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How to create a Road Safety Day or Week in your country?

What are Road Safety Days or Weeks?

Road Safety Days or Road Safety Weeks are part of a set of road safety campaigning activities that aim to improve road user behaviour. They target people by providing information which influences them and thus can have an impact on their course of action. They usually are organised at a national level. The initiators can vary from local citizens to high-level politicians. It is then a matter of forming an organisatory team, decide on the activities, find some public or/and private funding and mobilise the media and the masses around the event.

The duration of Road Safety Days/Weeks are shorter than other forms of campaigning (e.g. publicity campaigns), generally one day up to a week. For this reason, their effect can be considered to be limited. But providing they are part of a more global strategy, they have proven to be quite effective.

How do they influence behaviour?

A simple model of behavioural change shows how behaviour (or "end-effect) can change as a result of a Road Safety Day/ Week:



The **behaviour** is presumed to be a function of the individual's **awareness** of an issue, his **beliefs** about it and, based on these, the **attitudes** he will chose to adopt towards the issue[1].

For example: A Road Safety Day/ Week which would provide with information about the number of fatalities and injuries caused by speeding in the country where the campaign is made, combined with information about how lower speeds can successfully reduce both numbers, may increase the awareness of this issue. This, in turn, will help form beliefs that the road user can have an impact on this decrease by changing his attitude. As a result, his attitude will inspire a change in behaviour and the driver, from now on, will travel at a safe speed.

How effective is a Road Safety Day/Week?

General research concerning the impact of road safety campaigns found out that communication campaigns – like Road Safety Days - used in isolation, do not deliver a sustained impact on road safety with a reduction of fatalities or accidents. For this reason, they must form a part of a more global strategy for modifying the behaviour of road users. All campaign assessments show that information obtains better results when it is combined with other measures. These include law enforcement measures (new regulations, reinforced police checks etc.). In those case, the measures are mutually reinforcing[2]. Hence, police enforcement particularly before, during and after a Road Safety Day/Week, should be intensified. However, equally important, is that these combined campaigns last as long as possible, as they will be more effective.

What should be noted when organising one?

In general, the **topics and message**s of a Road Safety Day should be clear, unambiguous, give direction and not be too general. Messages such as "Drive safely" should be avoided as not enough focused[3]. It is recommended to analyse accident data before determining the particular areas of problems and to identify the specific behavioural factors involved that one will look to influence through the campaigns. Based on these results a target group (e.g. young drivers speeding and drink-driving, etc.) can then be identified and directly addressed in the campaigns. Subjects of campaigns can include for instance speeding and braking distances, or the problem of drink-driving and the diminished perceptions and reactions.

Considering the **management** of a Road Safety Day or Week, it is recommended that there is a key agency at a national level (government department, National Road Safety Council, etc.) responsible for the co-ordination of the campaign[4]. Communities, local police and other actors should also be involved and support actions in order to reach the public on regional and local levels. The police are especially essential partners for campaigns targeting drink-driving or speeding. The high profile of the police on Road Safety Day actions can send a powerful deterrent message.

Events and media used for a Road Safety Day will depend largely on the target group. In general, proposed events and media for the launch of a Road Safety Day may include:

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- Simulators, visual and reaction tests, driver training;
- Conferences, seminars, round-table debates and other discussions;
- Street demonstrations, events and fairs; and
- TV, radio, cinema spots, talk shows, etc.

In particular, events which involve people in an active way will enable them to "experience" the issue. This will help increasing their awareness of the particular problem and influence the attitude towards it.

Where have they been carried out so far?

At present, approximately half of the European states run national Road Safety Days. Moreover, the European Commissioner for Transport, Jacques Barrot, announced at the informal transport council meeting in Bregenz (March 2006) that a European Road Safety Day was under consideration by the European Commission.

In Germany a nationwide Road Safety Day (www.tag-der-verkehrssicherheit.de) was carried out for the first time in 2005. Due to positive experiences the Road Safety Day will be held in future every June. Under the umbrella of the National Road Safety Council (DVR) it is planned to propose one optional topic on the safety day every year that is then communicated by all participating actors. The DVR found that local activities drew public interest of citizens. More evaluation of Road Safety Days is also planned for the future.

In France, since 2000 a Road Safety Week is carried out under the chairmanship of the Sécurité Routière (http://www.securiteroutiere.equipement.gouv.fr). While in the first Road Safety Week only general issues were mentioned, there has been a change to specific problem areas and target groups (e.g. alcohol). An evaluation has been undertaken and a positive impact on road safety has been assessed.[5]

In the UK, there is a Road Safety Week coordinated by the road safety charity Brake (www.brake.org.uk) and part-funded by the government. Other involved actors are local authorities, police forces, private companies and individuals. In 2005, it focused on child pedestrian and cyclist road safety. During that week media launches were held at 11 schools around the UK. The National launch received national TV coverage.

Two independent Road Safety Weeks are organized in Cyprus every year by the police and supported by other public departments and sponsored by the private sector. The topics of the campaigns differ from year to year according to problems that are detected. In 2005, the first week focused on speeding and the second week on seat belt and children safety. Although the campaigns are not officially evaluated it is considered that they are very useful and have positive effects on road safety.

Country	Road Safety	
	Day	Week
Austria	n	n
Belgium	(n)	n
Cyprus	y	n
Czech Republic	n	y
Denmark	n	n
Estonia	n	n
Finland	(n)	n
France	n	y
Germany	y	n
Greece	n	n
Hungary	y	n
Ireland	n/a	n/a
Italy	y	n
Latvia	n/a	n/a
Lithuania	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	n	y
Malta	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	(n)	n
Norway	n	n
Poland	y	n
Portugal	n	n
Slovakia	n	n
Slovenia	(n)	(n)
Spain	n	n
Sweden	n	n
Switzerland	n	n
U.K.	n	y

y: yes; n: no;
(n): no, but an event similar to Road Safety Day or Week

References

1 www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au/Facts/papers_2001/paper20/paper20.PDF
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4 Delaney, Amanda et al.: A Review of Mass Media Campaigns in Road Safety. Monash 2004
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