

RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES ON TRAFFIC SAFETY IN REPUBLIC OF SERBIA FROM 2002 TO 2006 YEAR

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Abstract: *The changes of basic parameters of traffic safety during the period of sanctions and other irregular impacts in Serbia from 1991 to 2006 are analyzed in this paper. In particular, the changes following the stabilization of social situation in the country were analyzed. The period of sharp increase of the number of accidents and their consequences in the Republic of Serbia was stopped in 2001 and 2002 with the high increase of fines and set of activities which followed this increase. Especially good results in view of the reduction of traffic accidents and their consequences were achieved in 2002. Since the system of measures has not been refreshed since 2002, the number of accidents and casualties has again started to increase after 2002.*

KEY WORDS: TRAFFIC SAFETY, IRREGULAR IMPACTS, SIGNIFICANCE OF FINE INCREASE, "SHOCK THERAPY".

1. INTRODUCTION

Serbia belongs to the group of transitional countries which have basically accepted that traffic safety can be managed but still haven't managed to establish an adequate management system. National body for traffic safety foreseen in the current Law is passivated and does not have the possibility of actual management of the state of the affairs.

The changes of the number of accidents and casualties during economic crisis and sanctions are analyzed in the paper, as well as the sharp decrease of the number of fatalities after the stabilization of the situation. The impact of organized activities of traffic safety institutions on the number of traffic accidents and casualties has also been investigated.

The objective of this paper is to analyze activities and results of establishing a protection system in traffic safety as opposed to the changes in the number of accidents and casualties. Special analysis about the change of fines and the number of detected offences was performed, compared to the changes in the number of accidents with casualties and the number of fatalities.

The research included the territory of the Republic of Serbia without the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. The area of about 88 thousand km² was observed,

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which covers the road network in the total length of about 48 thousand km, with the population of about 7.5 million, with 1.6 million of registered motor vehicles and about 300 thousand other motor-driven vehicles (tractors, motor driven cycles, agricultural vehicles, etc.).

The condition in extremely atypical periods from 1991 to 2006 was analyzed, namely:

- from 1991 to 1999, when Yugoslavia was disintegrated, war in the surroundings, bombing of Serbia, sanctions and other irregular impacts occurred,
- during 2000 and 2001, when the stabilization of the social situation began, but the country still did not focus on traffic safety in a more serious manner,
- from 2002 to 2006, when the country's social and economic situation started with stabilization. Within this period, the preparation and implementation of new regulations on road traffic safety started.

Official data on traffic accidents and results from relevant researches conducted in Serbia were used in this paper. Although the research points at the fact that certain conclusions can be generalized, it should be taken into account that numerous non-traffic impacts have made the identification of regularities and generalization of results more difficult.

2. LEGAL AND ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The most important regulations on traffic safety in Serbia were passed during the 1980s, in a different social, technical and technological atmosphere. There are three basic groups of problems when enforcing these laws: 1) certain provisions are not compliant to the changes in the society (changes in property relations and introduction of market economy), 2) certain provisions are technically and technologically overcome, 3) certain very important provisions do not follow contemporary achievements and needs in traffic safety.

During 2002, a complex process of preparing new regulations for traffic safety started, which is still not finalized. There are no traffic safety strategy or other background strategic documents on the national level. Having in mind the abovementioned, the enforcement of certain regulations is impeded, which has a negative impact on the establishment of traffic safety management process. Stable funding of traffic safety is not established also.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES

During the observed period from 1991 to 2006, basic social, economic and traffic conditions changed, there were certain irregular impacts and inconsistent implementation of different activities. Therefore, a stable trend in the development cannot be spotted. Rather than that, we can talk about different, prominent changes caused by the changes in exposure and exterior impacts. In the period up to 1993, the number decreased (reduced exposure because of sanctions and other impacts), since 1993 to 1997 it rose fast (increased exposure because of the stabilization of the national currency), and decreased from 1997 to 1999 (repeated sanctions and bombing of Serbia). After the bombing the increase continued again in 2000 and 2001 (stabilization

of the situation in the country, lifting of all sanctions towards Serbia, significant increase of exposure, etc.).

