European Railway Agency

An agency of the European Union

The “nudge” project – what ERA is doing about railway suicides

REstrail final conference

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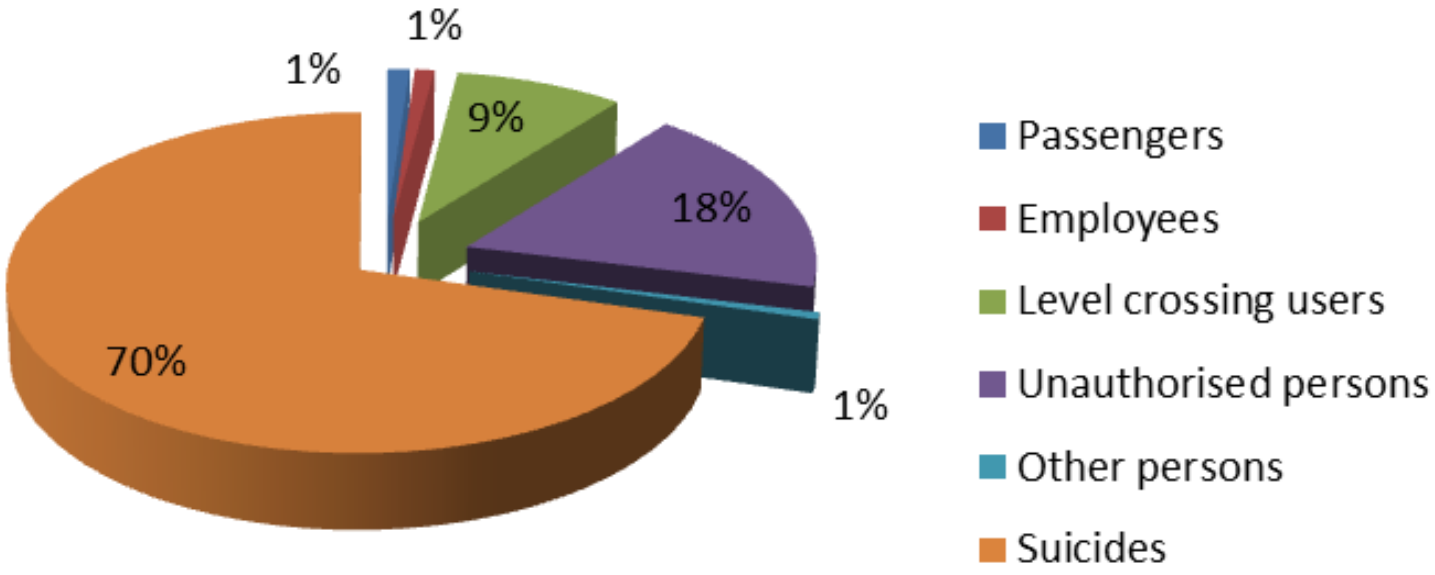
Outline

- Why is ERA doing something?
- What are we going to do and how we are going to do it?
- When are we going to do it?

