ETSC Memorandum

to the Finnish Presidency on the European road safety policy

JULY 06

EU Road Safety Policy to top Finnish Transport Agenda

This Memorandum will briefly outline ETSC's priorities for the Finnish EU Presidency and suggest how the Presidency may keep up the efforts made by the Austrian Presidency.

ETSC is very pleased to hear that road safety will continue to be a high priority during the Finnish Presidency. The Presidency provides the Finnish government with the opportunity to ensure that its commitment to road safety and its long-term target for a safer road transport system established its National Road Safety Programme is duplicated across Europe.

The Finnish Presidency should therefore:

Provide a strong response to the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme Mid-term Review's challenges

The Mid-term Review of the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme published in February 2006 is characterised by an increased inequality of road risk across the EU. With less than four years to go up to 2010, the chances of the European Union to achieve its 50% road death reduction target are slim. Additional efforts have to be made to reverse this trend beyond those envisaged on the European Commission Work Programme during 2006.

New instruments must be introduced to remind European, national and local policymakers, infrastructure managers and the industry on their share of responsibility in reducing road casualties. Strong leadership is needed to create a political motivation to do better. Subsidiarity should not be used as an excuse for Member States to resist European legislative proposals that could help reducing the burden of road accidents on society and the individuals.

Promote eSafety technologies

The Finnish Presidency should support Member States' efforts to promote the use of in-vehicle enforcement technologies such as seat belt reminders and alcohol interlocks, and to stimulate the development and use of Intelligent Speed Adaptation devices.

The Finnish government also is a forerunner in implementing the e-Call system and therefore should speed up the signing up of the e-Call Memorandum of Understanding by all EU Member States.

Provide 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. ETSC urges the Finnish Presidency to push for the introduction of a Directive on road infrastructure safety to enable a more stringent option. This Directive should introduce defined and harmonized common infrastructure safety management standards in the Member States for road safety impact assessment, "high risk sites", road safety inspections and road safety audits 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 infrastructures. Moreover 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 audits.

Adopt a Directive on daytime running lights

The Presidency should consider a mandatory requirement of daytime running lights for all motorised vehicles. Daytime running lights would increase the conspicuity of all road users, in particular the perception of cars by motorcyclists and would reduce the number of multiparty daytime accidents involving motorcyclists.

According to a study done by ETSC, the introduction of daytime running lights in European countries could lead to an annual reduction of 2,800 fatalities. The calculation of the cost/benefit ratio showed that the costs of daytime running lights are considerably lower than the benefits (value 1 :4.4). Furthermore, the cost/benefit ratio could even be more favourable

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if special daytime running-lamps equipped with economical bulbs were installed (in which case it would increase to 1 :6.4). As for the motorised two wheelers, research has shown that even if there was a negative effect from daytime running lights (this has been proven by no empirical evidence so far),it would in any case be offset by the benefits motorcyclists gain from increased perception of cars.This would successfully reduce the number of multiparty daytime accidents involving motorcyclists.

Initiate a cross-border enforcement Directive

ETSC supports the declaration of Vice-President Barrot on the Commission's intention to introduce a cross-border enforcement Directive. In France, approximately 25% of offenders escaped the traffic laws because their vehicles were registered outside France.

The Finnish authorities should also support the European Commission in its efforts to prepare a Directive that includes minimal requirements in all areas covered by the EC Recommendation on enforcement in the field of traffic law, including also the follow-up of offences and information linked to enforcement. These requirements should be based primarily on outcome, i.e. compliance.

Propose a Directive on the retrofitting of blind spot mirrors for goods vehicles

The Presidency should work with the European Commission to propose a Directive mandating the retrofitting of lateral blind spot mirrors to the existing fleet of goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.

Every year a large number of vulnerable road users are killed or severely injured because of trucks turning right. The main cause of these accidents is the bad visibility field of the truck driver on the right side of the vehicle. ETSC estimates that the benefits of retrofitting lateral blind spot mirrors to existing goods vehicles over 3.5 t. are approximatly four times higher than the costs.

Enhance driver training

The Driving Licence Directive, will increase the European minimum standards in driver licensing, especially among novice drivers, and improve cross-border enforcement of traffic laws, as well as the fight against fraudulent access to driving licenses. In the meanwhile, the Finnish Presidency should restart the process of developing the Driving Licence Network to facilitate the sharing of information between authorities and the fight against driving licence tourism.

As part of this, the Presidency should promote the dissemination of Best practice between Member States regarding driver training. For e.g. the introduction of the multiple-phase driving licence, or the rehabilitation model to help recovering their licence those who loose it due to repeated alcohol or drug offences could help to improve the safety of these high-risk drivers.

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 33 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

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