



Prioritising Road Safety and Sustaining the Verona Process

As the U.K. is the best-performing EU country on road safety it should prioritise actions to extend its experience across Europe during its upcoming Presidency. Britain has one of the lowest death rates in the world (7.4 deaths per billion motor vehicle km. compared with an EU average of 13.1 - ETSC 2003). This level is due partly to the U.K.'s traffic law enforcement efforts, where it leads in particular on reducing speeds with the use of its 5,000 fixed cameras. Its National Safety Camera Programme led to a 32% reduction in the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit at camera sites and reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured by 40%. Its infrastructure is also amongst the best in Europe integrating road safety considerations into engineering innovations. The U.K. has also fostered EuroNCAP enabling rapid progress towards safer cars. It is playing a strong role in promoting the sister programme, EuroRap the European Road Safety Assessment Programme which is **providing a safety rating for roads**.

The U.K. should ensure that this high level of performance and commitment to reducing road deaths is duplicated across Europe. It is therefore crucial that more than 'due attention to the promotion of road safety' is paid by the U.K. Presidency of the EU.

Its Presidency comes at an important crossroads as the European Commission puts forward its Mid-Term Review of the Third Road Safety Action Programme. The Presidency also has the task of chairing the third Verona Council Meeting on Road Safety. This will be an important moment to take stock in reviewing progress towards the ambitious target of halving road deaths and injuries in Europe by 2010.

The Verona Process

The signing of the Verona Charter in 2003 and the follow-up meeting of the Dutch Presidency in 2004 have initiated a political process on road safety. This evolution could result in a process for road safety similar to the Cardiff or Lisbon processes. The principal aim of the Verona Process must be to ensure political will and leadership in a policy area where effective measures are well-known and ready to be implemented, but simply lack the commitment and responsibility from top-level political decision-makers. Therefore, ETSC urges the U.K. Presidency to launch the Verona Process with the mid-term review of the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme as its main agenda point at the third Verona Council meeting in November.

Mid Term Review of the Third Road Safety Action Programme

The review of progress towards the target to halve road deaths by 50% by the year 2010 is eagerly awaited under the UK Presidency. ETSC welcomed the Third Road Safety Action Programme's ambitious target, clearly as seen from the French example it is possible to make progress if you have the political will. The same impetus is needed in all of the EU 25 Member States. We expect the review to take in the progress towards the target and possible addition of new measures as part of the Review. ETSC suggests the highlighting of two fields of road safety activity in the forthcoming mid-term review of the 3^d Road Safety Action Programme:

1. New Legislation on Road Infrastructure

ETSC believes that road infrastructure improvements can make a significant contribution towards reducing the frequency and seriousness of road traffic accidents. The Presidency should ensure that the European Commission fulfils its commitment to developing best practice guidelines in the fields of urban safety management, speed reduction, low cost measures and safety audit. ETSC welcomes the Commission's intention to introduce a framework Directive on road infrastructure safety under the U.K. Presidency. This Directive will introduce a system for the harmonized management of "high risk sites" and road safety audits for roads on the Trans-European network. As part of this, the EU Presidency should also consider safety audits and safety impact assessment to be a condition for all EU-funded infrastructure.

2. Implementation of Enforcement Recommendation

ETSC supports the conclusions adopted at the Verona Council in 2004 which include a strong focus on the enforcement of traffic law. The U.K. Presidency should ensure that EU Transport Ministers continue to account for the progress made so far in implementing the Commission's Recommendation on enforcement in their Member States. The U.K. Presidency should also support Member States' efforts to promote the use of in-vehicle technologies such as seat belt reminders and alcohol interlocks, and to stimulate the development and use of intelligent speed adaptation devices. Moreover the EU Presidency should work with the European Commission to prepare legislation to facilitate cross-border enforcement. The U.K. should take up the ratification of the EU Convention on Driving Disqualifications (1998). The Presidency should also support Member States who are forging ahead with a network of information exchange to facilitate cross-border enforcement.

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