Objectives

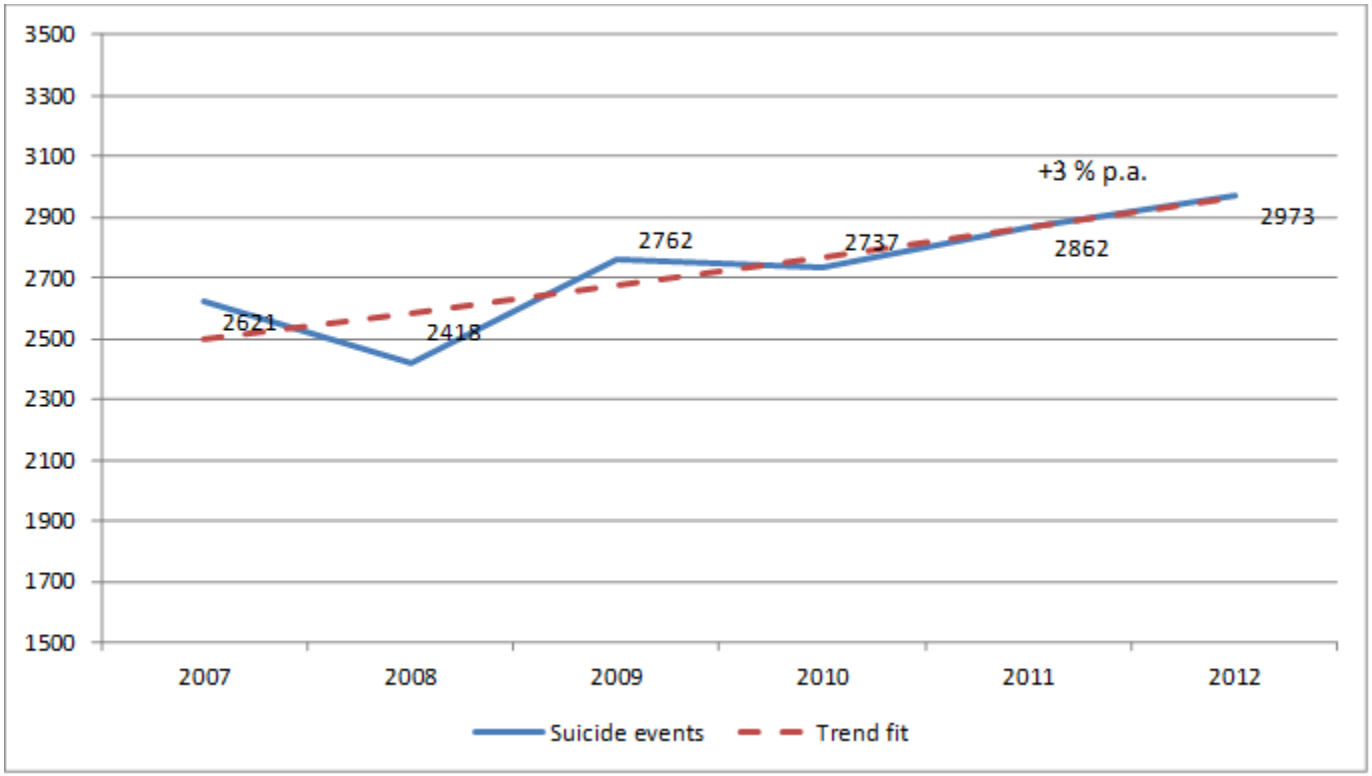
- An understanding of the:
  - need for action by ERA
  - meaning of “nudge”
  - systematic approach using the COM-B model/behaviour change wheel
  - next steps

Suicide = 70 % of all railway fatalities



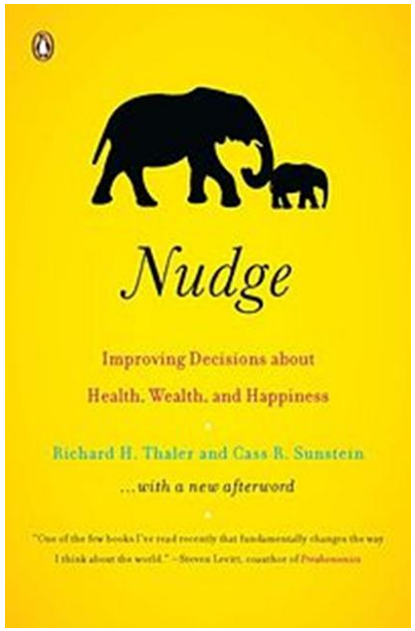
Fatalities per victim category on EU railways (EU-27: 2010-2012)

Suicide = 3000 /year in Europe



What is “nudge”?

- **Nudge** *verb* \ˈnəj\
- : to touch or push (someone or something) gently
- : to push (someone) gently with your elbow in order to get that person's attention
- : to encourage (someone) to do something



Example 1 of “nudge”

Schiphol Airport's Urinal Flies

Example 2 – We are not rational

Reflective

A Polo is £9,790.
Honestly, a Polo is £9,790.
It's true, a Polo is £9,790.
No really, a Polo is £9,790.
Trust us, a Polo is £9,790.
Look, a Polo is £9,790.
No joke, a Polo is £9,790.
Seriously, a Polo is £9,790.

