

Speed Monitor

ETSC's Newsletter on Speed Policy Developments in the EU

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Editorial

New EU proposal for a Directive on Cross-Border Enforcement likely to have an impact on speeding offences

The long awaited legislation on cross border enforcement was published on the 19th of March. The main objective of such a Directive will be to set up a system of communication and transmission of administrative or judicial decisions on traffic offences. This would apply road safety enforcement measures in the priority areas of speeding alongside drink-driving and non use of seat belts for non-resident traffic. It is limited to cross border enforcement and will not touch upon the application of best practice in the Member States.

This new piece of legislation should reinforce non-resident drivers' liability for their speeding offences. 'Foreign' drivers represent around 5% of the road traffic in the EU, whereas the share of non-resident drivers in speeding offences is 15% on average. Therefore, non-resident drivers are relatively more involved in offences than resident drivers. This is explained by the feeling of impunity that comes with crossing borders. It is precisely this impunity that the new proposal condemns.

In this edition of the Speed Monitor you will also find news about recent speed policy developments in EU Member States, and a country focus on Switzerland. The latest ETSC PIN ranking on motorway safety identified Switzerland as the country where the safest motorways are to be found in Europe. This is chiefly thanks to the deployment of safety cameras: in total the number of speed controls has doubled from 2002 until 2006. Switzerland provides yet another example, as always, that better enforcement of traffic rules is key to success in reducing casualties.

Antonio Avenoso
ETSC Executive Director

Invitation to the 10th bfu forum and 10th ETSC Lecture on 'Speed'

This year, bfu (the Swiss council for accident prevention) is organising its 10th forum jointly with the European Transport Safety Council. Like ETSC, bfu holds an annual lecture event on a current aspect of road safety work. As a member of ETSC, bfu is pleased to issue an invitation to Switzerland. The forum will be an international meeting, which will be held as follows:

Thursday, 25 September 2008, 3.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m., Stade de Suisse, Berne

This event will look into the most important facts and issues on the topic of «Speed» from a general, technical and psychological standpoint. Please reserve the afternoon now by sending an email to: b.buhmann@bfu.ch. The programme with registration details will be sent to you at the end of June.

Contents



Country News	2	EU Legislation	5
Country Focus: Switzerland	4	ETSC news in Brief	7

Country News

Belgium

Road Safety becomes regionalised

Decisions regarding road safety such as the designation of speed limits will become regionalised following the first agreement on the State reform of Belgium. The reform implies the attribution of a number of previous State competencies to regions.

While regionalisation of road safety is probably not a good mean to achieve a homogeneous level of safety across the territory, this decision is likely to have an impact on the designation of speed limits in Flanders that could be beneficial there. Indeed the Flemish region will most probably designate 70km/h as the default speed limit on rural roads. In practice many roads are already limited at 70 km/h in Flanders but these limits have to be signposted since 90km/h remains the default limit.

It is important to note that justice remains a federal competency, meaning that an offence will be punished in the same way whether it is committed in Flanders, Wallonia, or Brussels.

It might, however, become confusing for road users (particularly foreigners) to be required to abide to different limits within the same country.

Finland

More action needed to tackle speed

The number of road deaths in Finland decreased by 22.4% in 2001- 2006, in line with the EU average. However, this falls short of both the national and EU road safety targets. The country's road safety performance and the challenges ahead were discussed on the 6th of March at the Road Safety PIN Talk in Helsinki, organised by ETSC, the Traffic Safety Committee of the Finnish Motor Insurers' Centre (VALT) and the Central Organisation for Traffic Safety (Liikenneturva).

The Finnish Government confirmed its main national road safety goal of reducing the number of road deaths to 250 by 2010, with an interim target of less than 290 deaths in 2007. In the long term a much more ambitious aim to reduce annual road deaths to less than 100 by 2025 has been set. However, with 336 deaths occurring on Finnish roads in 2006, it has become evident that the country is still far from reaching its 2010 national goal.

With the number of speed-related accidents rising from 33% to 45% in the past three years, speed remains the single biggest contributor to road death and injury in Finland. This comes as no surprise given that average speeds on Finnish rural roads and motorways have decreased by as little as 1.1% - 1.4% over 1999-2006.

