VISIONS, TARGETS & STRATEGIES JUNE 1999

FIRST EUROPEAN TRANSPORT SAFETY LECTURE

The European Transport Safety Lecture series was launched by ETSC in January. It opened with 'Transport Safety Visions Targets and Strategies: Beyond 2000' presented by Professor Kåre Rumar. Neil Kinnock, EU Transport Commissioner and Pam Cornelissen MEP, road safety rapporteur of the European Parliament responded. ETSC Update summarises the key messages coming from this event.

Introducing the series, ETSC Board Chairman and Member of the Belgian Parliament, Professor Herman De Croo said: "We are bringing together in this event key individuals who, in view of their role and responsibilities, will make a major contribution to shaping future levels of transport safety.

"We aim to increase awareness of innovation, research-based solutions to important problems, and results-based transport safety management amongst policymakers, professionals and the private sector.

"We want to stimulate a high level debate across the European Union to exchange knowledge and experience and to help forge new commitment to efforts to reduce the risks and costs of transport crashes.

"Of all the aspirations which policymakers and professionals will hear this year as we approach the Millennium, there is no doubt in my mind that the challenge which Professor Rumar sets will be among the most important.""

TRANSPORT SAFETY VISIONS STRATEGIES AND TARGETS: BEYOND 2000.

"To prevent road death and disability, we have to design more around human capabilities rather than expecting users to cope with increasingly demanding conditions."

Presenting the 1st European Transport Safety Lecture, Professor Kåre (S) called upon the European Union and Member States to develop a comprehensive transport safety strategy to 2010 for the EU with emphasis on road casualty reduction:

"In order to cure an illness you have to diagnose the core of the problem. The major problem with transport safety is road transport. The one major problem with road safety is the human limitations of the road user

- the body cannot withstand collisions of speeds of more than 10-20 km/h without injury unless good crash protection is provided
- the behavioural response to the changing traffic, vehicle and road environment is not always safe.

To solve the problem, these human limitations of all road users must form the core design parameters of the transport systems of the next Millennium. To prevent road death and disability, we have to design more around human capabilities rather than expecting users to cope with increasingly demanding conditions."

In the European Union each year:

- There are 42,500 road deaths and 400 deaths from rail, sea and air travel.
- Road transport has the highest fatality risks and costs
- 1 in 3 citizens in their lifetime will need hospital care due to a road crash.
- Road crashes are the largest single cause of death for people <45 years.
- Road crashes cost around twice the EU budget for all of its activity.

To focus attention, Professor Rumar identified 10 golden rules comprising key strategies for the future and an urgent set of EU road safety actions.

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1. The numbers of road injuries and deaths constitute a major health problem.
2. There have been many efforts over the years to prevent crashes and to reduce road transport risk. But in the future work is needed more on reducing exposure to motorised traffic and reducing the severity of injury and permanent disability in the event of a crash.
3. Human beings have limitations in their physical tolerance to injury and in their unreliable behaviour. In the future these human limitations must be the core design parameters of the traffic system.
4. Public awareness of the importance of road safety needs to be increased - this is critical for future success in road safety work. Measuring traffic, driver education and traffic enforcement are important factors in this work.
5. Set quantitative road safety targets, both nationally, and for the EU as a whole (to reduce deaths to less than 25,000 by the year 2010).
6. Encourage the private sector to take a more active part in future road safety work by making road safety a competitive transport variable in bids for transport contracts in the public and private sector and in using safety as a quality parameter for cars and other transport products.
7. Implement present knowledge and carry out research where answers are needed. In both cases an EU road safety information centre could play an important role.
8. Develop a results management system for road safety work comparable to management systems used in trade and industry.
9. The consumer is one of the most important actors in a market economy. Consumer information is quick, very powerful and should be supported.
10. Specific measures in EU road safety work:

- Urgently agree on an EU Directive on safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists,
- Provide financial support for consumer information activity, e.g. EuroNCAP tests for safer cars,
- Create an EU information centre for exchange of national experience and best practice,
- Set ceiling limits for speed and alcohol
- Decide on the mandatory fitment of daytime running lights,
- Use modern technology for speed adaptation, traffic enforcement and driver licences.

