

Road Safety under the Irish Chairmanship of the Presidency of the EU

This Memorandum briefly outlines ETSC's priorities for the Irish Presidency of the EU and presents our recommendations on key EU policy dossiers¹. ETSC welcomes that the Irish Presidency of the EU has identified road safety as a priority, under the new Irish Road safety Strategy which is scheduled for adoption early 2013. We hope that Mr. Leo Varadkar, Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Irish Government will show their leadership in delivering road safety in Ireland and in the EU. This is absolutely crucial following a slowdown in the reduction trend of road deaths in the EU. In 2011 there were over 30,200 deaths representing only a 2% overall reduction in comparison to 2010. Moreover, some countries with a long standing record in reducing their road traffic deaths have seen dramatic increases (Sweden +18%, Germany +10%) in comparison to 2010. Ireland has achieved commendable results however between 2001 and 2010 managing to reduce road deaths by 48%. This laudable progress is the result of effective and concerted wide action to place road safety high up on the political agenda. Key issues carried over from the Cypriot Presidency are the discussions about the EU budget and the TEN-T, the tachograph legislation as well as the new Roadworthiness package released by the Commission in July 2012. At a national level, it is fundamental to keep road safety a priority on the agenda to assure that Ireland continues its steps toward achieving the 2020 road safety objective of halving road deaths.

During the Irish Presidency a number of issues presented by the European Commission in the "Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020" are on the agenda. These include the much awaited, progress on tackling serious injuries on our roads.

Road Safety Developments in Ireland

Since the Government has adopted a more strategic approach to road safety in 1998, Ireland has continuously managed to decrease the number of road deaths being one of the good performers in Europe. It has 47 deaths per million inhabitants, while the EU average is 60, and progress in reducing road deaths has been steady since 2001 and the adoption of the first EU target. Road deaths decreased by 48% cutting from 411 in 2001 to 212 in 2010; therefore almost reaching the EU 2010 target of halving the numbers in road deaths. Moreover, according to ETSC's latest PIN report, in 2011, Ireland saw a decrease of 12% in road deaths compared to 2010 (EU average reduction -2%). As a result, Ireland has received the "2010 Road Safety PIN Award" at the 4th ETSC Road Safety PIN Conference in Brussels as recognition of their

sustained efforts in reducing road deaths.

A new Strategic Plan for 2012-2020 is expected to be launched during the Presidency. The new road safety strategy will set the task of making Ireland's roads as safe as the best performing countries in the EU. In the new Strategy Ireland will adopt a move towards a safe systems approach to road safety for the remainder of the decade. The Strategy will also bring Ireland in line with the European Union Strategy. All of the measures contained in the Strategy are intended to make Ireland's roads safer and are based on societal interests, effectiveness, proportionality and costs of interventions. There will be an added emphasis on the reduction of serious injuries. Education and campaigning coupled with stronger and high profile Police enforcement

and specific anti-drink driving legislation is how Ireland tackled drink driving and reduced the number of alcohol-related road deaths. Regular campaigns on road safety, organised by the Irish Road Safety Authority and the Garda (Irish Police), bring to front political engagement

with support from the President of Ireland. This demonstrates a stable commitment to road safety and a healthy approach to enforcing targeted legislation. Moreover, there are currently 54 Irish entities which have signed the European Road Safety Charter.

The Main Killers on the Road: Speed and Alcohol

This section analyses data linked to the main road safety indicators: speed and alcohol. What contributed most to Ireland's success is the adoption and effective implementation of the Government strategic Plans for 2004-2006 and 2007-2012. The latest strategic plan had two main goals: reducing deaths to not more than 60 deaths or better per million inhabitants and reducing serious injuries by 25%. Through targets, motivation and accountability amongst stakeholders, the likelihood of achieving the desired results increased. The measurement of speed limits was changed as well, on the 20th of January 2005, from miles per hour to kilometres per hour. As a result of these changes, the speed limit for rural regional and local roads was reduced by 17% from 60 mph to 50 mph (from 96,6 km/h to 80 km/h) as latest EuroRAP results had shown that, on this type of road, present on 91% of Ireland's road network, the risk of a fatal collision was as high as 11.5 fatal crashes per billion vehicle kilometres (i.e. six times the motorway collision rate). The reduction in mean speeds on urban roads has been beneficial as well and helped Ireland to reduce its pedestrian deaths. Irish drivers have slowed down markedly in cities. However, the mean speed in 2011 is still 55 km/h with 59% of vehicles exceeding the limit. In residential areas, the mean speed is now 39km/h with only 9% of vehicles exceeding 50km/h, suggesting that there is scope to follow many other European cities by reducing the speed limit to 30 km/h.²