During the period 2002-2006, there were no big oscillations. However, the number of accidents and fatalities increased, which can be interpreted as constant increase of exposure and resistance of the system to the same set of measures and activities ("system resistance").

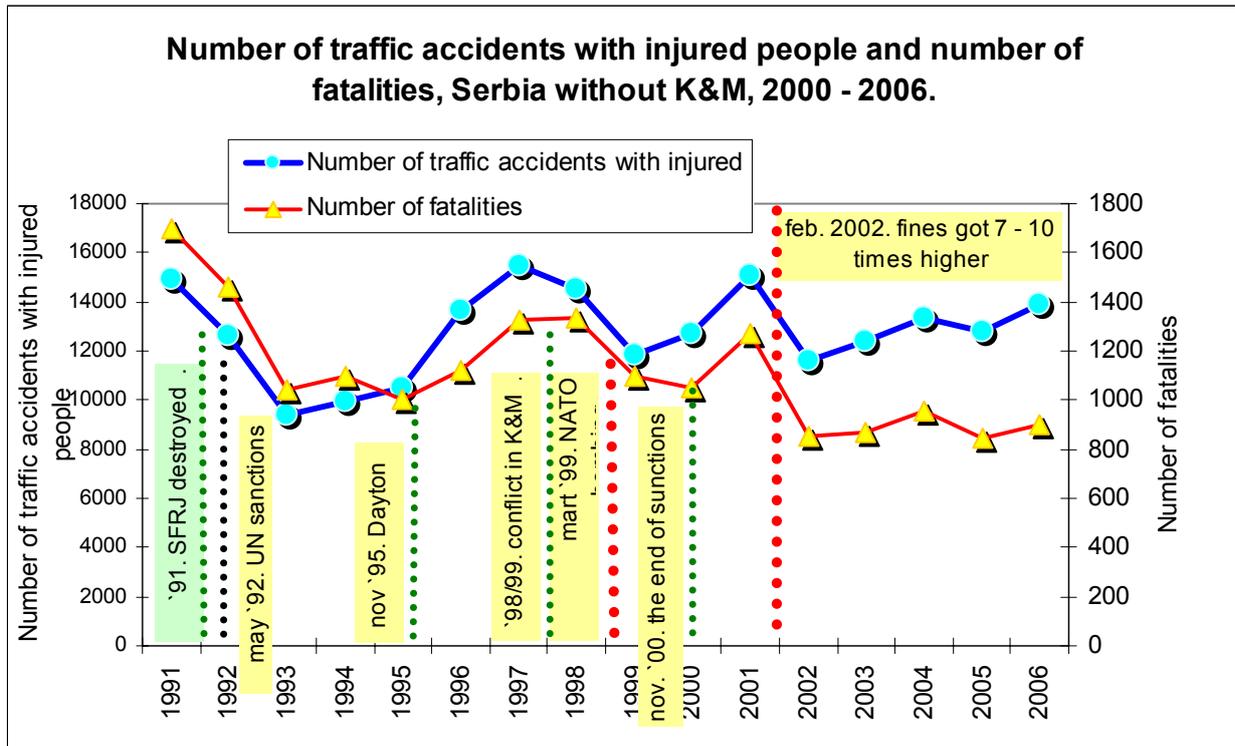


Diagram 1. Total number of traffic accidents with casualties and the number of fatalities in these accidents (Republic of Serbia without the AP K&M, period 1991-2006)

Based on the diagram 1, it can be noticed that in 2002 sharp decrease of the number of accidents and their consequences occurred, despite the increase of exposure. Within one year, the number of fatalities decreased by 421 (-33%), namely, from 1,275 (in 2001) to 847 (in 2002). Also the number of the injured decreased (-26%), as well as the number of accidents with casualties (-23%) and the total number of accidents (-15%). Such a significant decrease is interpreted as significant rising of fines along with a slight increase of the number of detected offences. Namely, at the beginning of 2002, the fines were raised 7 to 10 times, which was followed by an adequate campaign. In continuation, the number of accidents and fatalities slightly increased.

