

FINAL DECLARATION

of the Participants in the TWELFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE “SAFE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE”

We, representatives of professional organizations, the academic community, local authorities, the private sector, and civil society, together with international experts from leading European institutions, gathered in the city of Plovdiv on September 17–18, 2026, for the Twelfth Annual Conference “Safe Road Infrastructure.”

We acknowledge the efforts of the Bulgarian Branch Association Road Safety in organizing the most prestigious event in the field of road safety, as well as the participation of more than 240 delegates who share the noble cause dedicated to saving human lives on Bulgaria’s roads.

We note with great appreciation the participation of the Federal Highway Research Institute (BAST), a leading European scientific institution in the field of road infrastructure and traffic safety. Their presence adds exceptional professional weight and provides an opportunity for the exchange of proven German practices, standards and scientific approaches that would be beneficial to apply in our country.

We welcome the participation of the International Road Federation (IRF Geneva), which contributes to the enrichment of the international dialogue and policies in the field of road safety.

We congratulate the distinguished Bulgarian and international experts in road safety, who presented 13 papers, sharing valuable experience, research results, and concrete solutions for improving the quality of the individual elements of the road transport system and the interaction between them.

Reaffirming the statements made in the Final Declarations of previous Annual Conferences on “Safe Road Infrastructure”, and based on the issues raised in the reports and discussions, as well as our strong commitment to achieving our ambitious goals, we, the conference participants, hereby unite and declare:

I. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. Government agencies responsible for road safety, in short terms should continue their efforts and incorporate scientific approaches into their work, through which the most effective and sustainable results can be achieved.
2. We appeal the academic community to encourage researchers to conduct scientific studies in the field of road safety in order to enhance the effectiveness of government policies and strategies, as well as to improving public knowledge and awareness of road safety issues.

3. Every year, road traffic crashes cost Bulgarian society billions of euros. Nevertheless, these losses remain far from the political and public agenda. We must clearly state that these financial losses should be taken into account when planning and implementing government policies, infrastructure measures, and all other actions that improve safety on Bulgarian roads.
4. We appeal for improved dialogue between government institutions and professional, academic, engineering, and nongovernmental associations and organizations, which expressed their readiness during the conference to support the institutions in accordance with their areas of competence. Achieving a high level of cooperation and coordination is a key factor in strengthening public trust.
5. We recommend that municipalities ensure a sufficient number of qualified specialists to review, approve, and supervise road projects before issuing building permits. The lack of expertise within municipal administrations leads to omissions and acceptance of incomplete project documentation, which creates risks during subsequent implementation. It is necessary to introduce qualification and training requirements for the employees involved in these processes.

II. SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY

1. We welcome the efforts of the administration of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering, and Geodesy (UACEG) to develop competent professionals in the fields of design, construction, and maintenance of road infrastructure. We encourage the enrichment of the curriculum with mandatory courses that provide students with detailed knowledge of traffic safety.
2. The UACEG needs to place stronger emphasis on the content, structure, and requirements of road projects in all phases of design in an urban environment, thereby ensuring a high professional standard for future specialists and the projects they deliver.

III. ENGINEERING PRACTICES

1. The quality of the road pavement is a key element of road safety. Taking into account the fact that there's no regulatory document in Bulgaria that governs their design, we propose that the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works to take steps to include dedicated sections in the relevant secondary legislation regulating road construction in urban and non-urban areas. The application of modern methods for calculating pavement bearing capacity and durability is essential, supported by international best practices and scientific research adapted to Bulgarian conditions.
2. The drivers' psychology must be taken into account in every assessment and prescription of infrastructure measures to ensure the effectiveness of the actions taken.

3. Road signs and road markings are of critical importance for traffic safety. Although their installation and maintenance do not require significant financial resources, their condition on Bulgarian roads remains unsatisfactory. The most common problems include incorrectly placed traffic signs, missing road markings, and temporary signage that has not been removed after construction and installation work has been completed. To improve traffic management, it is necessary to update the existing signage by developing new designs and establishing a complete inventory of all road equipment.
4. Road restraint systems damaged as a result of traffic accidents must be replaced or repaired in a timely manner. The presence of compromised safety barriers significantly increases the risk of severe consequences in the event of a subsequent accident.
5. Maintaining a safe distance between vehicles is a critical factor in preventing serious traffic accidents. More precise regulation of minimum distance requirements is needed, as well as strengthened enforcement of these requirements. We recommend the introduction of modern control methods, including automated systems, to reduce the risk of chain collisions and severe consequences in the event of sudden braking or loss of control.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

1. Given the excellent feedback from the conference, we propose that the Bulgarian Branch Association “Road Safety” plan and organize the Thirteenth Annual Conference “Safe Road Infrastructure” in 2027. We propose that the next conference be dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the Vision Zero philosophy and working methods—an approach whose primary goal is to eliminate road fatalities.
2. We assign the Management Board of the Bulgarian Branch Association “Road Safety” to send the Final Declaration to all relevant institutions and organizations, along with specific proposals for individual and joint actions, and to adopt a plan for implementing the proposals contained in the declaration.

From the participants in the Twelfth Annual Conference

“Safe Road Infrastructure”

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