A novel measure of dealing with speed was introduced in November 2010 when mobile speed cameras were put into operation across Irish roads. The cameras are operated in areas that have been identified as having a history of speed related death and injury and are publically listed on the Garda website. Furthermore the cameras are set in well-signalled mobile

vans and the company that handles them moves them periodically according to traffic fluctuation, thus adjusting to the specificity of the Irish traffic (which is not concentrated). Since the introduction of the mobile safety cameras, research conducted by the Road Safety Authority has shown that there has been a noticeable increase in support for the initiative. The positive impact of the speed cameras advertising campaign is evident: agreement that safety cameras save lives has risen by 8%, from 77% in October 2010 to 85% in January 2011; agreement that safety cameras make roads safer has risen by 7%, from 77% in October 2010 to 84% in January 2011. Strong police enforcement as well as increased resources allocated to the Garda Traffic Corps is an important reason for the significant improvements observed in the last years in Ireland.

Addressing Ireland's high consumption of alcohol³ was also a decisive step in reducing the number of road deaths on Irish roads. A number of recent measures specifically adopted to tackle this road safety issue helped to dramatically reduce road deaths related to alcohol.

Following the Road Traffic Act of 2006, the Garda extended its powers to reduce drink driving on the Irish Roads as it became legitimate to test any driver stopped at a mandatory alcohol checkpoint. This is known as mandatory alcohol testing. Furthermore, since the 1st of June 2011, new legislation on drink driving enforcement allows the Garda to submit to a breath test drivers who were involved in collisions that resulted in injuries. The successful implementation of these measures was complemented by an increase in the number of Traffic Corps police officers since 2004.

In July 2011, after two years of internal

negotiations, Ireland opted for lowering the maximum BAC limit to 0.5g/l for all drivers and 0.2g/l for novice and professional drivers. There was considerable political leadership for this measure, which was sustained by hard hitting TV, radio, press and online awareness campaigns.

Finally, road safety campaigns in Ireland have managed to radically soften public opinion, which helped with the enforcement of lowered

BAC limits. Past decade surveys revealed constant progress when it comes to people's attitudes on drink driving, with a majority of them (90% of adults) condemning drink driving and labelling it as reprehensible and absolutely dangerous. Public support for the reduced BAC limits is also high with 9 out of 10 polled supporting the Government's move to change from 0.8g/l to 0.5g/l and 9 out of 10 polled agreeing with the 0.2g/l limit for novice drivers.

Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020

In order for the EU to reach its new 2020 target it is up to the Irish EU Presidency to work together with the Member States and also the European Commission and the European Parliament to reinforce the "Policy Orientations" and urgently translate them into determined action. Their support to the current priority set on defining serious injury and an accompanying set of measures would be much welcome.

Following the adoption in July 2010 of the European Commission's "Policy Orientations on Road Safety 2011-2020" ETSC welcomed the new emphasis on serious injuries. Earlier this year the European Commission launched a public consultation on an EU Strategy to reduce injuries resulting from road traffic accidents. In addition to the 30,200 people killed in road collisions in the European Union, about 1,700,000 people are recorded as injured in police reports each year, among them 300,000 seriously. For every road death in the EU, at least 44 road injuries are recorded, of which eight are serious. The Commission is developing a comprehensive strategy of action concerning road traffic injuries and emergency services.

At present, EU comparisons are hampered because both the levels of injury reporting and national definitions of a serious injury vary greatly among countries. The magnitude of underreporting undermines proper allocation of resources to preventive measures. Improving the quality of data about seriously injured survivors of road collisions is key to designing more effective safety policies. ETSC believes the new EC injury strategy should include challenging targets for the reduction of seriously injured people and recommends these should be set at the same levels as those for deaths. We hope that the serious injuries legislation will work towards the adoption of a common definition of serious injuries to foster EU comparison and reduce the number of serious injuries. In parallel, Member States should improve the recording of serious injuries by making use of both police and hospital data.

