

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

This Memorandum briefly outlines ETSC's priorities for the Polish Presidency of the EU and presents our recommendations on key EU policy dossiers¹. ETSC hopes that road safety will be one of the priorities under land transport during the Polish Presidency of the EU, and Prime Minister Mr. Donald Tusk and Minister of Infrastructure Mr. Cezary Grabarczyk will take personal interest and show their leadership in delivering road safety in Poland and in the EU. Key issues include improving road safety management and coordination, improving infrastructure and vehicle safety, tackling inappropriate speed, drinking and driving, non-wearing of safety belts and aggressive driving. In the case of Poland it is fundamental to step up action to improve the safety of unprotected road users.

During the Polish Presidency a number of issues presented by the European Commission in the "Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020" and the recently adopted Transport White Paper should feature as a road safety priority. These include the revision of the TEN-T guidelines and Tachograph legislation.

Road Safety Developments in Poland

The risk of dying on the roads is high in Poland. The number of people killed per million inhabitants is one of the highest in the EU27. Polish roads clock in as the third least safe in the EU, with 102 deaths per million inhabitants. This number is equalled by Bulgaria and surpassed only by Romania and Greece. Moreover, the large number of road deaths registered in Poland significantly drives up the EU average, making the whole bloc less safe. The EU27 average is 62 road deaths per million inhabitants, while the average of the other 26 Member States (EU27 minus Poland) is 59 deaths per million inhabitants.²

Progress in reducing road deaths has been slower in Poland than in the rest of the EU27. The number of people killed decreased by 29% from 5,534 in 2001 to 3,907 in 2010, compared with the EU average of 43%². Poland thus fared the fourth worst in the EU, with only Romania (3%), Malta (6%) and Bulgaria (23%) making slower progresses in reducing their number of road deaths.

The number of people who died in road crashes in Poland in 2010 (3,907) represents approximately

13% of the total number of road deaths in the EU27 (30,921), in spite of the fact that Poland's population represents only 7.6% of the total EU27 population².

Poland's main road safety organisation is the National Road Safety Council (NRSC). It is an inter-ministerial body advising the Council of Ministers on road safety issues that defines and coordinates government road safety policy. Poland, however, needs a road safety management system supported by sufficient funding to further reduce road casualties and accomplish the ambitious goals set out in the proposed Transport Development Strategy until 2020 (and beyond until 2030). According to the document, Poland wants to reduce road deaths by 50% by 2020 and by another 50% until 2030. The NRSC must adopt a results-focused approach to managing road safety that includes rigorous monitoring of interim indicators on the main risk factors and use of the knowledge gained to drive decisions about resource allocation for prevention initiatives. In addition, the NRSC must strengthen coordination among the key government agencies and with non-governmental actors.

The Three Main Killers on the Road: Speed, Alcohol and Non Use of Seat Belts

There is a very strong statistical relationship between speed and road safety. It is difficult to think of any other risk factor that has a more powerful impact on accidents or injuries than speed. With 70% of drivers driving faster than the speed limit on rural roads, Poland has one of the highest proportions of drivers breaking the speed limit among the countries monitoring speed in free flowing traffic. Unfortunately, speed measurements stopped in 2009.³ Poland has recently introduced a new law mandating automated speed enforcement on the Polish motorway network, a measure currently being implemented. Unfortunately, automated speed enforcement has been coupled with an increase in the maximum speed limits. Poland is now the country with the highest speed limits in Europe, 140 km/h on motorways. As well as increasing the risk on this part of the road network, speed often migrates and higher speeds spill over onto adjacent rural roads. Taking into account very limited number of motorways and expressways with proper traffic separation, speeding causes great danger to pedestrians and cyclists.

Drink driving is another important risk factor in Poland, and young drivers and riders aged 18-25 are particularly at risk. The maximum blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.2 g/l for all

drivers (lower than the EU recommended 0.5g/l) is well accepted by the population and is being reinforced by public education and communication campaigns calling for no drink and drive, as well as targeted social programmes aimed at reducing the social acceptability of drink driving. As a result, deaths attributed to drink driving decreased in Poland from 644 in 2001 to 470 in 2008. Yet, being checked for drink driving is the exception rather than the rule with only 47 roadside police tests per 1,000 population³. Moreover, in 2008 the percentage of drivers caught with the BAC over the legal limit was the highest among the EU countries. Hence, Police breath testing for detecting drink driving should increase and alcolocks for high level offenders and recidivists should be introduced.

On seat belts, Poland is at the bottom end of the EU league with front seat belt wearing rates of only 80%. Only Italy, Greece, Hungary and Slovakia have lower rates³. Seatbelt use has been compulsory in front and rear seats since 1991, yet only a minority of rear passengers buckle up. There is room for huge improvement here. The Police should systematically check the use of seat belts, together with communicating on the positive effects of seat belt wearing.