"Speeding is a problem particularly in urban areas," said Esa Rätty from VALT. "Over a third (39%) of fatal accidents in urban areas are related to speeding, while in rural areas the proportion is 35%. Furthermore, the proportion of accidents due to excessive speeding (of 30 km/h or more) is 28% in urban areas, which is almost twice as high as 16% in rural areas."

Richard Allsop, Professor at University College London and Chairman of the PIN programme, said: "Speed is a key policy area for boosting improvements in road safety. The Finnish Government is fully conscious of its importance as confirmed by the Government's 2006-2010 Road Safety Plan containing several measures for tackling speed offences. The next step is to enforce those measures effectively".

France

The Government announces new measures

The French interministerial committee on road safety (CISR) proposed on the 13 of February 2008 an impressive package of measures to reach the new target that the current administration agreed upon: to fall below 3000 yearly road deaths by 2012 (the current

figure is above 4500). The new measures focus on all aspects of road safety work. Of relevance for speed, it was decided:

- to pursue the deployment of fully automated speed cameras (500 more cameras will be deployed every year from 2008 to 2012).

- to require every 'département' across the territory to prepare a yearly enforcement plan for road checks and to render its results public at the end of each year.

- to confiscate the vehicle of a driver (if he is the owner of it) who commits a speeding offence of 50km/h or more above the speed limit if it is his/her second offence.

However, it remains to be seen both how these proposals fare in their passage through Parliament and how they will work on the ground. However these proposals show that the new government intends to honour the road safety legacy of the previous Chirac administration.

Germany

New study: innovative Dialogue-Display (thanking or blaming driver according to their speed) slows drivers down and is not ignored with the passage of time

The University of Dresden tested and confirmed the usefulness of a 'Dialogue-Display' device to reverse the lack of concentration combined with speeding.

The Dialogue-Display from RTB (a supplier of modern solutions for street traffic) 'thanks' or tells the driver to 'slow down' based on the speed of the vehicle passing the sign. According to the study, the speed of the vehicle is reduced over the long-run (the message is not ignored with the passage of time). The display relies on an appeal to emotions: a friendly green 'thanks' confirms observation of the speed limit while a red 'slow down' indicates speeding. This is also combined with a large picture that shows various motifs with

children to increase the social pressure on the drivers.

Many studies have shown the positive effect of such equipment in urban settings. To cite only two examples: in Berlin, the average speed could be reduced from 38.1 Km/h to 28.7 Km/h while in Frankfurt the display was responsible for an increase of 40% in the number of vehicles driven at a speed below 35 km/h.

A field trial also concluded that the amount of drivers who stopped at crosswalks in the vicinity of the dialogue displays to let pedestrians cross increased by 130% compared to previous measurements.



Ireland

Safety cameras get the go-ahead

The Government has given the go-ahead for the introduction of privately operated safety cameras, which had already been announced in Ireland's new road safety strategy launched in 2007. It is estimated that safety cameras will help reduce road deaths by

more than a fifth.

Ministers agreed at a Cabinet meeting on the 26th of February on funding for the cameras, which will provide a minimum of 6,000 hours of monitoring a month. The mobile cameras will target 600 collision-prone locations around the country. The locations for the cameras will be selected by the Garda National Traffic Bureau, which will have strategic control of their use.

The use of the private cameras had been subject to public debate after it was discovered that the running costs would be much higher than had been previously anticipated. However, proposals put forward by Justice Minister Brian Lenihan, and supported by Transport Minister Noel Dempsey, were accepted. The safety camera network provider has been selected following a public procurement process and running costs will be met from the justice budget.

It is understood that the Garda traffic corps will also be supplied with eight additional new speed detection units, which will be fully operational later this year.

Sweden

New speed limits

After a long inquiry and preparation, the Swedish government has made the final legislative changes needed to put a new speed limit system in force. From the 2nd of May, the authorities deciding upon speed limits will not only have a larger number of speed limits to choose from but also new instructions for setting these limits. The new instructions – expected to be completed in March – aim at making the speed limits correspond to the safety requirements and capacity of the various roads better.

