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CHANGE IN THE TRAFFIC CRIME RATE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF THE GLOBAL ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY

ABSTRACT: With the adoption of the Law on Road Traffic Safety in the past decade, better known as the *Decade of Global Action for Road Safety*, normative frameworks were established for successful and efficient progress in the field of road safety, requiring strategic and systemic action in the prevention of traffic offenses. The basic task of traffic safety policy lies in establishing a protective system that will have long-term effects in reducing the number of committed traffic offenses and their consequences. In this regard, traffic safety management policy has a direct impact on the criminal policy of combating traffic crime. These two policies intertwine and form a unified system with inseparable connections, since greater success in the field of traffic safety management means greater safety, fewer violations of traffic regulations, and consequently a reduction in the number of traffic offenses. Today, as we enter the second *Decade of*

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Global Action for Road Safety, we can look back on the effects of the first decade. Analyses of the impact of numerous measures on road safety in the previous decade show that the establishment of a protective system in traffic contributed to a reduction in the number of traffic accidents and accident victims. However, the analysis of traffic crime rates has not been addressed. Therefore, this paper examines how changes in the normative framework and its application in the Republic of Serbia during the first decade affected traffic crime. Using statistical methods, the trend of traffic crime from 2010 to 2019 was analyzed. The research findings indicate that, in the observed period, the traffic crime rate was declining.

Keywords: *traffic crime rate, traffic crime, traffic delinquency.*

1. Introduction

Casualties in traffic accidents have become a growing global problem, which has been pointed out by the United Nations General Assembly (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), among others. In its report for 2009, the Commission for Global Road Safety proposed the launch of a Decade of Global Action for Road Safety (hereinafter: The Decade). The UN Secretary General, in his 2009 report to the General Assembly, encouraged member states to support efforts to establish a Decade, which would represent an opportunity for long-term and coordinated activities to support regional, national and local road safety. In March 2010, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared the “Decade of Global Action for Traffic Safety 2011-2020” (UN/RES/64/255). In this regard, the World Health Organization recommended that all national governments adopt comprehensive laws to protect all road users.

The enforcement and application of regulations on traffic safety is defined as a field of activity, the goal of which is to control the behaviour of road users through comprehensive preventive and repressive measures in order to influence safe and efficient movement in traffic (OECD, 1994). Based on statements in the literature, it is estimated that the application of legal regulations in traffic could reduce the number of traffic accidents by up to 50%, in cases of the most optimal application of the law (European Transport Safety Council, ETSC, 1999, p. 42). In other researches, a significantly smaller percentage (up to 10%) was determined, which the application of traffic laws can have on the prevention of traffic accidents. According to the results of another researches, it was estimated that only permanent efforts and well-prepared law enforcement strategies could

significantly contribute to traffic safety, that is, reduce the number of traffic accidents by up to 25% (Zaidel, 2002, p. 3).

By establishing international standards and recommendations to member states, the United Nations has influenced numerous states to incorporate into their legislation measures that have been proven to be effective in the research and practice of the most traffic-developed countries. Following the aforementioned recommendations and standards, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Road Traffic Safety (2009) (hereinafter referred to as the LRTS), which has been in force since December 10, 2009, with numerous amendments. LRTS is a reform and systemic law, with accepted solutions from international standards and recommendations, obligations from ratified international conventions and agreements, this legal text creates a normative framework for systemic and strategic improvement of the level of traffic safety.

In numerous statistical reports of the Traffic Safety Agency of the Republic of Serbia (2025), as well as in the Traffic Safety Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030 (2018) with the Action Plan for 2023 to 2025 (2023), it is pointed out that in the Republic of Serbia, a stable downward trend in the number of people killed in traffic accidents has been established, while the trend of injured persons oscillates. The implementation of legal measures in the field of traffic also had an impact on the reduction of the number of traffic accidents in the analysed period. In 2019, a quarter fewer traffic accidents were registered than in 2010 (Petrović, 2021, p. 246). However, despite this, in the period from 2016 to 2020, there were 730 deaths (of which 66 were children) and 5,122 seriously injured persons more than was forecast by the first National Strategy of the RS, so it can be concluded that its goals were not achieved (Strategy for traffic safety of the Republic of Serbia, 2018, pp. 1–5).

