

## Road Traffic Safety Campaigning

### Road safety activities targeting road users

One of the most pressing issues for cycling promotion is to increase road safety – both in objective terms by reducing the number of accidents and in subjective terms by increasing people's perceived level of safety while cycling. The 'traffic climate' and hence the interaction of road users in general must also be improved.

The safe and smooth interaction of road users who share the street environment is largely dependent on an accommodating infrastructure and tolerable speeds. Under such circumstances careless driving or the violation of rules do not necessarily result in accidents. Car technology may also help prevent accidents.

Research shows that road users partly account for about 95% of road accidents. The causes for the accidents vary and range from drivers losing control of their vehicle to the deliberate violation of rules. Hence, the people's behaviour on the road is the central focus of road safety activities.

Against this backdrop, road safety campaigns are designed to transmit information about basic rules for interaction in the street environment, encourage safe and cooperative behaviour and prevent rules violation and recklessness. Safe cycling and driving are often the focus of these campaigns. Some current examples go further and aim to also increase the awareness for the different modes of transport among road users and acceptance for cycling.

Often the objective of these road safety and fairness campaigns is to challenge the target groups' thinking and habits. This preventive approach offers a wide range of measures to bring across the respective messages.

### Problem analysis and concept

The basis for any road safety campaign is an assessment of the status quo to clearly identify the problem that is to be addressed by the communication activities. In addition, a safety impact model must be used to make sure whether communication activities actually help solve the problem, or what accompanying measures must be adopted. References are, for example, the trans-theoretical model as well as the theory of planned

Cover Image: *Berlin nimmt Rücksicht (Berlin takes care).*  
© Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, Berlin

### Contents

Road safety activities  
targeting road users 1

Problem analysis and concept 1

Choosing the right message and stylistic  
devices 2

Showing consideration for fellow  
road users 3

Safe behaviour on the road 4

Conclusion 4

behaviour (see also CyE O-4, Campaigning for Public Awareness on Cycling), for example, may serve as references. The determination of the campaign's purpose will also influence the definition of the primary target group that is to be directly addressed by the campaign. In addition, so-called 'opinion formers' can also be used to indirectly reach out to certain groups – for example reaching out to schoolchildren through their parents and teachers. Parents can, of course, also be reached through their children who go to school.



Poster from the campaign "Berlin nimmt Rücksicht" ("Berlin takes care") © Jörg Thiemann-Linden

It is worthwhile to further segment target groups by certain characteristics. This has been done in Berlin and Freiburg with the campaign 'Rücksicht im Straßenverkehr' ('consideration for fellow road users') that is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. The campaign targets certain types of cyclists, car drivers and pedestrians. The segmentation of target groups is largely based upon their style of driving and how amenable they are to reflecting on their traffic behaviour.

As a rule, campaigns should not be isolated activities conducted by individual actors. The impact of campaigns is greater if they are designed and implemented in collaboration with multiple partners. A positive example is a partnership to prevent road accidents in the German city of Münster. The alliance is



Children imitating reckless behaviour of adults on the road.  
© Bau- und Verkehrsdepartement, Kanton Basel-Stadt;  
[www.fair-im-verkehr.ch](http://www.fair-im-verkehr.ch)

made up 23 partners including the police, media as well as the insurance industry and road building authorities. Hence, in Münster accompanying road safety activities are carried out successfully using various channels and media outlets.

It is also helpful to set up a concrete schedule and media plan to ensure that the information is provided at the right time and disseminated through the right choice of media.

## Choosing the right message and stylistic devices

Great care is necessary when choosing stylistic devices and messages due to various reasons. First of all, road safety campaigns address very sensitive issues such as possible consequences of a road accident. In addition, many road users may feel their self-image is damaged by a campaign, because most people think they display much better and safer traffic behaviour than others. Overall, there are two different approaches both of which are neither more nor less appropriate for road safety activities.

Confrontational devices discourage road users from engaging in a certain kind of behaviour by depicting the severe consequences such kind of behaviour can have. The idea behind this is to shock road users prompting them to reflect on their behaviour and ideally to change it. This approach, however, has varying effects. Using graphic imagery may cause inexperienced cyclists to feel more insecure or even put them off cycling. On the other hand, road users who constantly break the rules are addressed more effectively through confrontational

### Sources

[www.berlin-nimmt-ruecksicht.de](http://www.berlin-nimmt-ruecksicht.de)

[www.mobilitaet.bs.ch/bu/kampagnen-aktionen/fair-im-verkehr](http://www.mobilitaet.bs.ch/bu/kampagnen-aktionen/fair-im-verkehr)

[www.radfahren-ffm.de/9-0-Sicheres-Radfahren.html?s=](http://www.radfahren-ffm.de/9-0-Sicheres-Radfahren.html?s=)

[www.sicher-durch-muenster.de](http://www.sicher-durch-muenster.de)

[www.lovevelo.ch/](http://www.lovevelo.ch/)



*In Frankfurt am Main life-size figures are used to raise awareness of the risks of reckless bike riding.*  
© City of Frankfurt am Main

means. Extreme messages may, however, be deemed implausible and irrelevant by these 'routiniers' who might think along the lines of 'nothing will happen to me anyway'.

This has been confirmed by the evaluation of the campaign 'Runter vom Gas' ('Slow Down') in 2009 which showed that the campaign's effect was much lesser on the

largest group of high-risk road users (young, male drivers aged up to 24) than on the overall population. The suggestion was that future campaigns should also draw more heavily on constructive elements.