Furthermore, Ireland is organising a conference on Serious Injury in the field of transport with a specific focus on road transport on the 28th of March.

Revision of the TEN-T Road guidelines and Funding of Safe Road Infrastructure

Ireland will continue to work on the new proposals for the revision of the TEN-T Guidelines and the accompanying Connecting Europe Facility funding mechanism. A general approach was adopted by the Council for the TEN-T Guidelines in March and a general partial approach for the CEF in June. The review of the TEN-T guidelines included a specific reference to the two main infrastructure Directives: Directive 2008/96/EC on road infrastructure safety management and

Directive 2004/54/EC on minimum requirements for tunnels on the Trans-European Road Network. The guidelines also include the prioritisation of "road safety" when promoting projects of common interest. The Guidelines foresee the provision of secure parking areas as a priority: this is important for managing fatigue amongst professional drivers and thus reducing risk. The reference made in the guidelines to ITS safety applications, under the ITS Directive

and Action Plan, is also welcome. Promoting walking and cycling is one of the new priorities of the Transport White Paper within urban areas and the European Commission argues that they “could readily substitute the large share of trips which cover less than 5km”. The TEN-T urban infrastructure nodes should reinforce this new commitment by encouraging safe and sustainable

integrated transport options especially for the last kilometre. ETSC hopes the Irish Presidency will continue to support these safety-oriented priorities in further discussions to reach agreement between the European Parliament and the Council in the coming months.

Regional Funds

The Irish Presidency should also work to ensure that the ‘conditionality’ to comply with EU infrastructure safety legislation which exists now in the proposal for the TEN-T Guidelines is extended to all EU funds including the European regional development funds going

to support transport infrastructure. The present proposals for the Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund do not reflect the prioritisation of safety nor conditionality linked to the Infrastructure Safety Directive and Tunnels Directive.

Horizon 2020 EU Funds for Research and Development

Another important topic within the budget discussions is research and development. Horizon 2020 is the new financial instrument running from 2014 to 2020 with an €80 billion budget. The Irish Presidency should work to support the inclusion of road safety in the research priorities set out in the new framework for EU research: Horizon 2020. Sound policies are based on known, effective, science based countermeasures, which in turn are grounded in good research. The EU has a global reputation to defend as a centre of excellence and innovation in research and development in areas of road safety. Road safety research should continue to benefit from European funds under the research framework programme as a priority area under transport. Related to this is the need

to ensure the dissemination of knowledge about successful measures (good practice) and research results among decision makers and practitioners.

ETSC proposes to create a major and dedicated Research and Development Initiative for Safer Car (on the model of the Green Car Initiative). This would promote research on key safety technologies such as co-operative systems and vulnerable road user passive and active safety systems. It would support and evaluate the deployment of the most life-saving safety technologies and create a market for safety. Demonstration activities and wider support are needed to promote consumer demand and reduce costs for life-saving technologies.

eCall

On the 26th of November 2012, the European Commission adopted a measure that establishes the conditions under which the emergency call response centres will be capable of properly receiving and handling 112 eCall. A proposal for the mandatory introduction of the in-vehicle part of the eCall service in new type-approved vehicles in Europe is expected imminently as well. This follows the adoption of a Commission Recommendation of 2011 on support for an EU wide eCall service in electronic communication networks and the priority set for eCall within the 2010/40/EU Directive on ITS. The European Parliament has recently adopted a Resolution

supporting the need to progress in the implementation of this technology.

ETSC asks the Irish EU Presidency to encourage the European Commission to come forward with this proposal on in-vehicle type approval as soon as possible. ETSC supports eCall deployment and its extension to other vehicles, especially PTWs, as a matter of priority. ECall technology, once in operation, would allow for an emergency call to be generated, either manually or automatically, from a crashed vehicle immediately after a road collision has occurred. Basic data on the crash, including its location, would then be transmitted

to an eCall operator and simultaneously a voice communication would be established between an emergency centre and the vehicle occupants.

eCall has the potential to save lives in Europe and significantly reduce the severity of injuries.

Road Freight and the Social Rules: Sleepiness

Together with the European Parliament, the Irish Presidency will also continue the work on the proposal⁴ to revise the tachograph's legal framework. The legislative proposal looks at using the satellite positioning system, improving the technical capabilities of the digital tachograph and linking into current ITS developments.

