



NEWS RELEASE

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Reducing Speed – little progress, but everyone can act!

23 February 2010, Brussels – The European Transport Safety Council⁽¹⁾ held today a conference entitled “Future Directions in Speed Management”. Excessive or inappropriate speed has a singularly devastating impact on health and safety of road users, increasing both the risk of a crash and the severity of crash outcomes. It is estimated that speeding contributes to as much as one third of all crashes resulting in death⁽²⁾, and it is the most important contributory factor to road deaths and injuries. Therefore tackling speed must form a central part of the EU’s forthcoming Road Safety Action Programme. New ambitious targets and strong measures to reduce road death and serious injury by 2020 are expected in the new programme by the road safety community when it is published this spring⁽³⁾.

Trends in driving speeds show that overall there is little progress in Europe. Average speeds and speed limit violations remain high with encouraging signs only in a few countries⁽⁴⁾. In most societies speeding is still considered more socially acceptable than drink driving, and the risk posed by so-called ‘minor speeding’ is also grossly underestimated: in fact it is estimated that at any one moment about 35% of drivers exceed speed limits outside built-up areas and as much as 50% in urban areas⁽⁵⁾. The fact that speeding is so common poses a very significant threat to safety.

Yet there are numerous measures that can help manage speed: **action can be taken in all of the road safety pillars**. New measures that ETSC hopes will be adopted in the framework of the upcoming 4th Road Safety Action Programme should include for example as a matter of priority guidance to Member States to tackle traffic law enforcement of speed as well as a new Cross Border Enforcement Directive⁽⁶⁾. The in vehicle Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) technology and their supporting digital speed maps should also be developed, as well as EU Guidelines to reduce speed via traffic calming measures. Experts were invited to demonstrate how each element of the road transport system can be improved to tackle speed. Mr. Ian Aspinall spoke about the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme that has successfully been implemented in the United Kingdom, with clear evidence that after attending the scheme offenders have safer and more responsible attitudes towards road user behaviour than before⁽⁷⁾. Professor Oliver Carsten spoke about the safety potential that can be attained with the deployment of ISA systems, a technology that lets vehicles “know” the speed limit of the roads on which they are driven, and inform the driver or act upon the driving task to facilitate compliance with speed limits. Prof Fred Wegman spoke about the infrastructure improvements that can be made to help drivers behave safely, as embodied by the Dutch sustainable safety approach.

Action can be taken in all the road safety pillars and at all levels of society and in all professional sectors to tackle speeding. Professionals from public administrations at the European level (European Commission), the national level (the Swedish Road Administration), and the regional level (the Province of Limburg) were spoke at the conference, as well as a speaker responsible for the management of infrastructures (Autostrade per l’Italia, to speak about the “Tutor” section control system recently installed in Italy to enforce speed), and a speaker from a private company (Preem, to talk about safe fleet management)⁽⁸⁾.

The conference also marked the end of the ETSC's "ShLOW!" project: Show me How Slow, financed by the European Commission's DG Research 7th Research Framework Programme. ShLOW has focused on the work of students, as young individuals are a segment of society that is particularly at risk⁽⁹⁾. Students were selected to receive training in speed management and run a small scale activity of their choice to demonstrate through concrete actions how speed reductions can be achieved. Three winners were presented an award during the conference for their excellent work throughout the project. Petter Naef, Katarina Hedman, and Madelein Johansson from the University of Malmö convinced the Post in Malmö to let them run a speed awareness training with their fleet drivers. José López Sánchez from the University of Granada convinced the local town of Albox in Spain to trial his infrastructure project aimed at creating the illusion of narrower road lanes through thick road markings. Per Wulf from the Medical University of Hannover in Germany convinced the city of Hannover to trial an infrastructure measure that helps communicate how a 30km/h speed limit offers much safer braking distances than a 50 km/h limit on a road near a school, with the help of special road markings. **All students conducted before and after speed measurements and demonstrated marked speed reductions thanks to their actions⁽¹⁰⁾.**

Speed management is an area of road safety work that has been and continues to be extensively investigated, and many solutions exist. While political commitment is needed, individuals from all sectors and at all levels of society can still play a role in demonstrating and implementing these solutions. Using our road network and being exposed to excessive and illegal speeding by other road users is a daily reality for all of us, and we can all act to reduce speeding.

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Notes to Editors

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. See www.etsc.eu

(2) ETSC (2008) Managing Speed Towards Safe and Sustainable Road Transport
<http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Managing%20Speed%20Towards%20Safe%20and%20Sustainable%20Road%20Transport.pdf>

(3) ETSC (2008) Blueprint for a 4th Road Safety Action Programme
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Blueprint_for_a_4th%20Road_Safety_Action_Programme_ETSC_Sept%2008.pdf
Open Letter to Commissioner Kallas on Ambitious New Targets for 2020
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/copy_of_copy_of_copy_of_Open%20Letter%20to%20Commissioner%20Kallas%20Ambitious%20Road%20Safety%20Targets%202020%20for%20the%20EU_Final.pdf

(4) ETSC's next PIN Flash will provide an update on driver behaviour including speed, and will be launched in April 2010. <http://www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php>

(5) This is estimated on the basis of a limited number of countries as some countries do not collect speed data. To be published in ETSC's upcoming PIN Flash.

(6) More measures to tackle speed that the EU could adopt in the next decade can be found in ETSC (2008) Blueprint for a 4th Road Safety Action Programme
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Blueprint_for_a_4th%20Road_Safety_Action_Programme_ETSC_Sept%2008.pdf

(7) Provisions are taken so that in the not so distant future, about half a million drivers per year will have attended a road safety awareness course in the UK within this scheme. ETSC 2009:
<http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Speed%20Monitor%206.pdf>

(8) The agenda of the conference can be accessed online:
http://www.etsc.eu/documents/copy_of_copy_of_Future%20Directions%20in%20Speed%20Management.pdf
The presentations given at the conference will be available on www.shlow.eu in the coming days.

(9) Road Death is the first cause of premature death among 18-25 year olds. OECD 2006 Young Drivers The Road to Safety. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD/European Conference of Transport Ministers ECMT, Paris.

(10) These projects as well as the projects of other students within "ShLOW!" can be retrieved on www.shlow.eu