Apart from detailed and numerous statistical analyses of the impact of the application of legal measures on reducing the number of traffic accidents, it is extremely important to investigate the impact of their application on the change in the rate of traffic crime in the Republic of Serbia in the first decade. This is particularly supported by the following:

1. In our legal system, almost all the norms that prescribe the rules of behaviour in traffic are found in legal and by-laws of traffic regulations, i.e. outside the realm of criminal law. Those behaviours “enter” the criminal law zone through blanketness, when the perpetrator achieves the elements of a criminal offense by violating traffic regulations. Hence the criminal law importance of analysing the effectiveness of the application of Traffic Safety Law to the prevention of traffic

crimes. Traffic accidents can be prevented or their consequences mitigated by the legal regulation of traffic safety rules on the roads. Depending on the resulting consequences and the fulfilment of legal requirements, traffic accidents can be legally qualified as criminal offenses against the safety of public traffic. It follows from the above that the analysis of the impact of the application of legal measures in the field of traffic on the reduction of the number of committed traffic crimes - can be observed in correlation with the number and trend of traffic accidents in the Republic of Serbia (Petrović, 2021, p. 46).

2. Statistical data on the number and consequences of traffic accidents in the period from 2010 to 2019 can be significant indicators of the impact of the implementation of legal measures in the field of traffic on the reduction of the number of committed traffic crimes, for two more reasons:
 - the number of traffic accidents is correlated with the number of committed crimes against the safety of public traffic (Petrović, 2019, p. 46), primarily with the criminal offense from Article 289 of the Criminal Code, endangering public traffic and
 - the number of traffic accidents with dead or seriously injured persons is correlated with the number of serious offenses against the safety of public traffic from Article 297 of the Criminal Code.

2. Research subject and methods

The subject of research in this paper is Criminal offenses against the safety of public transport. In order to establish complete protection of the safe and secure flow of traffic, both in general and in certain types of traffic, positive criminal legislation foresees “traffic crimes” (Jovašević, 2000, pp. 205–210). Criminal offenses against the safety of public transport are provided for in Chapter XXVI of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia (2005). They represent the most dangerous and difficult, and therefore the most significant type of traffic offences, i.e. considered in a narrower sense, traffic crime. These acts, as a rule, “arise” from actions that violate traffic regulations and are manifested in jeopardizing (endangering) certain values (life and bodies of people or material goods in public traffic), (Jovašević & Simović, 2016, p. 81). Therefore, through blanketness, only when the legal conditions are met, responsibility is transferred from the area of misdemeanour to the area of criminal legislation. For example, only when a certain perpetrator, “by violating

traffic safety regulations, endangers public traffic in such a way that it endangers the life or body of people or property of a larger scale, and as a result, a slight bodily injury occurs to another person or causes property damage that exceeds the amount of two hundred thousand dinars...” (Article 289 paragraph 1, CC). Therefore, traffic offenses touch criminal law only in their most serious forms and consequences. This reflects the protective function of criminal law, which occurs when the act has already been committed, *post factum*, i.e. when the protected goods are already threatened, damaged or injured.

From the above follows the logical sequence of the connection of research of the impact of the application of legal measures in the field of traffic safety on the prevention of traffic crimes, especially bearing in mind the fact that in the structure of traffic crime in road traffic, the crime of endangering public traffic occurs most often, followed by serious crimes against public traffic safety, while other crimes occur in insignificant numbers (Petrović, 2021, p. 102). The present paper analysed statistical data based on the number of legally binding court decisions, which determined the commission of some of the traffic crimes, as legally relevant indicators of the number of committed traffic crimes. In this sense, a statistical method was used, i.e. an analysis of statistical data on the number of legally convicted persons for crimes against public traffic safety, in the period from 2010 to 2019 in the Republic of Serbia, which exactly coincides with the period of the first Decade of Action for Traffic Safety (part of the research results from the doctoral dissertation Petrović, 2021 was used). The year 2020 was not included in the research, because due to the global pandemic of the corona virus, a state of emergency was introduced in that year, which significantly reduced the mobility of the population.

In addition to the absolute indicators of the number of persons convicted of traffic crimes, the rate of persons convicted of traffic crimes per 100,000 inhabitants and per 100,000 registered vehicles is also shown. It is another important indicator in order to see absolute data on the number of traffic crimes independently of changes in the number of registered motor vehicles and changes in the number of inhabitants (Petrović, 2021, p. 227).

