

Transport Safety Lunches

"Belt up!"

Fitting Europe's cars with seat belt reminders

Chairperson: Ewa Hedkvist Petersen (MEP) and Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (MEP)

Panelists: D. Theologitis and W. Maes (DG TREN European Commission), J. Provensal (ACEA), B. Forslund (Volvo Bus Corporation), A. Kullgren (Folksam Research and Development)

Welcome by: Prof. Herman De Croo MP, Speaker, Belgian Chamber of Representatives

Despite the legal obligation since 1991 to use safety restraints for all car occupants, usage rates still vary greatly across Europe. Universal seat belt use alone could prevent 6,000 deaths every year in the EU-15. In May 2006, a new Directive will come into force that extends the obligatory use of seat belts to all motor vehicles, including trucks and buses.

The use of seat belts is crucial for preventing fatalities and injuries particularly at lower speeds. In case of an accident, rear passengers who do not wear a belt will risk to severely injure front seat occupants. Seat belt reminders encourage front and rear seat occupants to buckle up.

Seat belt reminders increase usage rates of safety restraints by sending out a light and/or sound signal to alert the driver passenger that he or she is not belted. Many new vehicles (60% of cars sold in Sweden, 72% of cars tested by EuroNCAP since 2003) are now fitted with such a device. They have also been installed in some car passenger seats, but how can this be further improved?

Wide-scale installation of seat belt reminders could be achieved by:

- (1) extending seat belt reminders to the driver seat in all passenger cars and in a second step to all other types of vehicles including trucks. Considering EU legislation including technical requirements will speed up this process.
- (2) extending seat belt reminders to other seats in the car. Getting a clear commitment, from industry and providing incentives as well as better consumer information are key steps.
- (3) providing for retrofitting of all cars with seat belt reminders by using low-cost aftermarket devices.

Still, there will remain a small minority of non-users unwilling to use seat belts and employ reminders. Enhanced enforcement should focus on this group, including truck drivers. For persistent offenders, seat belt interlock schemes could be considered to help them develop a habit of belting up.

ETSC's Transport Safety Lunches are the site for openly debating promising and successful European approaches to prevent both accidents and injuries in transportation. They bring together decision makers from the transport sector in Brussels, thus establishing a platform to exchange information and views for all those interested in transport safety.

Following a buffet lunch the experts provide the audience with an insight into innovative transport safety work in the particular country. By addressing the most pressing problems they are paving the way for sharing knowledge and experience of how to best reduce transport-related accidents and injuries. The debates will explore possibilities of how key actors can develop the political and organisational leadership that it takes to implement effective safety schemes.

The Lunches provide good opportunities for both public authorities from all EU countries and private companies from all transport sectors to present their technical and organisational measures for the improvement of safety and security within the different modes of transport.



Professor Herman De Croo MP
Speaker, Belgian Chamber of Representatives

ETSC's Transport Safety Lunch

On 3 May 2005 from 12:45 – 15:00

"Belt up!"

Fitting Europe's cars with seat belt reminders

At "Autoworld", Parc Cinquantenaire

Free of charge

For registration: Ms. Graziella Jost, trainee@etsc.be

Please e-mail or fax the following information:

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Address: _____

Telephone/Fax: _____

E-mail: _____