The new legislation means that within the next couple of years the speed limits on all Swedish roads will be reviewed and thereafter possibly adjusted. There

will be 10 speed limits (instead of the previous 5), ranging from 30 km/h in some urban areas up till 120 km/h on the safest motorways.

Country Focus: Switzerland

Best practice

Speed limits and speed enforcement have been a topic in Switzerland for a long time. In the mid 1980s the speed limits in urban areas were lowered from 60 to 50 km/h. Also the national maximum speed limit on motorways was decreased from 130 to 120 km/h and on rural roads the maximum speed was lowered from 100 to 80 km/h. Since then, no further decreases in the national maximum speed limits were introduced.

As in most other countries in many residential areas 30 km/h zones were introduced in the 1990s but the federal court has recently decided that the general urban speed limit is still 50 km/h and 30 km/h zones are only allowed under special conditions.

Switzerland has relied heavily on speed checks, in total the number of speed controls has doubled from 2002 until 2006. In 2006 about 203 million vehicles were checked for speed (Federal Office of Statistics), 188 million with a fixed camera, and 14 million with a mobile speed camera. In total this means that every motor vehicle in Switzerland has been checked for speed 37 times. More than half of the controls took place in urban areas (about 108 million). Another 88 million were made on motorways. Unfortunately, rural road speed controls are only rarely conducted (about 3% of total controls), so this should be the focus of further efforts.

Switzerland has also introduced a detailed indicator system to monitor developments in the fields of speed and drink driving. Indicators include the levels of speed-related injury crashes, police checks, violation rates and sanctions as well as the opinions of the drivers about relevant safety regulations and their

enforcement. The data are available on the internet through the Swiss statistical office:

www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/19/04/01/ind11.html

Finally, in Switzerland there are national as well as regional information campaigns. These campaigns are either funded by national institutions like the Swiss Road Safety Fund or at regional (cantonal) level funded mostly by the police. In recent years - 2004 - the Touring Club of Switzerland (TCS), the largest drivers association, launched a campaign against speeding and speeders with two rather provocative slogans: "Help speeders – donate brain" and "Speeders reach the goal faster" with a skid mark leading directly into a grave. However it is hard to assess the impact of such campaigns.

Finally, road safety and enforcement activities were extensively discussed in the media.

Impact

In Switzerland, the number of persons killed on the motorway network has decreased by an outstanding 15% per year on average between 2001 and 2006 (the highest reduction in Europe): 31 people died on motorways in 2006 compared to 71 in 2001, making Swiss motorways the safest ones in Europe in 2006. Speed enforcement on the motorway has become a high priority with the implementation of new speed cameras and increased mobile checks. On motorways average speed has been reduced by 3%. Within the last years the frequency of speeding has gone down on all types of roads. Particularly on motorways and urban settings.

The rate of fatal crashes (per million vehicles) for which the policeman believed speed to be a major cause has decreased markedly. It has more than halved from the mid 90's to 2006.

Future Progress?

In view of the high toll of deaths on rural roads (about 50% of all road deaths) the number of controls on this type of road seems to be rather low.

EU legislation news

MEPs support the Infrastructure Safety Management Directive

Following heated discussions in the European Parliament's Transport Committee, MEPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of a proposed Directive on road infrastructure safety management on the 26th of February. This is excellent news for all EU citizens.

Although the Report must still be adopted in the Plenary session of the European Parliament at the start of May, this vote represented a turn-around for MEPs following last year's rejection of the Report by the TRAN Committee. Many MEPs still questioned the need for such a Directive this time round, concerned with too much 'red tape' and challenging the EU's competency to act in this field.

While not imposing technical standards or procedures, the proposed Directive invites Member States to make better use of existing procedures and practices. The implementation of time-proven instruments in this Directive would help to raise standards in countries that are lagging behind in road infrastructure safety. The Directive would apply only to the TEN-T, but ETSC and other road safety stakeholders truly hope that there will be a positive spill-over effect on the road safety management of other roads as well.