In addition to the statistical method, the research used the method of content analysis (which included different reports - annual and periodic, which specifically focus on the problem that is the subject of this research), the method of deduction and induction, as well as the comparative method that was used in order to compare different data and results relevant to the research, especially when studying the effectiveness of legal regulations in suppressing traffic offenses, but also for the purpose of assessing the reliability of the applied method, when drawing conclusions.

3. Statistical data on traffic crimes in the period from 2010 to 2019

In the period 2010–2019, in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, by legally binding court decisions, a total of 28,579 persons were convicted for criminal offenses against the safety of public traffic. Compared to 2010, when there were a total of 3,063 convicted persons, in 2019 that number was 2,158.

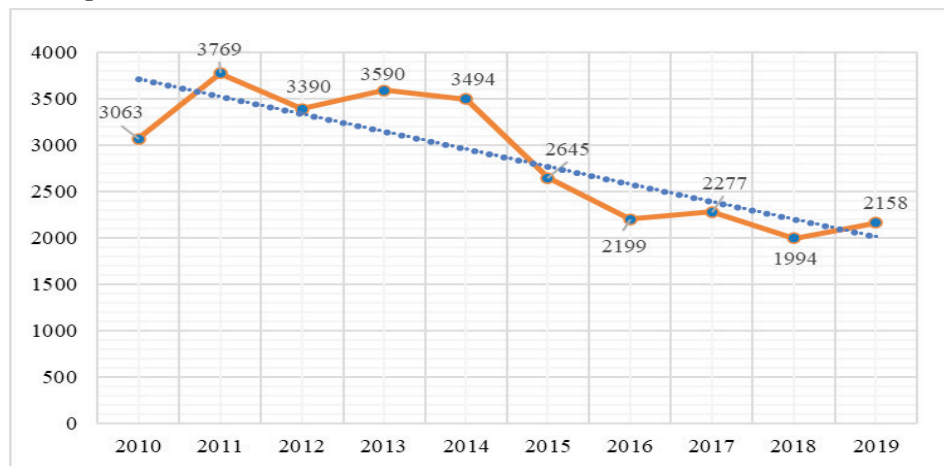
Table 1. Number, trend and rate of crimes against public traffic safety according to the number of convicted persons in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2010 to 2019

Year	Number of convicted adults	Number of convicted minors	Total number of convicted persons	Rate of convicted persons per 100.000 inhabitants	Rate of convicted persons per 100.000 registered vehicles
2010	3003	60	3063	42,01	169,25
2011	3693	76	3769	52,08	194,99
2012	3323	67	3390	47,07	171,45
2013	3508	82	3590	50,09	165,42
2014	3461	33	3494	48,99	156,04
2015	2616	29	2645	37,28	115,57
2016	2176	23	2199	31,15	93,58
2017	2250	27	2277	32,43	94,14
2018	1974	20	1994	28,56	81,05
2019	2134	24	2158	31,07	83,59
Total	28138	441	28579	/	/

Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

From the above, it can be concluded that the number of convictions for traffic offenses in 2019 decreased by a third compared to 2010 (29.54% fewer convicted persons). Based on the data in the table, the decrease in the total number of convicted persons for criminal offenses against public traffic safety in the analysed period is shown graphically (Chart 1.).

Chart 1. Presentation of the number of crimes against public traffic safety according to the number of convicted persons in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2000 to 2019



Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

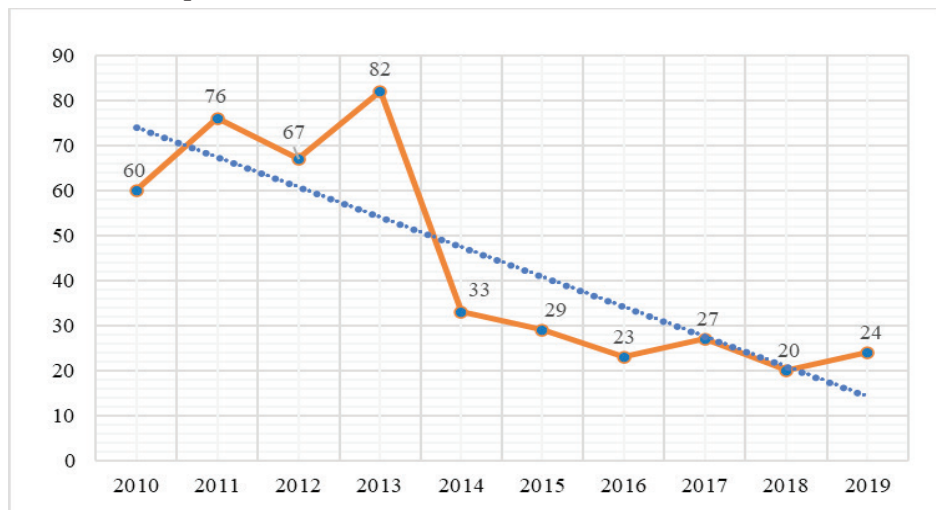
If the illustrated data by year is considered in more detail, it can be concluded that this decline is not linear, but there are certain “jumps” in the number of convicted persons. The lowest number of convictions was recorded in 2018 (1,994 convicted persons), while the highest number was recorded in 2011 (3,769 convicted persons).

