European Transport Safety Council

# PRESS NOTICE

Wednesday 22nd January 2003

## Ageing Europe: challenges and opportunities for transport safety

In the 5th European Transport Safety Lecture "Ageing Europe: the challenges and opportunities for transport safety", Professor Liisa Hakamies-Blomqvist, Chairman of the OECD expert group on ageing and transport, challenges the concept that older drivers present an increased risk for other road users and that age-related driver screening improves road safety.

Addressing transport safety policymakers and professionals from across Europe, her key messages in this evening's Lecture in Brussels organised by the European Transport Safety Council are:

- Mandatory age-related driver testing does not lead to safety benefits
- Traffic safety may be diminished by making safe older drivers stop driving prematurely and switch to less safe modes of travel
- A sound research evidence-based view of the complex problems of ageing and safe transportation should be implemented among decision makers. Viewing traffic safety in a public health perspective will be useful in balancing the legitimate demands of ageing citizens concerning both mobility and safety.
- The costs of measures benefiting older road users should not be exaggerated
- Improvements in road infrastructure, speed management, vehicle design benefiting older road users will benefit users of all ages.

Responding to the lecturer, Mrs Isabelle Durant, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Mobility and Transport and ETSC experts consider the implications for national and EU action:

Isabelle Durant adds: "Professor Hakamies-Blomqvist's policy recommendations should be implemented around Europe. Older pedestrians and cyclists are particularly frail. I am, therefore, in favour of stronger regulation for the design of car fronts for pedestrians than what the industry suggested last year. Besides, in order to ensure maximum mobility and safety to all, in particular older drivers, we should not impose mandatory

screening tests after a certain age. Elderly citizens do not pose a particular risk. But, because some have individual health difficulties, we need adequate incentives and support."

Professor Herman De Croo MP, Speaker of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives and Chairman of ETSC's Board says "It is clear that we need to cater much better for citizens, including older road users, in the design of our towns and cities, and in the design of vehicles used there if we are going to meet the highly ambitious new EU-wide target to reduce road deaths by 50% by 2010."

ETSC experts say:

Safer vehicles: Professor Murray Mackay (UK)

- A Directive on safer car fronts for pedestrians is needed mandating the four EEVC crash tests for new car designs without further delay
- A Directive on mandatory fitment of daytime running lights for motorcycles to increase their visibility to older people
- Include better car-to-car compatibility in 6th Framework Research Programme

Safer roads: Fred Wegman (NL)

- Encourage Member States to introduce a functional road network hierarchy and match speed limits, layout and design according to function e.g. Dutch sustainable safety policy, for road users in general
- Produce best practice EU handbook on safe infrastructure and older road users
- Encourage review of existing road design guidelines in EU Member States
- Include older road user safety in 6th Framework Research Programme

Influencing road user behaviour: Bernhard Biehl (D)

- No requirements for general medical checks and driving tests for older people in the forthcoming Directive on driving licences
- Encourage car manufacturers through legislation and consumer information to provide vehicles with a higher safety standard, more comfort than power, and not to over-provide IT equipment
- Better integration of different transportation modes
- Making users aware that the roads should be used for transport and travel rather than sport

---

For further information, contact: ETSC secretariat/Marie Defrance: + 32 (0)2 230 41 06/40 04; Email: information@etsc.be; The full text of the Lecture is available from the ETSC secretariat (hard copy) or on ETSC's website http://www.etsc.be/eve.htm from Thursday 23rd January. The OECD report referred to is: Ageing and Transport: Mobility needs and safety issues, OECD, 2001.