Unprotected Road Users in Poland

More than 15,300 pedestrians, cyclists and powered two-wheel riders were killed in the EU in 2009, representing 44% of all road deaths across the EU. Pedestrians killed represent 20%, cyclists 6% and powered two-wheelers 17% of all road deaths but big disparities exist between countries. At the EU27 level deaths among pedestrians and cyclists decreased by 34% between 2001 and 2009 and those among PTW riders by only 18%, compared with 41% for car drivers. For pedestrians, progress since 2001 has been disappointing in Poland with an average annual reduction of only 1%, but it is encouraging that in Poland the numbers in 2009 showed substantial reductions compared with 2008. For cycling, Poland achieved a just below EU average reduction of 3.8% annual reduction

of deaths. To improve the unprotected road users' safety there should be more emphasis on education for all age groups, an increase of visibility of unprotected road users and active promotion of sustainable mobility.

Much has been done in Poland to improve road infrastructure with motorway and bypass construction and the installation of roundabouts, thousands of refuge islands for pedestrians and improving traffic signals. But there is still the need for a further extension of the infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. Enforcement, especially at pedestrian crossings, should be increased. The drivers' awareness of the dangers of not respecting the rules and the consequences for unprotected road users must also be raised.

Road Safety should be made a top priority, budget secured and management improved

Poland has several high-quality transportation research institutes and researchers that contribute to road safety analysis, some of them being ETSC long-term dedicated Members (e.g., the ITS Motor Transport Institute, the Technical University of Gdańsk, the Technical University of Warsaw, and the Technical University of Krakow).

As a matter of priority, Poland needs to swiftly develop a new road safety programme for the years 2011-2020 and consistently implement the measures included within it. Proportionally to the size of the problem, the very small number of professional road safety staff in the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Secretariat of the NRSC, limited legal responsibilities, limited participation of its members (e.g. education, health sector) and limited sustainable funding significantly reduce the ability of the NRSC to carry out the wide

range of functions needed from a lead agency and coordinating body⁴. The urgent need to develop high-level professional capacity in road safety in governmental institutions and secure a budget for road safety was stated in GAMBIT 2005. The Parliament should adopt the proposal to dedicate a line item in the budget earmarked for road safety efforts. The budget amount should reflect that road safety is a priority of the Polish government. Moreover, high-level political commitment is required to ensure that approval of this proposal will lead to greater and more effective actions relating to road safety, involving the different line ministries (horizontal coordination), nongovernmental organisations, regional and municipal agencies (vertical coordination) and private business enterprises. Investing in road safety should be seen as an investment rather than a cost.

Priorities for the Polish Presidency

Revision of the TEN-T Road guidelines

A major legislative proposal is expected under the Polish Presidency with the overhaul of the existing TEN-T Guidelines. The review of the guidelines should include 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 in the Trans-European Road Network. The recently published Transport White Paper recognises that new investments in the TEN-T will also need to reflect EU legislation on road safety infrastructure. This should ensure that at least on the TEN-T network, Member States should be working towards the same high levels of infrastructure safety. It is hoped that the principles of the infrastructure safety Directive should be applied also on other parts of motorways, all rural roads and the urban road networks. The implementation of the new Directive on infrastructure safety has the potential of saving 600 lives and avoiding 7,000 serious injuries every year across the EU on the TEN-T network (European Commission, 2005).

In its "Policy Orientations on Road Safety 2011-2020" the European Commission proposed that European funds should only be granted to infrastructure compliant with the infrastructure safety and tunnel safety Directives. This proposal is also very much supported by ETSC and should be highlighted within the debate on the new White Paper and upcoming revision of the TEN-T guidelines. Every year between 1.5 and 2 billion EUR of EU funds are spent on building roads in the EU, it is the EU's duty to ensure that these roads are built safely.

Promoting walking and cycling is one of the new priorities of the Transport White Paper within urban areas and the EC argues that they "*could readily substitute the large share of trips which cover less than 5km*". The EC should consider elaborating the TEN-T network also to include cycling paths, and thus contributing to safe infrastructure for all road users including also cyclists.

Finally, the TEN-T core network should also include "best of class" ITS applications supporting

safety as well as ensuring that sufficient parking spaces that are also secure are integrated.

Road Freight and the Social Rules: Sleepiness

The European Commission is soon due to "review the rules on the tachograph to make it more cost-effective." ETSC welcomes the intentions of the European Commission to review the degree of convergence on safety legislation including its transposition, enforcement, tachographs

and the social rules. Research shows that driver sleepiness is a significant factor in approximately 20% of commercial road transport crashes. ETSC welcomes the recognition that one of the most important factors in tackling sleepiness will be reviewed⁵.

