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Drivers are not more dangerous when older

MEPS are currently debating the revision of the Driving Licence Directive (91/439/EEC), including the requirement to renew Driving Licences at five yearly intervals from 65 years of age and whether this renewal will be linked to medical testing for these drivers.

Contrary to popular belief, research has shown that a healthy older driver is no more likely to be in an accident than a younger driver¹. Healthy older drivers typically try to compensate for deficiencies, e.g. by driving slower and avoiding rush-hour traffic or poor lighting conditions, or avoiding risk-taking in general².

"In fact as far as driving ability and driving skills are concerned, healthy old drivers have been found to be generally as good as or even better than young drivers" stated European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) Executive Director Jörg Beckmann. "The proposal to increase the frequency of driving licence renewal at old age does not take research findings into account, but merely increases the licensing authorities' administrative burden" he added.

Instead, measures should be taken to introduce road safety education programmes for elderly people such as those already in place in the Netherlands. Here driving proficiency trips and information meetings for drivers over 50 have enabled many to remain active. Other supportive measures include better vehicle design that improves driving performance and comfort for all, including older people³.

Jörg Beckmann called upon MEPs to support new initiatives to train older drivers. "Inefficient medical tests will needlessly discriminate against healthy older drivers who pose no risk to others" he said.

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¹ Hakamies-Blomqvist, L. (1998), Older Drivers Accident Risk: Conceptual and methodological issues. *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 30, 305-312

² Kraay J.H., and Methorst, R. (2000). *Elderly People in a Safe Traffic Environment*. OECD

³ ETSC Proceedings of the Fifth European Transport Safety Lecture 1998 and Hakamies-Blomqvist 2003. See [ETSC website](#).

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. It brings together 27 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across EU Member States.