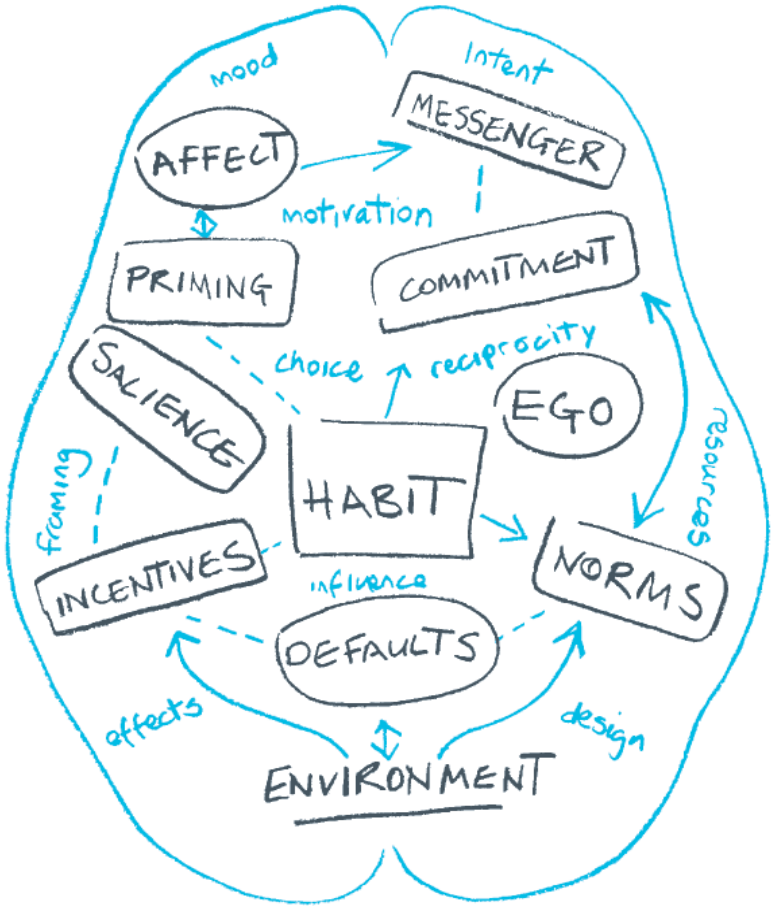
Unbelievable value.

Evaluations, plans…

Automatic

Emotions, impulses…

UK Behavioural Insights Team - MINDSPACE



What is the psychology behind “nudge”?

A dual process model in which human behaviour is shaped by two systems:

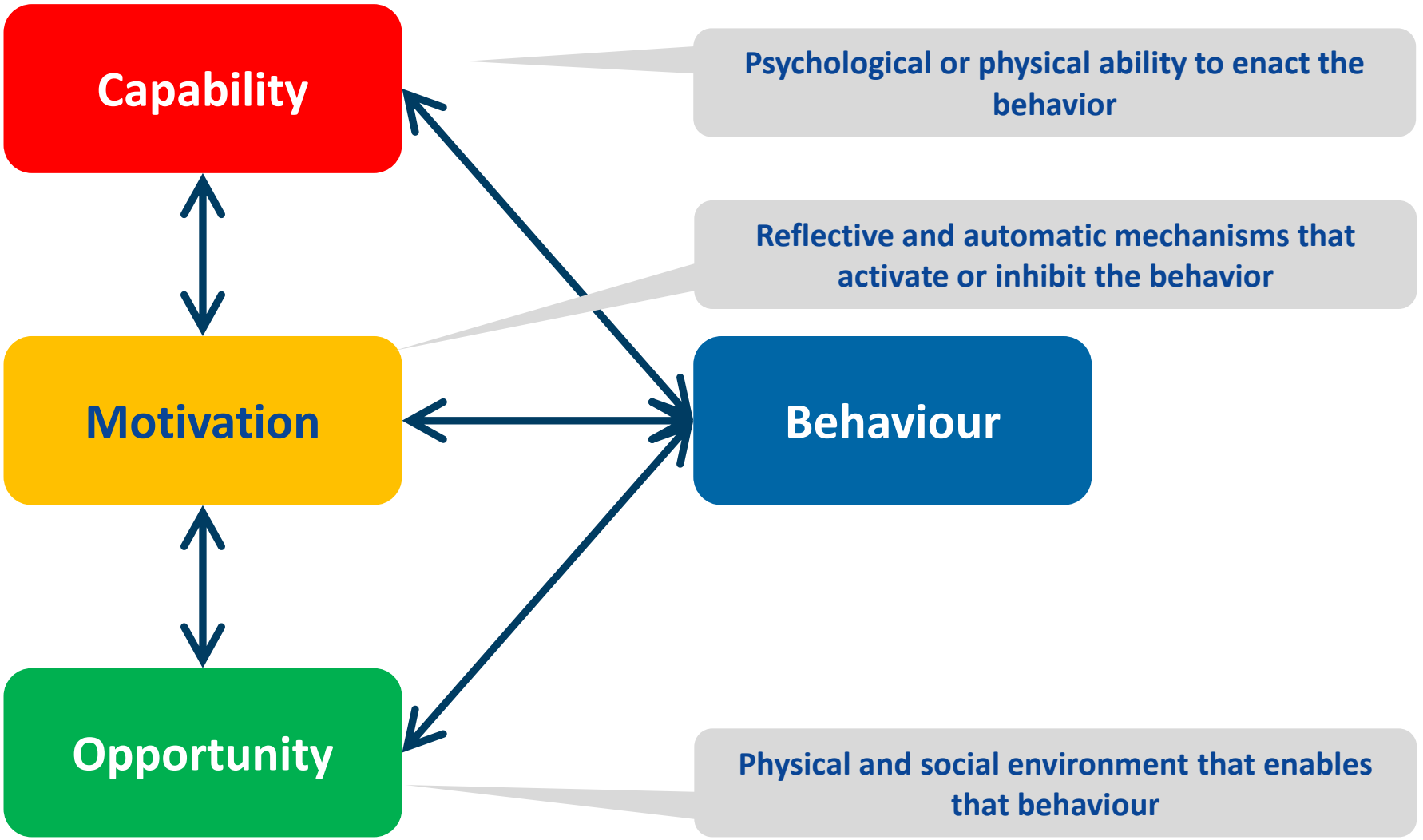
- **A reflective**, goal-oriented system driven by our knowledge, values and intentions
- Used in typical suicide prevention behavioural interventions
- Designed to alter beliefs and attitudes, e.g. posters, information campaigns and education at schools

- An Automatic, **affective** system driven by feelings, habits, triggers in our environment
- Rapid, requires little or no cognitive engagement
- Designed to alter “choice architecture” e.g. default options, information about others’ behaviour, cues outside awareness

Suicide – Fiction and facts (WHO, Geneva, 2000)

Fiction	Fact
1. People who talk about suicide do not commit suicide.	1.Most people who kill themselves have given definite warnings of their intentions.
2. Suicidal people are absolutely intent on dying.	2. A majority are ambivalent.
3. Suicide happens without warning.	3. Suicidal people often give ample indication.
4. Improvement after a crisis means that the suicide risk is over.	4. Many suicides occur in a period of improvement when the person has the energy and the will to turn despairing thoughts into destructive action.
5. Not all suicides can be prevented.	5. True. But a majority are preventable.
6. Once a person is suicidal he/she is always suicidal.	6. Suicidal thoughts may return but they are not permanent and in some people they may never return.

HOW? Understanding behaviour using the COM-B model[1]