RESPONSE OF EU TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER

"Most would agree that the achievement of higher road safety performance requires strategies that strongly feature integrated activities and re-inforce good quality in design and management, rigorous enforcement and effective means of strongly promoting good behaviour amongst road users."

ON THE CASUALTY PROBLEM

In his response EU Transport Commissioner, Neil Kinnock said that 1 in 80 European citizens currently died each year following road accidents - on average 40 years earlier than their life expectancy. For people aged between 10 and 30, road accident injuries were the most prevalent cause of death in modern Europe.

Deaths and casualties in road traffic accidents were a serious public health problem that clearly needed urgent and continuing attention and action. But it was essential to sustain 3 related activities:

1. To keep on highlighting the scale of the carnage and relating it to the figures for deaths from other causes.
2. To continue to draw attention to the way in which lives have been saved and injuries avoided as a result of the cumulative effect of a few decades of seat belt laws, tougher drink drive policies, improvements in car occupant protection, better road design and other developments - almost all of which were resisted by one or another vested interest before their introduction.
3. To keep on demonstrating that road accidents generate huge economic costs as well as terrible human misery. It was for that reason that the 1997 Commission Communication setting out the road safety programme to 2001 highlighted the social cost of road accidents and promulgated the so-called "1 million EURO test" which Member States could apply in evaluating the effectiveness of road safety measures.

ON THE EU ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

The Commission has embarked upon a two-stage prioritisation process in their Road Safety Programme. First of all, a group of experts had been invited to score each of the measures according to certain criteria such as;

- Social acceptance
- Added value across the EU
- Political feasibility
- Ease of institutional implementation

The result of the first stage was that there was a consensus that out of 64 different potential measures and initiatives; the three top priorities were:

- Crashworthiness of cars,
- Seat belt and child restraint use,
- An EU data and safety information source

The second stage was to apply a cost–effectiveness calculation, where applicable, which includes an assessment of casualty reduction potential in order to produce a final ranking of

the road safety measures. This final ranking would provide guidance for the Commission's efforts to reduce casualties in road accidents from 2000.

The forthcoming progress report would also include an assessment of other priority measures such as;

- combating drivers' use of drugs & alcohol,
- speed limitation devices and automatic

speed control,

- daytime running lights,
- roadside design which reduces collision

effects,

- safer car fronts for pedestrians

ON EURO NCAP

Referring to the important contribution being made by the EuroNCAP programme, the Commissioner said that it gave manufacturers a real inducement to produce cars and consumers excellent reasons to buy cars that offer better protection for drivers and passengers.

But it was clear that the information provided by these tests did not give equally strong stimuli to manufacturers to reduce the injury risk of pedestrians and other road users. The fact that pedestrian fatalities in the EU had fallen from 10,000 in 1991 to 7,400 in 1995, was welcome – and that trend is apparently continuing. But the relatively poor pedestrian friendliness performance of cars in the EuroNCAP test demonstrated that there was still great potential for further reducing pedestrian fatalities. The Commission would be proposing legislation to establish a standard for the design of cars to be more "pedestrian friendly".

ON A EUROPEAN INFORMATION SOURCE

One of the cornerstones of the current EU road safety programme was the development of a European database of road accident statistics, which would provide the foundations for an integrated EU information system. This would include details about traffic exposure, the implementation of road safety measures, key research results and best enforcement practices.

All Member States were directly or indirectly involved in the construction of the European road accident database – known by its acronym, CARE. One of the benefits of this co-operative exercise was the development of an understanding of the way that information is defined and processed in each Member State.