Infrastructure Safety Directive Transposition

The deadline for the transposition of the Infrastructure Safety Directive was December 2010. Along with ten other Member States⁶, Poland still has to transpose the Directive into Polish law. In May, the European Commission sent "a reasoned opinion" to these countries under EU infringement procedures. If the Member States fail to inform the Commission within two months of measures taken to ensure compliance with EU law, the Commission could refer the cases to the European Court of Justice. The Directive asks for regular road safety inspections and audits on both the new and current infrastructure network. Poland should build its capacity to run

the regular audits and inspections and needs to train professionals required for this undertaking. Poland and other Member States should work to include safety considerations in their land use planning including road hierarchies. Moreover, the use of each road should be matched with the functions that the road serves in terms of living space, access and through movement (applying the principles of the Sustainable Safety Approach⁷). Poland should also encourage other Member States that have not yet transposed the Directive to do so post haste and also to extend its scope of its implementation beyond the TEN-T network.

Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020

Following the adoption in July 2010 of the European Commission's "Policy Orientations on Road Safety 2011-2020" ETSC looks forward to seeing the first of the road safety packages for adoption by the European Commission in 2011. ETSC welcomed the adoption of a new EU target to reduce road deaths by 50% by 2020 and the new emphasis on serious injuries included in the "Road Safety Policy Orientations". ETSC called also on Member States to adopt targets for reducing serious injuries. Ministers at the Transport Council in December 2010 adopted Conclusions which prioritised measures they wanted to see for the brand new "common European area for road safety" in response to the European Commission's "Policy Orientations 2011-2020".

The European Parliament is also due to finally adopt its Own Initiative Report on Road Safety in September 2011. Road safety is an issue close to the heart of European citizens and thus their democratic representatives in the European Parliament. In its draft Report, the Transport Committee of the European Parliament has supported the strategic objectives proposed by the European Commission. However, MEPs regretted that, instead of a new Action Programme, only some weaker policy orientations were put forward. They also argued that the envisaged measures - although going in the right direction - should be further developed in order to meet the Commission's proposed target of a further 50% reduction of road deaths by 2020. The rapporteur

suggested a more ambitious 'Vision Zero' in the long run as well as additional and measurable targets for a better monitoring of road safety developments. Other MEPs shared the general view that the Commission's policy orientations were insufficiently ambitious. Other issues they raised included a harmonised low limit for blood alcohol, 30 km/h speed limit in residential areas, drug driving measures and proposals to take up

new challenges such as the ageing population.

In order for the EU to reach its new 2020 target and to maintain and build on its reputation as a world leader for road safety, it is up to the Polish EU Presidency to work together with the Member States and also the European Commission and the European Parliament to reinforce the Policy Orientations and translate them urgently into determined action.

Road Safety in the White Paper on the "Future of Transport"

At the end of March the European Commission published its new White Paper on Transport entitled: "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system". ETSC welcomed some of the proposed measures notably the inclusion of a 'Vision Zero' for road safety. This is seen as a new and potentially ground-breaking goal for 2050, complementing the renewed target of halving road deaths by 2020. ETSC also urged the Commission to accelerate its work on a common definition of serious road injuries and adopt a target for reducing these.

The European Commission highlighted the importance of behavioural risk factors such as driving distraction or driving under the influence of drugs and medicines and recognised that reducing speed is an extremely effective way to reduce not only the risk of crashes but also fuel consumption. This reinforced the message from the "Policy Orientations" that promoting eco-driving and in-vehicle systems that 'provide real-time information on prevailing speed limits' will contribute to improving compliance with speed limits. The Polish Presidency should engage with the European Parliament on the issue of road safety within the context of their response to the White Paper this autumn.

Finalising the Directive on Cross Border Enforcement of Traffic Law in the Field of Road Safety

ETSC strongly welcomed the further progress made under the Hungarian Presidency with the Council's common agreement on the proposal for a Directive which aims to "facilitate cross-border enforcement in the field of road safety" reached on the 17th of March⁸. ETSC also gave its strong support to the original European Commission Proposal⁹ of March 2008. Following the European Parliament's overwhelming support to the proposed Directive in 2008, ETSC welcomed its recommendations in second reading¹⁰. With an early second reading agreement expected in July, ETSC hopes the Polish Presidency will take the step to finalise an agreement between the Council and the European Parliament on this challenging and yet important piece of European

road safety legislation.