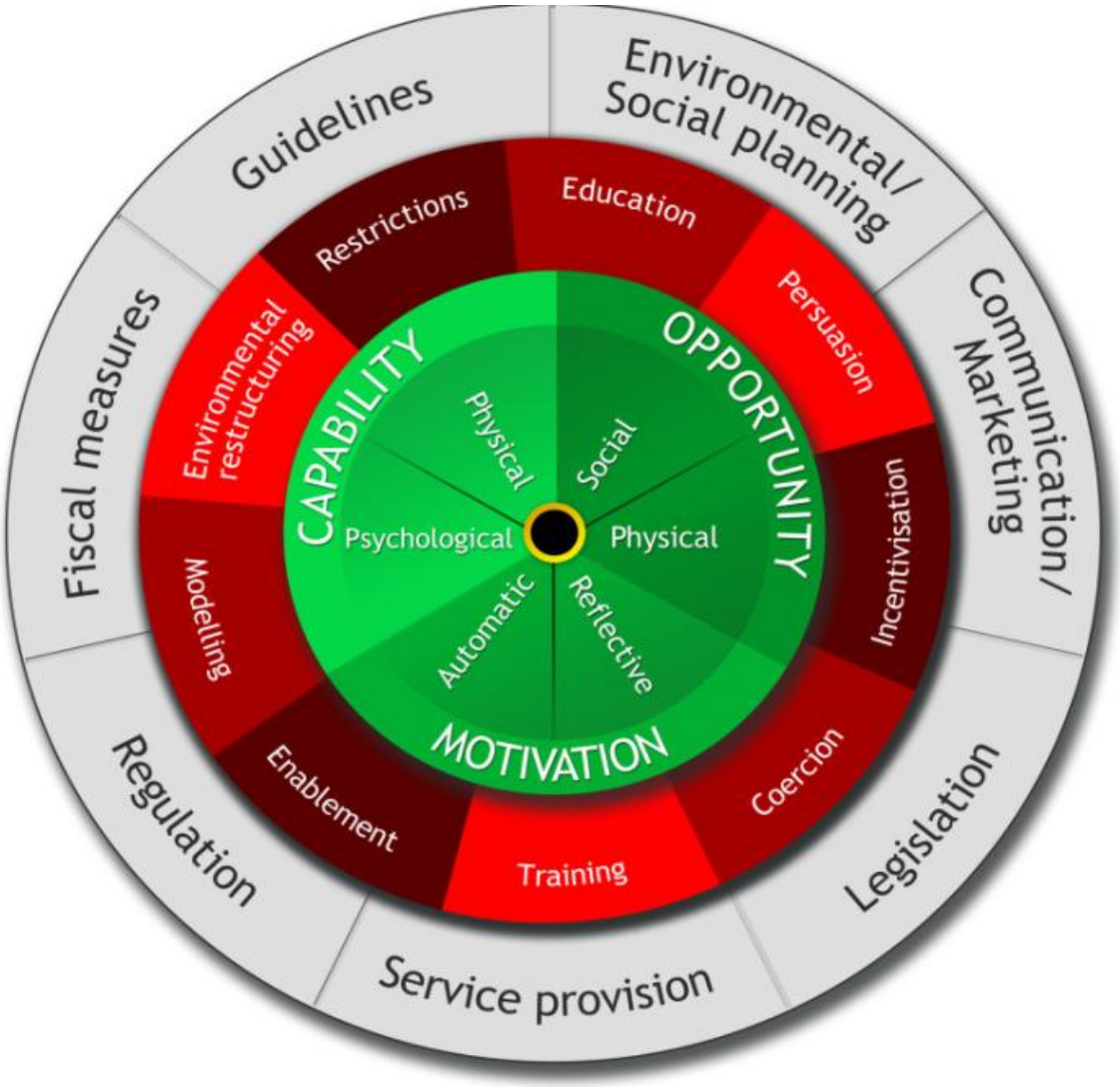
[1]Professor Susan Michie, Dr Lou Atkins & Professor Robert West

How? Systematically using the Behaviour Change Wheel[1]

Sources of behaviour

Intervention functions

Policy categories



[1]Professor Susan Michie, Dr Lou Atkins & Professor Robert West

ERA's approach - summary

- Systematic approach to designing and evaluating behaviour change interventions (avoid the "ISLAGIATT" principle)
- Focus on automatic motivation
- Interventions include all phases of the suicidal behaviour process not only just before the individual is about to make a suicide attempt
- No "magic bullet" intervention
- ERA acts as a facilitator between the railway actors and other parties

When? Next steps

Design an intervention in a systematic way to be launched in 2015:

- Diagnose the behaviour and identify what needs to change
- Identify intervention functions e.g. environmental restructuring
  - Adding objects to the environment
  - Prompts/cues
  - Remove/add aversive stimulus (e.g. psychological barriers)
  - …
- Set up a focus group to evaluate the most feasible interventions for the pilot project

Example 3 of “nudge”

Making the railway system work better for society.

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