

Road safety experts call on MEPs to approve infrastructure Directive

27 June 2007, Brussels – The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)⁽¹⁾ presented today an open letter to all Members of the European Parliament urging them to decide in favour of road safety in the vote on infrastructure safety during the upcoming plenary session. This letter has been signed by 104 individuals in 22 countries who believe that road infrastructure must be managed in each EU country to the highest-possible safety standards⁽²⁾.

On many European roads, the same type of crash happens again and again in exactly the same spot. At these 'high-risk sites', poorly managed infrastructure produces routine death and injury. People have been killed there and more will be killed in the future if these sites are not identified and brought up to standard. Moreover, large amounts of money will be spent on new roads that are designed to kill if no action is taken to ensure that they are built to latest safety standards.

In some countries, procedures have been developed to address this carnage. These procedures include road safety impact assessments, audits, network safety management and safety inspections. But there are still too many European countries where these tools are not widely applied, so a structured European approach is sorely needed.

The European Commission has made a proposal requiring Member States to adopt their own national rules on these four procedures. According to the proposal, application of these rules would be mandatory only on those 85,000 km of main roads belonging to the Trans-European Road Network (TERN). The Parliament's Transport Committee rejected the proposal on 5 June 2007 without any attempt at amending it on the grounds of its representing a "bureaucratic delusion"⁽³⁾.

"This letter shows that the Commission's proposal has the support of the road safety community across Europe. The signatories have been engaging for years and years in the exchange of best practice. They have come to the conclusion that this approach has failed to accelerate progress. What Europe now needs is a law." said ETSC Executive Director Jörg Beckmann.

Three parliamentarians from the biggest political groups support this view. Dieter-Lebrecht Koch MEP (EPP-ED, Germany) said: *"Most of Germany's road infrastructure is safe. But in many of the EU's Member States the level of infrastructure safety is not satisfactory. By applying effective safety procedures on the Trans-European Road Network (TERN) alone we can save every year 600 lives, about 80 of those in Germany alone, and avoid 7,000 injuries, according to Commission estimates. It is in our responsibility to make this happen."*

Inés Ayala Sender (PSE, Spain) said: *"Many Member States are in the process of upgrading or constructing their part of the TERN, as well as preparing for new investments on better infrastructures. I am sure that the improved Commission proposal would help Member States to take better decisions for safer roads."*

Paolo Costa (ALDE, Italy) said: *"The Commission proposal strikes a balance between the EU-wide legal obligation to safeguard the highest level of safety on the TERN and Member States' need to be able to continue their own national approaches. Every country will be able to keep existing procedures or introduce new ones. But none will be able to disregard safety when managing the TERN on their territory."*

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Notes to Editors:

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 37 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. See www.etsc.be.

(2) The open letter can be found on ETSC's website at <http://www.etsc.be/Openletter.php>. Signatories include road safety researchers, practitioners and campaigners working with the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC).

(3) *EP Transport Committee rejects Directive on Road Safety*, press release by Renate Sommer MEP, 6 June 2007

See <http://www.epp-ed.eu/press/showPR.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=6136&PRContentID=10869&PRContentLg=en>