In the structure of convicted persons, adults make up 98.46%, and minors make up 1.64%. If the number of minors, who were found guilty of crimes against public traffic safety, is observed separately, a downward trend can also be noted. However, in the case of minors who have been declared guilty, a significant decrease has been recorded since 2014, which continues with smaller oscillations until 2019, (Chart 2).

The graphic shows that compared to 2010, the number of convicted minors in 2019 is lower by two thirds (about 60%). The highest number of juvenile convicts was in 2013 (82%), and the lowest in 2018 (20%).

In the last two columns of table 1, the rate of convicted persons for traffic offenses is shown. The rate of convicted persons per 100,000 inhabitants is decreasing in the period 2010-2019. year. In 2010, it was 42.01%, while in 2019 it was 31.07%. If data from 2010 and 2019 are compared, the rate of convicted persons per 100,000 inhabitants decreased by one quarter (26.04%).

Chart 2. Presentation of criminal offenses against public traffic safety according to the number of minors declared guilty in the period from 2010 to 2019 in the Republic of Serbia



Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

Even more significant is the decrease in the rate of convicted persons per 100,000 registered motor vehicles. In 2010, the rate was 169.25, while in 2019, the rate was 83.59. If we compare 2010 and 2019, we can conclude that the rate of convicted persons per 100,000. of registered motor vehicles fell by more than 50%. In all indicators, the declining trend is not linear, but contains oscillations, which shows that the decline is not fixed but varies over the years.

A decrease was also recorded in the quota of convicted persons for traffic offenses in the analysed period (Table 2). From the total number of legally convicted persons for criminal offenses in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2010-2019, persons convicted of traffic offenses accounted for 13.13% in 2010 and 7.24% in 2019. Based on this, it can be concluded that the share of traffic crime in 2019 was significantly reduced in total crime in the Republic of Serbia (about 50%) compared to 2010. There is also a decrease in the quota for the number of accused persons, while the quota for the number of filed criminal charges for criminal offenses against traffic safety in the analysed period is on the rise.

Table 2. Quota of traffic crime in the period from 2000 to 2019 in the Republic of Serbia

Year	Submitted criminal charges			Accused persons			Convicted persons		
	Total	For traffic offences		Total	For traffic offences		Total	For traffic offences	
	Number	Number	%	Number	Number	%	Number	Number	%
2000	87601	6346	7,24	46475	6382	13,73	34223	5692	16,63
2001	97071	7526	7,75	48136	6443	13,38	35566	5753	16,18
2002	107312	7243	6,75	51535	6792	13,18	35997	6017	16,72
2003	98148	6519	6,64	46680	6025	12,91	35097	5451	15,53
2004	91573	6902	7,54	47607	6161	12,94	36222	5543	15,30
2005	103481	6747	6,52	51102	6200	12,13	39135	5590	14,28
2006	108742	7115	6,54	57636	6282	10,90	42988	5748	13,37
2007	102136	7834	7,67	51404	5963	11,60	40690	5488	13,49
2008	105808	8990	8,50	55868	6850	12,26	44367	6228	14,04
2009	103523	8506	8,22	52869	6812	12,88	42782	6105	14,27
2010	78026	5418	6,94	30065	3405	11,33	23321	3063	13,13
2011	92530	6609	7,14	42579	4359	10,24	33097	3769	11,39
2012	96792	7311	7,55	44567	4052	9,09	33624	3390	10,08
2013	95255	7896	8,29	49004	4392	8,96	34889	3590	10,29
2014	95710	7509	7,85	50947	4176	8,20	37410	3494	9,34
2015	112114	7923	7,07	44565	3065	6,88	35115	2645	7,53
2016	99880	7863	7,87	42115	2542	6,04	34557	2199	6,36
2017	93813	7800	8,31	39744	2523	6,35	33392	2277	6,82
2018	95546	8481	8,88	36995	2186	5,91	31298	1994	6,37
2019	95700	8744	9,14	34362	2329	6,78	29788	2158	7,24

Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

4. The number of traffic crimes in the period from 2000 to 2019

By comparing the number of persons convicted for traffic crimes, in a longer period of time from 2000 to 2019, an even more significant trend of decreasing traffic crime is noticeable (Table 3). This analysis is particularly important in order to observe changes in the trend of traffic crimes in the Republic of Serbia, before and after the beginning of the implementation of LRTS.

Table 3. The number and trends of persons convicted of crimes against public transport safety in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2000 to 2019

Year	Total number of convicted persons	Increase/decrease in % compared to 2000.	Change (increase/decrease) in % compared to the previous year
2000	5692	100	0,00
2001	5753	101,07	1,07
2002	6017	105,71	4,59
2003	5451	95,77	-9,41
2004	5543	97,38	1,69
2005	5590	98,21	0,85
2006	5748	100,98	2,83
2007	5488	96,416	-4,52
2008	6228	109,42	13,48
2009	6105	107,25	-1,97
2010	3063	53,81	-49,83
2011	3769	66,21	23,05
2012	3390	59,56	-10,06
2013	3590	63,07	5,90
2014	3494	61,38	-2,67
2015	2645	46,47	-24,30
2016	2199	38,63	-16,86
2017	2277	40,00	3,55
2018	1994	35,03	-12,43
2019	2158	37,91	8,22

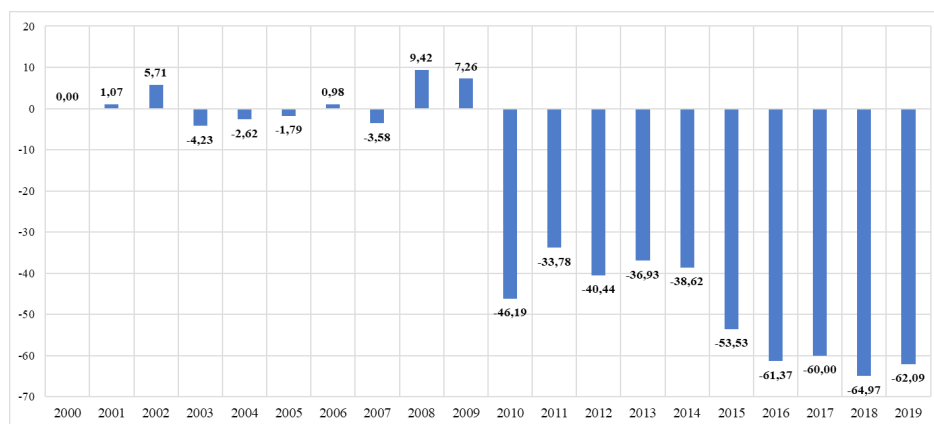
Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

The total number of persons convicted for traffic offenses in 2000 was 5,692, while in 2009 it increased to 6,105, and in 2010 the number of persons convicted was halved to 3,063. In 2019, there were 2,158 convicted persons, which is one third less than in 2010 and two thirds less than in 2009.

The second column of table 3 shows the base index (increase/decrease in percentages compared to 2000). The changes show that in 2019 there was a decrease in the number of criminal offenses by 62.09%, compared to 2000. It is even more significant to point out that from 2000 to 2009 there

was an increasing trend in the number of convicted persons (7.26% more in 2009 compared to 2000). After that, there was a significant drop in 2010 (by 46.19% compared to 2000). According to these data, it is clearly observed that in 2019 the number of convicted persons for this group of crimes decreased by 62.09% (Chart 3).

Chart 3. Change in the trend (base index) of convicted crimes against public traffic safety in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2000 to 2019 compared to 2000



Source: Republic Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia (2025).

The last column of a Table 3 shows the change in the chain index (change in percentage increase/decrease compared to the previous year). The trend of growth (2000–2009) and decline (2010–2019) of traffic crimes is not linear, but there are variations in the trend of traffic crimes in the Republic of Serbia in the analysed period.