The adoption of the Report also sends a signal to the European Commission and Council that the EU should not shy away from legislating for better road safety in the EU. When push comes to shove MEPs will support efforts to save the lives of their constituents. Those working on a new Directive to improve cross border enforcement of key areas of traffic law such as speeding should take courage from this vote.

New Commission proposal for a Directive on Cross-Border Enforcement

ETSC welcomes this new proposal which will certainly contribute to reducing road deaths on Europe's roads. European legislative action is sorely needed especially given the worrying performance during 2007 when for the first time in a number of years there has been no reduction in the number of road deaths in the EU. The main objective of the new legislation is to set up a system for exchanging information (e.g. owner data) and procedures for the proper notification of offenders, so that road safety enforcement measures can be applied to non-resident traffic offenders.

At present effective and efficient follow up of cross-border offences hardly exist. Although a number of bi-lateral agreements exist, there has been no common EU approach so far to tackle non-resident drivers who believe they are above the law.

At present non-resident drivers are more likely to take risks and break the law due to their feeling of impunity. Non-residents represent around 5% of road traffic in the EU, whereas the share of non-resident drivers in speeding offences is around 15% on average. The proposal will hopefully bring an end to this flagrant disregard for traffic rules.

Research shows that it is sustained and intensive enforcement that has a long-lasting effect on driver behaviour.

This proposal will build on previous initiatives by the European Commission where Member States had to identify enforcement co-ordination points to ensure the effective reporting to the competent authority of the Member State in which the vehicle causing an offence is registered. A note of disappointment has been, however, expressed by ETSC's Executive Di-

rector Antonio Avenoso: "Although this proposal is a step in the right direction, it would have had an even greater life saving potential if it had included an EU wide reference framework for convergence of enforcement best practices, such as the use of fixed safety cameras in combination with mobile controls for speed, targeted alcohol breath testing."

ETSC hopes that future incorporation of best enforcement practices into the legislative proposal will significantly strengthen it and help to reduce the 42,000 annual deaths on Europe's roads.

MEPs turn down a statement advocating a 'blanket' maximum speed limit of 130 km/h across European Motorways

In Strasbourg on 11th of March MEPs voted against homogeneous level of safety across European Motorways. The European Greens had tabled an amendment advocating a 130 blanket speed limit across European roads to the Albertini Report, a Parliament own initiative report on 'sustainable European transport policy, taking into account European energy and environment policies'. The amendment stipulated that the Parliament:

'Congratulates the Commission President and the Energy Commissioner for advocating a blanket speed limit on all EU motorways in order to save energy and protect the climate; accordingly encourages the Commission now to propose a 130 km/h speed limit for all EU motorways, with the possibility for Member States or regions to set lower speed limits.'

This amendment was unfortunately rejected (375 votes against 262), drowning a chance for the Parliament to send a strong signal, notably in favour of the introduction of speed limits on German Motorways.

ETSC News in Brief

The ETSC Fact Sheet investigating the debate surrounding the introduction of speed limits in Germany has been published and is available online:

http://www.etsc.be/documents/Speed_Fact_Sheet_1.pdf

The PIN ranking on Motorway safety is also available:

http://www.etsc.be/documents/PIN%20Flash%208_final.pdf

A PIN talk was held in Finland focusing on Speed:

http://www.etsc.be/documents/copy_of_copy_of_copy_of_copy_of_Press%20release_PIN%20Talk%20in%20Finland_final.pdf

ShLOW! Show Me How Slow

ETSC's new project on Speed Management commences. This project will run in 10 European countries through the work of committed young students who will be encouraged to run a local campaign or concrete action to reduce excessive speed.

Examples, among others, will include running an Intelligence Speed Adaptation demonstration, lobbying local municipalities to install traffic calming devices, running a small scale awareness raising campaign or approaching fleet operators to incite them to develop speed management policies.

The first phase of the project will be a series of Lectures on Speed Management conducted in September-December across 50 universities to recruit students and motivate them to participate in the project.

For more information regarding ShLOW! please contact Gabriel Simcic: gabriel.simcic@etsc.be

Members

Accident Research Unit - Medical University Hannover (D)
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