ETSC Memorandum

to the Portuguese Presidency on the European road safety

JULY 07

Strong Portuguese leadership needed for safer roads

This Memorandum will briefly outline ETSC's priorities for the Portuguese Presidency of the EU and suggest how the Presidency may react to the important dossiers on the EU road safety agenda.

ETSC congratulates Portugal for being among the best performers in reducing the number of deaths on its roads between 2001-2006 (42% reduction) and therefore approaching the EU target of halving road death by 2010. Portugal should use this leadership as a solid reminder to other Member States that quick action is needed to reach the EU target.

ETSC welcomes that safety has been identified as one of the most important policy area to be further strengthened by the Presidency in his transport priorities' agenda. Moreover ETSC calls on the Presidency to promote safety on roads with the same intensity foreseen for maritime safety. The EU is forging ahead on a number of safety issues that need to be followed up vigorously by the Presidency. The Portuguese Presidency should also take pride in bringing forward new themes in the road safety arena.

The Portuguese Presidency should therefore:

Provide for effective legislation on safer road infrastructure

Besides the vehicle and the driver, infrastructure is the third pillar of any comprehensive road safety work. Road infrastructure improvements can make a significant contribution towards reducing the frequency and seriousness of road traffic accidents. The unique piece of legislation currently under discussion at EU level in the road safety area, the proposal for a directive on road infrastructure safety management, could save 600 lives per year according to Commission estimations. ETSC believes this proposal deserves high priority and must be accompanied by careful consideration thus calling the Presidency to speed up the process of its adoption.

Support binding legislation on traffic law enforcement

A legislative proposal on traffic law enforcement should be placed at the top of the Portuguese EU Presidency's agenda. After concluding its consultation process on 19 January 2007, the Commission has not yet presented a legislative proposal on this topic. The framework provided by the 2003 EC Recommendation on enforcement still needs to be strengthened in each Member State by a comprehensive binding EU legislation raising the quality and the quantity of enforcement in the areas of speed, seat-belt use and drink-driving. A legislative instrument could help to prevent 14,000 deaths by 2010, according to European Commission estimates.

Support legislation on daytime running lights

Daytime running lights have a very high potential to increase road safety. According to a study done by ETSC, the introduction of mandatory daytime running lights in European countries could lead to an annual reduction of 2.800 deaths. This is why the Commission has launched a consultation process to explore the possibility to table a legislative proposal. The consultation process was concluded on 17 November 2006 and the potential benefits of daytime running lights still have not been translated into an effective reduction of road deaths thanks to the adoption of an EU legislative instrument. ETSC calls on the Presidency to take the opportunity to substantially contribute to achieve the 2010 common European target by supporting a legislative proposal on daytime running lights.

Bring to the fore e-Safety technologies

ETSC urges the Portuguese Presidency to continue addressing the evolution of existing driver assistance systems such as the seat belt reminders and to explore the possibility to further extend the use of alcohol interlocks and intelligent speed assistance (ISA). Ensuring uniform standards in Europe of the application of in-vehicles safety technologies should be at the core of the Presidency's agenda. These are enforcement technologies that undoubtedly can save lives, lower the casualty rate and reduce the frequency of collisions.

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Promote speed reduction

Even though speed is generally considered being road safety's number one enemy, it is still a widespread phenomenon across Europe and not much has been done so far for tackling speed appropriately. Evidence shows average speeds and numbers of speed limit violations remain high across Europe. Therefore ETSC calls on the Presidency to take the lead in the promotion of a new approach aimed at addressing the speed problem. Given the fact that speed reduction would directly affect the level of CO2 emissions, it should be a measure to consider strongly within the framework of the Presidency's environmental and energy strategies for transport.

Notes to editors:

(1) 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. The Council brings together 37 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

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