



The project so far

By Maria Papdakaki, Project Coordinator

Understanding how teenagers think, feel, and behave regarding road safety is crucial in preventing road traffic injuries. **SAFETeen**, co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Programme, is dedicated to researching these challenges while commuting.

So far, focus group discussions have been successfully conducted in the **SAFETeen** project's partner countries (Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Finland), with strong participation from students, teachers, parents, and key stakeholders. These discussions have provided valuable insights into the biggest challenges teenagers face in road environments. Participants engaged enthusiastically, sharing their experiences and perspectives on the difficulties young people encounter while commuting.

Furthermore, building on the success of these focus groups, the findings were used to develop an e-survey, which is currently being distributed to students in participating schools. The e-survey gathers data from adolescents, which will be analysed to calculate risk levels and safety scores.

IN THIS ISSUE

THE PROJECT SO FAR

TEEN ROAD SAFETY: INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

VISION AND SCOPE OF THE ICT TOOLS

PARTNER PRESENTATION FORTH

NEWS

This data will help better understand the factors that influence teenagers' psychomotor and cognitive performance while commuting in different conditions and assess their risk perception under various circumstances. Analysing these risk levels will play a crucial role in shaping educational material and interventions designed to reduce risky behaviours among adolescents. This material will promote safe decision-making in various contexts, including situations involving peer pressure and other challenges.

The insights gathered will form the foundation for youth-driven stories and scenarios, which will be integrated into digital tools such as a Virtual Reality (VR) tool and an Emergency Aid tool to immerse students in realistic traffic situations. These tools will help students understand risks and practice safe decision-making. Additionally, a Pedagogical Handbook is being developed

to support educators in delivering engaging and impactful road safety lessons in class.

The development of the Pedagogical Handbook is ongoing, while the technical specifications for the VR tool and Emergency Aid tool have been finalized. The design process for these tools is already underway and will be available at later stages of the project to enhance road safety education and provide interactive learning experiences for students and teachers. Ultimately, all developed tools will be freely accessible to interested stakeholders who wish to contribute to youth road safety, empowering teenagers to make informed and responsible decisions on the road.

Focus groups - Finland

By Brita Somerkoski

At the University of Turku, the focus group discussions for the SAFETeen project were conducted in November. Winter presents significant challenges for traffic behavior in Finland, particularly due to darkness. This is especially true in the southernmost parts of the country, where there is no snow yet to provide additional light, and the roads are also slippery. These conditions create specific traffic hazards.

The pupils who agreed to participate in the focus group interviews eagerly and actively responded to the questions. When discussing traffic dangers, they highlighted darkness, slippery roads and yards, and the rush, particularly in the mornings, as key concerns.

Although traffic in the interview location is relatively calm, young people had observed various risks. Some of these were specifically related to the use of mobile phones. They also noted that running or cycling across the road in slippery



conditions increases the risk of falling, which could prevent an approaching car from braking in time due to the icy surface. During the interviews, young people suggested that more traffic lights should be installed and that pedestrians and cyclists should wear reflective vests and use lights on their bikes for better visibility.

In an interview with adults, concerns were raised about young people's traffic behavior in the evenings and on weekends.

The experts who participated pointed out that young people's leisure-time mobility is particularly vulnerable to risks. In addition to potential substance abuse, many young people travel in vehicles that are in relatively poor condition. Furthermore, newer micro-mobility vehicles and a lack of experience in handling them may pose additional risks. To mitigate these dangers, experts suggested that before heading out -especially on weekends-parents should carefully determine where the young person intends to go, whose car

will be used, and who will be driving. This winter, young people's traffic safety has been widely discussed in the Finnish media following a tragic accident in a rural area, where a car driven by a young person veered off a bridge into a river, resulting in the deaths of four young people.

The **SAFETeen** research is essential!

Focus groups - Cyprus

By Dr Christiana Philippou Charidemou

We are pleased to share that the focus groups were successfully conducted! Students from both lower and upper secondary education levels actively participated, showing great enthusiasm and collaboration throughout the process. Their feedback made it clear that they found the experience both enjoyable and engaging. We also appreciated the support of parents and educators, whose cooperation played a key role in the smooth implementation of the

focus groups. However, our research through questionnaires is still in progress, as we continue the data collection phase. There is a delay primarily due to challenges in obtaining parental consent, as well as reluctance from some students to participate, despite ongoing efforts from the research coordinators to inform and encourage them.



Focus groups - Greece

By Sissy Kroustalidou

Road safety for teenagers continues to be a pressing issue in Crete, as highlighted during the recent focus groups conducted by RDPSEC. These discussions brought together experts, local authorities, educators, students, and parents to explore key factors that influence young people's behavior on the road and the challenges in promoting safer habits.

Key Insights from Experts, Educators, and Parents

Experts in the fields of traffic safety, emergency services, and education identified a few critical factors that contribute to accidents involving teens. One of the most significant influence is



parental behavior. Teens often look to their parents for guidance on how to act on the road, so when risky driving habits are present at home, they can become normal. In some areas, a culture of early driving persists, creating an environment where risky driving is seen as acceptable.

