fir-rigward tal-għadd ta' mwiet minn inċidenti tat-traffiku għal kull miljun ċittadin. Din l-istatistika turi li fl-2019 kien hemm 22800 mewta fit-toroq tal-UE.

Għalkemm l-imwiet fit-toroq Maltin huma taħt il-medja tal-UE, D4RS tinnota bi tħassib li Malta u l-Olanda biss irreġistraw żieda fl-imwiet fit-toroq tagħhom fl-aħħar sena meta mqabbla mal-2010. B'kuntrast ma' dan, l-UE ġeneralment irreġistrat tnaqqis ta' 23 % fl-imwiet minn aċċidenti tat-traffiku fit-toroq meta mqabbla mal-2010. Minkejja li Malta għandha fatturi bħal distanzi qosra tas-sewqan u nuqqas ta' awtostradi favur tagħha fir-rigward tar-riskji għall-fatalitajiet fit-toroq, in-numru ta' fatalitajiet tat-traffiku fit-toroq lokalment huwa ogħla b'mod sinifikanti meta mqabbel ma pajjiżi bħall-Iżvezja (li ġie kklassifikat bħala l-pajjiż bl-aktar toroq siguri fl-unjoni).

D4RS tirrikonoxxi t-titjib sostanzjali fl-infrastruttura tat-toroq Maltija matul dawn l-aħħar snin u t-tnaqqis fil-limitu ta' alcohol permess waqt sewqan. Barra minn hekk, l-iżvilupp fil-qasam mediku, b'aktar taħriġ għall-ħaddiema fil-qasam tal-kura tas-saħħa u aktar investiment fil-kura ta' pazjenti qabel ma jaslu l-sptar, wassal għal ħinijiet ta' rispons aktar mgħaġġla. Minkejja dawn l-avvanzi, wieħed ma jistax jkun ssodisfat bit-tendenza tal-imwiet fit-toroq tagħna, speċjalment meta l-għan tal-UE huwa li jkollha 50% inqas imwiet fit-toroq Ewropej sal-2030. L-infurzar tal-liġi fit-triq għadu fqir, u dan iwassal biex il-ksur ta' ċerti regolamenti tat-traffiku fit-toroq jibqa' komuni.

Huwa importanti wkoll li wieħed jinnota li n-numru ta' fatalitajiet fit-toroq mhuwiex l-uniku metrika li għandha tiġi kkunsidrata meta tiġi vvalutata s-sikurezza fit-toroq f'pajjiż. Għandu jiġi kkunsidrat ukoll l-għadd ta' inċidenti tat-traffiku li jirriżultaw f'korrimenti, b'mod partikolari korrimenti gravi. Inċidenti li jirriżultaw f'korrimenti gravi, ħafna drabi jkollhom konsegwenzi li jibdlu l-ħajja għall-utenti tat-triq involuti minħabba l-kumplikazzjonijiet mediċi bħal ksur, ħsara

fl-organi u amputazzjonijiet li jsofru, flimkien mal-uġigħ u trawma psikoloġika kkawżati mill-ħabta. Fl-2019, kien hemm 305 inċident fit-toroq Maltin li rriżultaw f'korrimenti gravi.

Huwa imperattiv illi strategiji li jindirizzaw l-edukazzjoni u jkomplu jtejbu l-infrastruttura, ikunu akkumpanjati minn strategija ta' infurzar robusta. Malta immirat lejn tnaqqis ta 50% ta' mwiet fit-toroq sal-2024 fl-iStrateġija tas-Sigurta fit-Toroq ippublikata fl-2014. Għadna l-bogħod ħafna minn dan ir-riżultat imma nistqgħu nilħquh fil-ħin?

Id-D4RS hija NGO magħmula minn tobba li l-għan ewlieni tagħhom huwa li jitnaqqsu l-imwiet u korrimenti serji fit-toroq Maltin.

Mr Ray Gatt President

Dr Tonio Piscopo Segretarju