The Directive would introduce a system of exchanging information to enable the follow up of road safety related traffic offences committed by non-resident drivers. Enforcement is a means to prevent crashes from happening by way of persuading drivers to comply with the safety rules. Deterrence is based on giving drivers the feeling that they run too high a risk of being caught when breaking the rules. Thus effective enforcement leads to a rapid reduction in deaths and injuries. Following agreement with the European Parliament and the Council a two-year period follows for Member States to transpose EU legislation before it comes into force, ideally by 2013.

Regulation on type-approval of two- and three wheel motor vehicles and quadricycles

ETSC welcomed the proposal for a Regulation on the approval and market surveillance of two- or three- wheel vehicles and quadricycles (L-category vehicles). ETSC considers the proposal extremely useful as a means to improve the safety of Power Two Wheelers (PTWs), the most unprotected group of road users. Stricter regulation on vehicle safety, and in particular on mandatory equipment for active safety systems, will contribute to reducing the current figure of more than 6,000 annual deaths among road users of these vehicles in Europe. The users of PTWs (huge majority of vehicles concerned) represent 16% of the total number of road deaths in the EU while accounting for only 2% of the total kilometres driven. For the same distance travelled, the risk for riders being killed in road accidents is on average 18 times higher than the risk for car drivers. While the number of road deaths has declined considerably in the

past decade in Europe, the number of killed PTW riders rose in 13 out of 27 countries.

Many elements of the proposed framework Regulation have great potential for improving the safety of riders of powered two-wheelers. ETSC supports the European Commission proposal that ABS and advanced braking systems should become mandatory for all PTWs and adds that riders should be educated regarding their use and benefits. Moreover, evidence shows that motorcyclists are safer riding with lights on during the daytime and one third of all motorcycle accidents are linked directly to the lack of conspicuity¹¹. ETSC supports the proposal to introduce mandatory 'Automatic Headlights On' for all L-category vehicles. The Polish Presidency should strive to forge an agreement on this type approval regulation and thus support progress in addressing this group of EU road users.

Technical Inspections and Road Worthiness

The European Commission is planning to revise the roadworthiness Directive 2009/40/EC in 2011. Although the Directive was recast in 2009 this involved only minor changes to the administrative articles. The body of the text has not seen any major revision since adoption in 1996. Since 1996 both cars and in vehicle safety systems that are electronically controlled have developed rapidly. Vehicle examiners also need to assure a similarly rigorous testing regime for new in vehicle technologies. Technical inspection interviews

should also be reassessed. Inspection protocols should be reviewed in relation to higher speed conditions relating to more severe crashes. In sum, the Directive needs to be revised to ensure that the testing of new modern vehicles is safely maintained. The EU should consider extending the Directive to cover other vehicle types such as PTWs. The Polish Presidency of the EU should encourage the European Commission to prioritise measures with the highest life saving potential in the revision of this Directive.

Notes:

1. The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated the numbers of deaths and injuries in transport in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 45 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu
2. ETSC (2011), 5th Road Safety PIN Report.2010 Road Safety Target Outcome: 100,000 Fewer Deaths since 2001 <http://www.etsc.eu/documents/pin/report.pdf>
3. ETSC (2010) 4th Road Safety PIN Report, Road Safety Target in Sight - Making up for lost time, Chapter 3.
4. World Bank (2011), Report No. 59715-PL, Poland Transport Policy Note, Toward a Sustainable Land Transport Sector.
5. ETSC, (2001), The Role of Driver Fatigue in Commercial Road Transport Crashes <http://www.etsc.eu/documents/drivfatigue.pdf>
6. Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia
7. ETSC (2010) PIN Flash 18 Reducing Deaths on Rural Roads http://www.etsc.eu/documents/PIN_Flash_18.pdf
8. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st17/st17506.en10.pdf>
9. http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/enforcement/doc/2008_03_19_directive_proposal_en.pdf
10. ETSC (2011) Position on Cross Border Enforcement Directive, <http://www.etsc.eu/documents/Cross%20Border%20Enforcement%20Directive%20ETSC%20Position%20May%202011.pdf>
11. MAIDS report 2005. A three-year study co-funded by the European Commission and ACEM. ACEM (2004) MAIDS project. <http://www.acembike.org/html/maids.htm>

For more information please contact:

ETSC Policy Director, Ellen Townsend, ellen.townsend@etsc.eu, 0032 (0)2 230 41 06

ETSC Programme Director, Graziella Jost, graziella.jost@etsc.eu, 0032 (0)2 230 41 06

European Transport Safety Council
Av. des Celtes 20 – B-1040 Brussels
Tel. +32 (0) 2 230 4106 – Fax +32 (0) 2 230 4215
www.etsc.eu