From the perspective of local parents, many share similar concerns. They point out that Heraklion, like other crowded cities, faces chaotic traffic due to overcrowding and poorly planned infrastructure. This creates a high-risk environment for everyone, especially young people. Parents also recognize that, particularly in rural areas, driving from a young age remains a cultural norm—one that puts teens in danger. However, they did acknowledge that today’s teenagers are more aware of road safety rules and generally take the risks of unsafe driving more seriously.

Two focus groups with teens—one with ages 11-15 and another with 16-18—provided valuable insights into how young people view road safety.

For the younger group (11-15 years), distractions like using mobile phones while crossing roads or cycling were key concerns. They also highlighted a lack of proper infrastructure and poor visibility at crossings, noting that sometimes they don’t realize the risks until it’s too late.

For the older group (16-18 years), the risks were more focused on driving with unlicensed drivers, encountering drunk drivers at night, and giving in to peer pressure to take unnecessary risks. They pointed out the dangers of traveling late at night without safe transport options and admitted that social pressure often leads them to ignore their own safety.



Despite these differences, both groups agreed that distractions—such as mobile phones, social media, and music—are a major contributor to risky behaviors. They also believe that parents, teachers, and the community need to step up and do more to set better examples and raise awareness about road safety.

Breaking the Cycle: Solutions and Barriers

A major issue in both groups was the difficulty of breaking dangerous habits. While teens recognize the risks, peer pressure, emotional attachments, and a lack of awareness is often challenging for them to change. Experts suggested that the solution lies in a multi-faceted approach: starting early with road safety education in schools, involving families, and fostering a strong community-wide effort.



Vision and scope of the ICT tools

By Vasilis Kontogiannis

In a constantly evolving world, promoting safety in commuting through measures that facilitate preparedness to handle any relevant incidents is essential, especially for adolescents. To support this, two innovative digital tools are being developed for mobile devices. An **emergency aid tool** for rapid self-assessment of fitness to commute and a **Virtual Reality (VR) tool** for hazard perception for immersive road safety education. Each tool will serve a specific purpose while also complementing one another, empowering young users to assess their readiness and improve their ability to identify and respond to potential dangers.



The emergency aid tool will focus on real-time self-assessment of fitness to commute, leveraging scientific methods and offering users information on their performance. Through interactive exercises and a range of questions users will be able to assess their alertness and readiness. Tasks will vary, being simple yet effective, from responding to visual cues to maintaining focus, ensuring an engaging and informative experience. This approach will not only enhance self-awareness but will also encourage a proactive attitude towards safe commuting.

The VR tool for hazard perception will place adolescents into real-life commuting scenarios, helping them identify potential risks and make safe decisions. An essential element will be the influence of peer pressure and demonstrating how the social interactions contribute to risky behaviors.

By simulating structured environments, users could navigate through challenging situations, such as deciding how to respond when peers invite them to take high, commuting-related risks.

They will gain valuable experience preparing them to handle real-world commuting challenges. An intuitive, user-friendly interface will be designed for both tools, ensuring smooth navigation that allows users to access the features in an effortless manner. Customization options, such as language and themes selection, will further enhance engagement and adaptability for a diverse range of users. Integrating state-of-the-art technologies, will provide an effective, interactive, and educational experience that encourages adolescents to adopt safe, commuting behaviors.

Our vision extends, beyond developing the digital tools, to also shaping a culture of awareness and preparedness while at the same time adopting safe behaviours when necessary, in the context of commuting and mature decision-making. This combined approach will serve as a valuable resource for assessing and improving commuting readiness, identifying areas for further education, and reinforcing safe decision-making.



Partner Presentation

Foundation for Research and Technology (FORTH)

Advancing Innovation in SAFETeen

The Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH) is one of Greece’s largest and most esteemed research institutions. Renowned for its well-structured facilities and highly skilled researchers, FORTH operates under the General Secretariat for Research and Technology of the Hellenic Ministry of Education. With a strong commitment to excellence in scientific research, FORTH consistently delivers high-quality results, solidifying its position as a leading research center on an international scale.

A key contributor to the SAFETeen project, FORTH’s Institute of Computer Science (ICS-FORTH) plays a crucial role in advancing innovative digital tools aimed at enhancing adolescent well-being and safety.

The Computational BioMedicine Laboratory at ICS-FORTH is at the forefront of these developments, leveraging cutting-edge



FORTH

INSTITUTE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE
COMPUTATIONAL BIOMEDICINE LABORATORY

technology to create impactful solutions that support young people in navigating today’s digital landscape safely and responsibly.

Through its dedication to groundbreaking research and societal impact, FORTH exemplifies the synergy between scientific excellence and real-world applications. For more information about FORTH and the CBML laboratory, visit: <https://www.ics.forth.gr/cbml>

News

Save the dates!

SAFETeen will be at the **EU-SAFETY 2025 Conference: European Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion**, 1-2 October 2025, Heraklion, Crete

SAFETeen will participate at the **European Public Health Week**, 12-16 May 2025, in Brussels, Belgium with the focus on “Innovation for Resilience: Shaping a Sustainable Future”