During the five-year period (from 2002 to 2006), there were 296,064 accidents in total in Serbia, out of which 64,039 were accidents with casualties. In these accidents 83,547 were injured and 4,417 were killed. Overall number of fatalities was smaller by about 3,635 persons, and the number of injured by 74,568 persons, compared to the forecasted values based on the established tendencies until 2001.

The circumstances ("causes") of accident occurrence in 2006 were similar to previous years. Driving too fast and unadjusted speed appear as the most common circumstance

for the occurrence of accidents (about 35%), and especially of accidents with fatalities (almost 60 %).

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES COMPARED TO THE NUMBER OF DETECTED OFFENCES DURING THE PERIOD 2000 – 2006

So, after an extremely unstable period, general situation in Serbia stabilized from 2000. Therefore, the period after 2000 was analyzed. Diagram 2 shows the number of detected offences in the period from 2000 to 2006 proportionate to police enforcement in the Republic of Serbia.

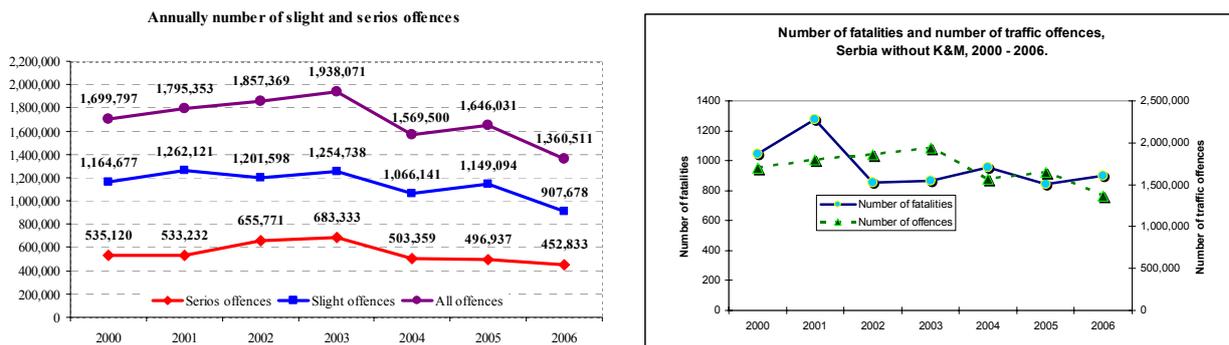


Diagram 2. Annual number of detected offences (left) and comparative display of the number of detected offences and the number of killed in accidents (Serbia without K&M, 2000-2006)

During 2002 and 2003, police enforcement was intensified by drastic increase of the fines⁶ and the increased number of detected offences. This was followed by campaign and other measures. Also objective and subjective risk from being punished was increased. By better directing the operations of traffic police, in particular, specific subjective risk from being punished was increased, namely the feeling of the offender that he/she would be punished. Such a "shock therapy" contributed to the drastic reduction of the number of accidents and casualties in 2002, compared to 2001. After 2002, police enforcement was slightly reduced, and the fines remained on the same level. The preparation of a new law on traffic safety and other regulations began, as well as the long-term campaign on the new law. Objective risk from being punished was reduced, subjective risk from being punished was kept on the same level (thanks to the media). Regardless of the fact that neither strategic documents nor stable funding existed, nor the comprehensive system of measures and activities was realized, the number of fatalities (only) slightly increased.

