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Summary

The programme theory of Vision Zero defines that the system designers have a responsibility to take measures to prevent people from being killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. The Swedish Road Traffic Inspectorate has been given the role of following the development and working to ensure that the system designers apply a systematic procedure in their work. Given the limited tools for the mandate of the Inspectorate and the lack of legislation supporting the programme theory of Vision Zero, the development has been positive so far.

However, in order to decrease the death toll in road traffic, the supervision methods must develop and be based on a clear legislation. A committee of inquiry proposed recently to government to establish a joint Traffic Inspectorate with a mandate covering all transport modes. Special attention were given to the safety legislation concerning road traffic and to the investigation of road traffic accidents.

Road Traffic Inspectorate – Current role and mandate

As a consequence of the parliamentary decision in 1997 the Swedish government decided in 2002 to establish a Road Traffic Inspectorate. The idea behind the decision was to create an independent body with the task to follow how the system designers and service providers in the road traffic sector had incorporated the theory behind the vision Zero and how they developed their safety work.

The Inspectorate started its activities in 2003 and was given the following tasks and mandates:

1. To monitor and analyse conditions that could substantially affect the design and functioning of the road transport system through taking a holistic view of the road safety goals adopted by public authorities, municipalities and others.
2. In dialogue with the organizations referred to above, work to ensure that they apply a systematic procedure to prevent road accidents that result in death or serious injury.



3. To co-operate with other players to improve traffic safety on roads.
4. To initiate research and development within the road safety sector and monitor research of importance to the operations at the Inspectorate.

The Road Traffic Inspectorate has been given the dialogue as the only tool to influence the system designers to apply a systematic procedure in order to prevent severe accidents. No legislation exists to support that work of the inspectorate. The sole and only directive to the inspectorate is given in the instruction from government.

The decision of Parliament in 1997 strongly emphasizes the responsibility of the system designers for system safety. That decision, although not materialized in law, together with the mandate given to the Inspectorate by the government should be a rather strong basis for the Inspectorate.

However, the inspectorate cannot legally demand a system designer to take action in any situation. Based on knowledge, statistics and its own analyse-process, the inspectorate can present questions and arguments to the system designer. The dialogue-process follows a decided procedure including the following steps:

1. Problem identification and analyses
2. Meeting with the system designer in order to reach an agreement on the problem
3. Actions to be taken by the system designer
4. Follow-up
5. Report

A Joint Traffic Inspectorate – proposal from a committee of inquiry

At several times the question of merging the existing transport inspectorates – the Civil Aviation Authority, the Rail Agency, the Maritime Safety Inspectorate and the Road Traffic Inspectorate – into one Traffic Inspectorate. Two months ago, a committee of inquiry proposed to government to establish such an inspectorate with a stronger mandate and wider tasks within the area of road traffic safety.

After having studied the proposal, we find that an inspectorate covering the whole transportation sector surely would strengthen the development of the safety work, especially in the road traffic sector. The exchange of information and experiences between the four sectors will be easy and the development of working and investigation methods will be more efficient.

My hope is that government in the near future will decide to establish this new inspectorate. Thus Sweden will take an important step forward to maintaining a leading role in transportation safety.



Creating a joint safety culture

One important task for the new inspectorate will be to push forward the development of a common safety culture in the whole transportation sector. In civil aviation, safety is a prerequisite for the use of the system and every measure to increase of capacity or to shorten travelling time is made under strong safety regulations. Quoting my former colleague in the Swedish CAA: "Everyone know that flying is dangerous, that's why it is so safe!"

In the road traffic sector safety is too often regarded only as a restriction on capacity and travelling time. The frequent use of cost-benefit calculations makes safety to a factor with a price like any of the other traffic policy objectives.

It must be noted, that the Swedish decision on Vision Zero, covers all transport modes. Thus the basis for safety work among the system designers and the service providers must be the same, independent of transport mode.

Accident investigations

The results from accident investigations are among the most important sources of knowledge for safety improvements. The proposal of the committee on inquiry will strengthen the role of the Traffic Inspectorate on investigation of road traffic accident. Like today, the Accident Investigation Board will investigate road traffic accidents with several fatal victims or with great economic or environmental consequences. The Inspectorate will be given the task to investigate accidents with importance to the development of safety of the transportation system, independent of if they are fatal or not. Like in the other transport modes, the Road Administration will be obliged to investigate the fatal accidents.

Of great importance is thus a systematic and transparent method for accident investigations. The proposals for such a common approach will be important steps forward. And since transportation safety is an international problem, a common European approach is important. I strongly support the proposals presented here today, hoping that this will be a beginning of a systematic work to improve road traffic safety on a common European level.