In a report entitled: "Tackling Fatigue; EU Social Rules and Heavy Goods Vehicle Drivers" ETSC looks at how enforcing the social rules is one of the important tools to manage fatigue. Research shows that driver sleepiness is a significant factor in approximately 20% of commercial road transport crashes⁵. ETSC welcomes the recognition that one of the important tools in tackling sleepiness amongst professional drivers, the tachograph, will be reviewed.

The proposal underlines the need for more efforts in training enforcement officers. At present, there is room for interpretation in terms of procedures and application of the legislation which means that the decisions of control officers vary. Drawing up European minimum standards for the training of inspection bodies and for coordinating cooperation between the inspection bodies in line with the proposals of the TRACE project⁶ could lead to welcome improvements. When the Regulations on working hours and tachographs are ignored or circumvented, the lives of drivers, passengers and other road users may be put at risk. Non-compliance and fraud also give undue competitive advantage to those

breaking the law, with negative impacts on the functioning of the internal market. ETSC welcomes efforts included in the proposal to tackle this with, for example, higher standards demanded of the workshops which install and calibrate the tachograph.

The new proposal includes the intention to ensure a minimum degree of harmonisation of sanctions in relation to the tachograph rules. This is also welcomed as at present the rules on penalties applicable for serious infringements vary greatly between Member States. For drivers and undertakings engaged in international transport, it is therefore very difficult to receive a clear message concerning the gravity of possible infringements when they do not comply with certain provisions of Regulations. There is much more to be done in this area to improve road safety including communicating more with the drivers and also their employers

On the 18th of June 2013 Presidency Euro Control Route will organise an Enforcement Conference in Dublin for National Authorities concerned with the enforcement of rules related to the road transport of passengers and goods. The conference will identify best practices and provide guidance to National Authorities and police authorities on efficient and effective road transport enforcement at a time of financial crisis. Further information concerning the conference is available on the ECR website www.euro-controle-route.eu.

Technical Inspections and Road Worthiness

The Irish Presidency will also oversee progress on the revision of the roadworthiness Package. The main objective of the proposed legislative package is to enhance road safety and the European Commission clearly sets out both the long-term 'vision zero' objective of the Transport White Paper and the target of halving road deaths by 2020.

ETSC welcomes these three proposals as a step to

upgrade roadworthiness to modern vehicles and new in-vehicle technologies as well as extending technical checks to PTWs. ETSC urges the Irish presidency to guide the Council talks towards a stricter perspective as recent discussions among Ministers have revealed opposition on the Commission's proposal to extend periodic tests to motorcycles and light trailers and on increasing the minimum frequency of checks for older cars and light commercial vehicles.

Technical Harmonisation – Motor vehicles

The Irish presidency will continue to progress the examination of the dossier on the noise level of motor vehicles. The proposal aims at reducing environmental noise by introducing a new test method for measuring noise emissions, by lowering the noise limit values and by including additional sound emission provisions in the vehicle type-approval procedure. It also aims at ensuring road and occupational safety by introducing requirements regarding the minimum noise for electric and electric-hybrid

vehicles. These discussions are taking place in the 'Technical Harmonisation Motor Vehicles' Council Working Group. There are six meetings planned during the Irish Presidency, which will be chaired by the RSA, with the first taking place on the 15th of January 2013. It is also expected that the eCall proposal (in vehicle technology) from the commission will be transmitted later in the term of the Presidency and this will be presented to Member States during one of the working group meetings.

Notes:

1. The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. The Council brings together 47 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.
2. ETSC (2011), 5th Road Safety PIN Report (2010 Road Safety Target Outcome: 100,000 fewer deaths since 2001), 2011, p. 29
3. In 2009, the Irish Health Research Board ranked the country among the highest alcohol consuming countries in the EU. In 2008 the recorded per capita consumption was 12.4 litres of pure alcohol for every adult aged 15 or over.
4. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending the Council Regulation (EEC) N. 3821/85 on recording equipment in road transport and amending Regulation (EC) N. 561/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council.
5. ETSC (2001) The Role of Driver Fatigue in Commercial Road Transport Crashes.
6. More information available at: <http://www.traceproject.eu/>

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