The University and experts in traffic and transport carried out a number of researches which they presented to the police and decision makers. The media paid more attention to traffic safety, which caused elevation of awareness on traffic safety (about the significance and possibilities of management). The experts in traffic and transport defined key areas of work in traffic safety (reduction of speeding, reduction of driving under the influence of alcohol, increased usage of safety belts, improvement of

⁶ The National Assembly increased fines for traffic offences 7 to 10 times. This was backed by all media, experts in traffic and transport and the police. After one month of the campaign, traffic police intensified the control and sanctioning of offences. Especially controls directed at police officers who made offences were organized, which increased the effectiveness of the campaign.

the protection of children in traffic, better technical condition of vehicles in traffic, safer participation of agricultural tractors in traffic).

Campaign was realized for the purpose of increasing the usage of safety belts, supported by the traffic police (by setting the example and punishing the drivers and co-drivers who did not use safety belts). This campaign produced wider effects – overall observance of regulations and traffic behaviour was improved.

In order to maintain and improve the favourable trends in traffic safety, several new institutions have been established in Serbia dealing with traffic safety: Department for Traffic Safety within the Ministry of Traffic, Department for Traffic Safety within the Administration of the City of Belgrade, Council for Traffic Safety in the Serbian Army, Department for Traffic Safety in the Public Enterprise 'Roads of Serbia', Committee for Traffic Safety in Belgrade, etc. After the adoption of the new Law on Traffic Safety, the National Council for Traffic Safety and the National Agency for Traffic Safety will be established, the latter of which should become the most important institution in the system of traffic safety. It is estimated that the abovementioned and other institutions will give their contribution to traffic safety in future period, especially in initiation, preparation, adoption, realization and evaluation of strategic documents in the area of traffic safety.

5. NEW CONCEPT AND SYSTEM OF ACTIVITIES

Traditional scientific professional gatherings with international participation have been established, organized by the Universities in Belgrade and Novi Sad (every second year), Department of Traffic Police within the Ministry of Interior Affairs (every year), Serbian Army (every year) and insurance companies (every year). The abovementioned gatherings have international character and more and more foreign experts take part in them. Beside these traditional gatherings, other gatherings dedicated to certain traffic safety topics are also realized more and more often.

Traffic police is more open for the public and has active participation in all scientific and professional gatherings covering the topics of traffic safety. Strategic document on the development of traffic police in Serbia was adopted in 2003.

In recent years, non-governmental organizations dealing with traffic safety have been established or activated in Serbia, such as: YUBS-Yugoslav Society for Traffic Safety; CIBS-Center for Research in Traffic Safety; KBS-Committee for Traffic Safety; TSM-Traffic Safety Media – Organization for Traffic Safety and Media, etc.

However, direct and stable funding of traffic safety on national or local level has not been established, although the Law has provided that the money collected from fines for traffic offences should be spent for traffic safety activities. Today, traffic safety in Serbia is mostly funded from the budget.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, civil war in the surroundings, global sanctions, conflicts on Kosovo and Metohija and the bombing of Serbia were dominant irregular impacts on the economy and life in Serbia during the

period from 1991 to 2000. Unstable social economic situation in the country had negative impact on traffic and traffic safety. After the lifting of the sanctions and the stabilization of the situation, the number of accidents rapidly increased. During 2002, fines for traffic offences were drastically raised, campaign about the usage of safety belts was conducted as well as a number of other measures. Coordination and cooperation between certain entities was improved. With this "shock therapy" better results were achieved in view of the situation of traffic safety in Serbia.

The following were particularly important – political support (drastic increase of fines), improvement of traffic police operations, intensifying scientific and research work and bigger dedication of the media. This caused the increase of the specific subjective risk from being punished, namely, the feeling of the offender that he/she would be punished for the offence. The increase of this risk had a dominant impact on the improvement of the behaviour of participants in traffic.

For the purpose of further improvement of traffic safety, Serbia should adopt the new Law on Traffic Safety, establish the National Council and the Agency for Traffic Safety, establish local bodies for traffic safety, make National and other strategies of traffic safety and establish stable and safe funding resources for traffic safety.

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