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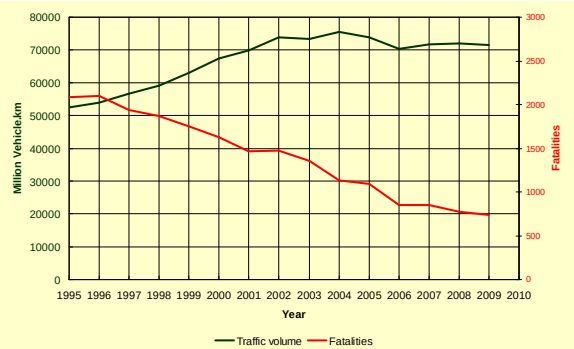
The contribution of road infrastructure safety interventions to registered safety improvements in the last decade in Portugal.

Road safety levels in Portugal have improved significantly in the last ten years, allowing the country to almost reach the EC safety target of halving the number of fatal victims between 2001 and 2010. The development of yearly crash related data shows similar improvements in other road safety areas, besides the number of fatalities (for instance the number of severe injuries was reduced by 54%). Consistent reductions in the number of accidents and related injuries have been registered in Portugal since 1995. During these 15 years, the number of injury accidents was reduced by 27%, fatalities diminished 64% and serious injuries were reduced by 77%, while, at the same time, overall travelled distance increased 36%.



Developments in the number of fatalities and traffic volume in Portugal 1995-2010

Several measures contributed to these developments, namely, at the strategic level, the authorization of the National Road Network plan in 1995, later revised in 2000, which contemplated the modernization of the trunk road network, including the construction of 3000 km of motorways; and the implementation of the national Road Safety Plan 2003-2010, which made possible the integration of road safety interventions and effective coordination of safety related activities by all national stakeholders. The Road Safety Plans set ambitious targets (50% reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries by 2010, in relation to the average numbers of 1998-2000) which, due to strong political backing during its initial stages, were all met. In 2008 a Road Safety Strategy was approved, targeting a 32% reduction in the number of fatalities by 2015 (based in numbers from 2006).

Despite its general nature, improvements in road safety were not uniform across the country and road user categories. For instance, fatalities in urban areas were reduced by 45%, while in interurban roads they were reduced by 60%. Infrastructure developments played a significant role in these differences, as new motorway construction and application of low-cost engineering measures in black spots were more easily financed than the application of traffic calming schemes on existing interurban roads passing

through small villages or the implementation of sustainable mobility practices in urban areas.

In this presentation recent safety interventions in the Portuguese road infrastructure are reviewed, that contributed to the mentioned improvements, both at the central government and the municipal (or local) levels. As reported, these interventions were not restricted to road environment hardware, but reached technical recommendations and procedures as well.