5. Conclusion

Implementation of legal measures in the field of traffic, in the period 2010-2019, had an impact on the reduction of the number of committed traffic offenses in the Republic of Serbia. If the number of final convictions for traffic offenses is analysed, in 2019 the number of traffic offenses decreased by 29.54% compared to 2010. The decreasing trend is even more significant if the period before the implementation of LRTS is analysed. Thus, in 2019, the number of traffic crimes decreased by 64.65% compared to 2009. This

is supported by other indicators presented in the research part - the rate of traffic crime and the quota of traffic crime. If the data in the analysed period are compared, it can be concluded that in 2019 the rate of traffic crime per 100,000 registered motor vehicles decreased by more than 50%, while the traffic crime rate per 100,000 inhabitants decreased by one quarter (26.04%), compared to 2010. Also, the traffic crime rate in 2019 is half of that in 2010.

Along with the above conclusion, it is necessary to point out the following facts. First, the trend of reducing the rate of traffic crime is not linear, but has certain oscillations. This means that the declining trend exists, but it is not fixed, because it varies from year to year in the analysed period (which is proven by the analysis of the change in the chain index). Second, the impact of the application of legal measures in the field of traffic on the reduction of the number of committed traffic crimes is indirect and stems from the blanket nature of criminal law norms. Thirdly, the basis for the aforementioned conclusion also stems from the fact that in the analysed period there were no changes to the Criminal Code (2005) related to criminal offenses against public traffic safety (tightening of sanctions or narrowing the criminal zone), so in this sense the results of the research can be linked to the effects of the application of legislation in the field of traffic safety.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.P., S.A. and J.D.; methodology, A.P.; resources, A.P.; formal analysis, A.P.; writing - original draft preparation, A.P.; writing - review and editing, A.P., S.A. and J.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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PROMENA STOPE SAOBRAĆAJNOG KRIMINALITETA U REPUBLICI SRBIJI U PRVOJ DEKADI GLOBALNE AKCIJE ZA BEZBEDNOST NA PUTEVIMA

APSTRAKT: Usvajanjem Zakona o bezbednosti saobraćaja na putevima u prošloj deceniji, poznatijoj kao *Dekada globalne akcije za bezbednost na putevima*, stvoreni su normativni okviri za uspešan i efikasan napredak u oblasti bezbednosti saobraćaja na putevima, koji zahtevaju strateško i sistemsko delovanje u sprečavanju saobraćajnih delikata. Osnovni zadatak politike bezbednosti saobraćaja leži u uspostavljanju takvog zaštitnog sistema koji će imati dugoročne efekte u pogledu smanjenja broja izvršenih saobraćajnih delikata i njihovih posledica. U tom smislu, politika upravljanja bezbednošću saobraćaja ima neposredan uticaj na kriminalnu politiku suzbijanja saobraćajnog kriminaliteta. Ove dve politike se međusobno prožimaju i čine jedinstveni sistem sa neraskidivim vezama, jer veći uspeh na polju upravljanja bezbednošću saobraćaja znači veću bezbednost, uz manje kršenja saobraćajnih propisa, pa samim tim i smanjenje broja saobraćajnih delikata. Danas, kada se nalazimo u drugoj *Dekadi globalne akcije za bezbednost na putevima*, možemo se osvrnuti na efekte prve Dekade. Analize uticaja brojnih mera na bezbednost saobraćaja na putevima u prethodnoj deceniji pokazuju da je uspostavljanje zaštitnog sistema u saobraćaju uticalo na smanjenje broja saobraćajnih nezgoda

na putevima i žrtava u nezgodama. Međutim, analiza kretanja stope saobraćajnog kriminaliteta nije bila predmet razmatranja. Stoga se u ovom radu analizira na koji način je promena normativnog okvira i njegova primena u Republici Srbiji, u okviru prve Dekade, uticala na saobraćajni kriminalitet. Koristeći statistički metod analiziran je trend kretanja saobraćajnog kriminaliteta u periodu od 2010 do 2019. godine. Na osnovu izvršenog istraživanja došlo se do zaključka da je u analiziranom periodu stopa saobraćajnog kriminaliteta bila u opadanju.

Ključne reči: stopa saobraćajnog kriminaliteta, saobraćajni kriminalitet, saobraćajna delinkvencija.

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