Positive stylistic devices focus on rewarding safe or preventive behaviour. This has increasingly been done by the so-called 'fairness campaigns' in recent times. In general, it is recommendable to use 'pre tests' to try the effectiveness of messages that have been formulated and stylistic devices that are to be used.

## Showing consideration for fellow road users

In many places cycling traffic is significantly increasing. Hence, the entire traffic situation also changes because cycling traffic increasingly shifts onto the traffic lanes. At the same time, many cyclists use pedestrian spaces. This may cause conflicts or accidents; also the political and societal consensus for cycling promotion might be placed in jeopardy.

Against this backdrop, the city of Berlin and the city of Freiburg have teamed up with the German Insurance Association (Gesamtverband der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft e.V., GDV) and the German Road Safety Council (Deutscher Verkehrssicherheitsrat, DVR) for a joint campaign to encourage road users to show

more consideration for others. The campaign is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. It was designed for use in different city types and has been tested as a model campaign in the two German cities since early 2012. The overall budget available for the campaign is more than EUR 750,000.

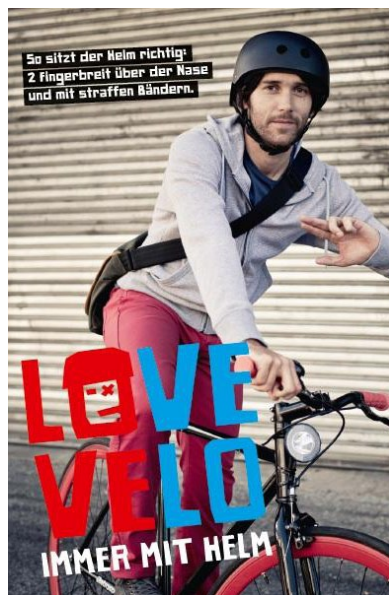


*The consequences of careless driving can be stressed without resorting to striking scare tactics.*  
© NYC Bicycle Safety Coalition

The campaign aims to encourage all road users to show consideration for others, to help improve the traffic climate, and raise awareness of risks caused by their own behaviour and dangerous traffic situations. However, it is not cycling that is to be portrayed as dangerous. The central role model of the campaign is St. Christopher who is the patron saint of road traffic and gives consideration lavishly. Five other scenes show the different target groups and modes of travel. The types of media used for the campaign range from outdoor advertising and flyers to a thoughtfully designed

website. The measure is designed to have multiple steps; it is monitored permanently. An interim assessment is to enable re-adjustments that may be necessary. The model phase is to end and be evaluated in autumn 2013.

The Swiss road safety campaign 'Fair im Verkehr' ('fair



*A bicycle helmet only works if cyclists wear it correctly.*

© bfu – Beratungsstelle für Unfallverhütung

traffic behaviour') also aims to improve the "traffic climate" without waving its finger at a certain group. The campaign has been commissioned by the Building and Traffic Department of Canton Basel City. The campaign focuses on video clips with children showing typical 'adult' traffic behaviour. Reckless behaviour by car drivers, cyclists or pedestrians is commented with the exclamation 'Goppeloni!' which is meant to say something like 'oh

my goodness'. The videos are available on YouTube and are broadcast on local television. The ambassador for fair traffic behaviour is the 'Fair-Rider' who goes around asking pedestrians about their experiences regarding the issue of 'fair traffic behaviour'. This ambassador figure is meant to advocate for fair behaviour and is supported by police and local cyclists' and neighbourhood associations.

## Safe behaviour on the road

Another Swiss campaign focuses on teaching people how to wear bicycle helmets correctly. Only if worn correctly, leaving two fingers' breadth above the nose and with straps pulled tight, helmets will give maximum

protection in case of an accident. The campaign focuses on showing positive examples and role models instead of using scare tactics. The campaign is supported by the Swiss transport association Verkehrs-Club der Schweiz (VCS) and famous cyclists.

A New York campaign that was jointly developed by the city and NGOs highlighted the possible consequences of turning without looking. The campaign also avoids graphic imagery but at the same time stresses the importance of anticipation and the quick over-the-shoulder-glance to confirm that there is nothing coming.

The cities of Frankfurt am Main and Münster have launched a safety awareness campaign titled 'Denkzettel-Kampagne' ('food for thought campaign') to raise awareness of the consequences of careless driving and traffic behaviour. On road sections where accidents happen extremely often, life-size figures on the side of the road aim at highlighting the risks of reckless bike riding.

## Conclusion

In line with the principle of 'engineering – education – enforcement – public relations', road safety campaigns are a crucial instrument for road safety activities. However, they do not bring about an immediate shift in traffic behaviour, but rather initiate a psychological action process. Inappropriate behavioural patterns are destabilised while new appropriate action strategies are developed.

The success of a campaign is dependent on the characteristics of its addressees – for example to what extent are they willing to reflect on their traffic behaviour or respond to positive role models. Hence, a campaign requires clearly defined target groups as well as knowledge about the effectiveness of stylistic devices and messages to help improve road safety. In order to increase the effectiveness of a campaign and its components, it is recommendable to carry out an accompanying evaluation.



Funded by



Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development

More information can be found in  
I-8/2012: Safety by Cycling Facilities - basics  
O-4/2012: Campaigning for Public Awareness on Cycling  
S-7/2012: Marketing Action to Promote Cycling

"Cycling Expertise" is available online:  
[www.nrvp.de/cye](http://www.nrvp.de/cye)

### Imprint

Publisher: German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) gGmbH  
Zimmerstraße 13–15, 10969 Berlin  
Department for Mobility and Infrastructure  
Editor: Wolfgang Aichinger,  
[cycling-expertise@difu.de](mailto:cycling-expertise@difu.de)