ON TARGETS, STRATEGIES AND ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

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Responding to Professor Rumar's proposal to set targets at national and at EU levels, the Commissioner said decisions about target-setting were for governments (by which he meant at national rather than at EU level).

Some Member States and local authorities already formulated road safety plans around numerical targets, and he believed the evidence seemed to support the view that target-setting could lead to more effective programmes.

This was good practice for two reasons: Firstly, because it represented conscious co-operation between central and local government, police forces, educational establishments and hospital services in pursuit of agreed casualty reduction targets. Secondly, because target-setting could raise public awareness of the level of crashes and the need to achieve reductions.

He said most would agree that the achievement of higher road safety performance requires strategies that strongly feature integrated activities and re-inforce good quality in design and management, rigorous enforcement and effective means of strongly promoting good behaviour amongst road users.

Raising safety performance also required a confident and realistic philosophy which counteracted the idea that there are regrettable but acceptable "cultural" reasons for casual attitudes to safety in particular geographical areas of the Union or in particular generations.

While the liberty of the individual was sacred, the freedom of the individual to carelessly inflict misery and cost on others through laziness, stupidity or a misplaced spirit of "adventure" was not.

RESPONSE OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S ROAD SAFETY RAPPORTEUR

"Politicians should take the lead in the war against the slaughter on our roads"

"It is my firm belief that safer transport is a matter of money and political will.

Pam Cornelissen MEP (EPP, NL) and current rapporteur for Parliament on road safety saw it as a common task to make society more aware that road crashes lead to the enormous pain and suffering of hundreds of thousands of people and a waste of money - money that was badly needed to improve the quality of life for many EU citizens.

Traffic unsafety was not a natural disaster like an earthquake. Traffic could be made just as safe as people wanted. Traffic safety was a shared responsibility. It was the task of everybody involved one way or another in transport to ask the question what can 'I' do? Politicians should take the lead in the war against the slaughter on our roads.

ON THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S CASUALTY REDUCTION TARGET

For that reason, the European Parliament has adopted a clear political target to reduce the number of fatalities by at least 50 per cent in the coming 15 years.

Parliament awaited the follow up to the Commission Communication (April 1997 with great impatience. Parliament has asked the Commission to prioritise the various measures proposed on the basis of their impact on the reduction value of the number of fatalities. In order to allow the Commission to carry out the necessary work, Parliament had increased the budget for transport safety considerably, almost doubling it to some 9 million Euro for 1999.

He said that there were not many areas in European Union policies where the European Commission received more money than requested (the initial proposal by the Commission for the 1999 budget was 5.5 million Euro).

Pam Cornelissen said that the European Parliament was ready to take up Professor Rumar's challenge. He highlighted the following points.

1. Sustainable transport safety was Parliament's central line of action. A comprehensive strategy was needed to achieve the goal.
2. The limitations in human abilities and performance must form an important parameter in the design of the traffic system.

   He emphasised the almost unlimited possibilities of technological development. – e.g. to reduce excessive speed and to ban driving with alcohol in the blood of more than 0.50 pro mille.

3. The latest EuroNCAP test results showed again the need for action on safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists. Following the 20 year old research and development programme, EU legislation introducing EEVC test procedures should be introduced as soon as possible.
4. Gains could also be expected from safer infrastructure and road safety impact assessment for all EU-funded transport infrastructure should be introduced. More traffic regulation enforcement was needed as was information and education for road users to encourage positive attitudes to road safety and safety measures.

The total cost of road crashes in the EU were estimated by experts at over 160 billion Euro a year so money ought not to be the sticking point. What remained was the political will to set an EU-target for fatality reduction.

All were agreed that the Member States who had set a concrete target had performed better than those without. Such a fact should count. Each life counted. Parliament's vision was that all efforts needed to be combined to make the EU the safest continent in the world for travelling by any mode. Parliament's target was that all necessary measures should be taken to reduce deaths by at least by 50 per cent in the coming 15 years.