

We need to change the law and habits - after the expert debate at GITD

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Nearly 6 hours of discussion, over 80 participants and many ideas on how to reduce the number of road accidents and improve road safety. The Chief Inspectorate of Road Transport organized a debate "Road safety. Perspective of changes." This is a very important event. Every minute of this debate will bring results in the future, Minister of Infrastructure, Andrzej Adamczyk, summed up the discussion.



Meeting the expectations

I am glad that the debate is organized in GITD, the institution responsible for safety on Polish roads for the last several years, said Alvin Gajadhur, Chief Inspector of Road Transport at the beginning of the meeting. The debate is organized to change the law. I hope that today's discussion will contribute to the development of constructive conclusions that can be further dealt with by politicians, added the head of the Road Transport Inspection.

The debate was officially opened by Andrzej Adamczyk - Minister of Infrastructure, Maciej Wąsik - Secretary of State in the Ministry of Interior and Administration, Michał Wójcik - Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice and Jarosław Pinkas - Chief Sanitary Inspector.

Over 80 people gathered at the GITD headquarters in Warsaw. They are the road safety experts. Not only politicians, but also journalists, representatives of control services and specialized organizations, associations and the academic community. During three discussion panels, the causes of road accidents were discussed, including the consequences of excessive speed, but also the need for greater pedestrian protection and proposals for legislative changes.

We are putting into use subsequent sections of new or renovated roads. Poles, using thousands of kilometres of modern infrastructure, travel more comfortably and faster than ever before. However, this does not prompt everyone to comply with the law. Statistics on the number and mortality of accidents clearly show that we need thought-out and comprehensive solutions in this area, and that it is necessary for many communities to work together, the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki

emphasized in a letter addressed to the organizers and participants of the debate.

From the very beginning we put BRD issue first - we try to analyse the reasons and causes of tragic accidents on Polish roads. We have more vehicles per 1000 people than Germans or French. We are rebuilding this infrastructure. Only last year, together with the local road fund - it was PLN 10 billion spent on the reconstruction of communal and regional roads, said Andrzej Adamczyk, Minister of Infrastructure.

Drivers must slow down

Excessive speed still ranks second to the most common causes of road accidents. In 2019, there were fewer road accidents than a year earlier, but more people died in them. The largest number of fatalities occurred in accidents because of not adapting speed to traffic conditions. Drivers must slow down, well-known automotive journalists: Włodzimierz Zientarski and Marcin Koczyba, the participants of the debate and its moderators postulated. It is proposed to limit the speed in built-up areas to 50 km/h around the clock. As indicated, up to 75% of drivers drive too fast today and 45% exceed the permitted limits by more than 10 km/h. The specialists also agree that in case of gross violations, drivers should be deprived of their driving license, they indicated that it is worth considering a change in the enforcement system, and consider changing the amount of penalties.

Pedestrians under special protection

More than half of traffic incidents with unprotected road users occur at pedestrian crossings. In 2019, every 19th accident killed a pedestrian. The number of people killed at zebra crossings is growing, and the culprits are mainly drivers. Only less than 0.5% of passers-by force driving cars to brake suddenly, but as many as 90% of drivers "forget" to slow down before the crossing. The participants of the debate pointed to the need for proper lighting of passages, which would improve the safety of passing through the lanes, as well as reconstruction of dangerous passages, also giving unprotected participants more privileges and imposing greater responsibility on vehicle owners.

We need to change the law and improve the speed camera system

The law should keep up with reality, enabling for example the use of technological novelties now available that could have an impact on reducing dangerous road incidents. It is worth investing in a speed camera system - it was emphasized during the debate. The current "automatic" is unfortunately only in name, its automation ends with a photo taken by a speed camera. Later, a scrupulous procedure begins to determine and punish the perpetrator. This is not always successful. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the system and facilitate the enforcement of penalties. One proposal on which the vast majority of experts agreed was to introduce, following the example of many European countries, the liability of the owner or holder of a vehicle in the event of the offender being not identified. Participants in the debate also postulated extension of the limitation periods and more severe punishment of recidivists.

Changing the law - yes, but let's not forget about education

Together with the change of law, activities should be carried out that change the habits of road users. It is the man who has the main influence on what is happening on the road. They should anticipate threats, be aware of the consequences. Statutory penalties, e.g. a ticket or a fine are not enough. The punishment is the awareness of killing another person, but also the awareness of life without a loved one who died in a road accident. An importance should be put on the education of road users from an early age. Participants in the debate postulated introducing or increasing the number of hours of communication education in schools. It is also worth using various and attractive forms of education so that the largest group of recipients can be interested in BRD topics.

Debate. What's next?

The debate organized by the General Road Transport Inspectorate lasted nearly six hours. During this time many suggestions and ideas for changes in traffic were made. *For me it is a very important event. Every minute of today's debate will bear fruit in the near future. We will consider the postulates that have been made here today, said Minister of Infrastructure, Andrzej Adamczyk. Thank you all for being here. I am pleased that the social side was also very interested in this event. We spent many hours here and we are very happy that many participants stayed to the end. This shows how important the topic of road safety is to you, said in the end Alvin Gajadhur.*

Representatives of parliamentary clubs: Jerzy Paul, Parliamentary Club of Law and Justice, Wiesław Szczepański, Coalition of the

Left Parliamentary Party (Together, Democratic Left Alliance, Robert Biedron's Spring) and Michał Szczerba, Parliamentary Club of the Civic Coalition (Civic Platform, Modern Civic Platform, Polish Initiative, Greens) also took part in the summary discussion. Parliamentarians agreed that it is necessary to change the rules and will work on new legal solutions.

The debate was broadcast online. It is available under the link - tiny.pl/t8mxi (beginning from approx. 18 minutes of material).

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