

Small Country Big Task: Slovene Presidency of the EU

This Memorandum briefly outlines ETSC's priorities for the Slovene Presidency of the EU and presents our recommendations on key EU policy dossiers that we would like the Presidency to take into account.

ETSC(1) welcomes the news that road safety will be one of the top priorities on the Transport agenda during the Slovene Presidency of the EU. ETSC hopes that this commitment to road safety will also be translated into concrete policy initiatives. The road safety community will be watching closely to see how Slovenia prioritises road safety actions in the last year before the EU deadline to halve road deaths between 2001 and 2010. 2009 will also be the year when the EU will start thinking about a new target and a new strategy for its 4th Road Safety Action Programme (RSAP) to tackle the challenges of saving lives on Europe's roads beyond 2010. At a European level only very few of the measures set out in the ambitious 3rd Road Safety Action Programme have been achieved at all. Clearly road safety deserves a boost to increase the momentum in the penultimate year before the consideration of new actions. On the legislative timetable key to measuring the success of its Presidency will be the adoption of a strong Infrastructure Safety Directive to improve Europe's roads.

Slovenia needs to increase efforts at home to raise its contribution to reaching the target of halving road deaths by 2010. According to Road Safety PIN Flash 6, issued in October 2007, Slovenia has only managed to reduce its road deaths by 6% between 2001 and 2006. As regards the 130 road deaths per million population in 2006 Slovenia also comes in at the bottom quarter of Europe. It has worked hard continuously in recent years with the adoption of a new Road Safety Programme in 2006 and a new target of halving road deaths by 2011 based on 2001 and also adopted the Vision Zero. ETSC hopes the impact of this new policy will soon translate into casualty reductions.

The "Periodic Plan for Road safety 2008 and 2009" was passed for consideration to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia by Ministry of Transport in December 2007. The main issues of the plan are prevention work, protection of vulnerable persons, tackling speed and drink driving, seat belt and motorcyclists. Several ministries and other governmental bodies, which are co-responsible for the road safety, will be involved in the implementation of this next action plan. "Common co-responsibility" means the obligation and responsibility of ministries and other governmental bodies, which are directly or indirectly involved in the road safety, to improve the road safety through more intensive work and endeavors in their field.

4th RSAP and beyond 2010

The Slovene Presidency should consider the need for a new European wide target for action on improving road safety in the EU beyond 2010. A new target also needs the formulation of a new 4th Road Safety Action Programme with a set of measures linked to milestones and monitoring mechanisms. Part of this process should include a review of the achievements within road safety at a European level over the past decade. The last decade has seen big changes in the EU with enlargement and an increasing imbalance of road risk. We should learn from the experience of implementing the 3rd RSAP and therefore adopt clear and strict monitoring and accountability mechanisms, for the 4th RSAP to be achieved.

Infrastructure

ETSC is pleased that the Infrastructure Safety Directive proposal is now back in the European Parliament for renewed consideration by MEPs. We stress again the need for a swift adoption of this legislation which could save 600 lives a year according to Commission estimates. It should provide for a substantial improvement of the road network, introducing an EU system of high risk sites treatment, road safety audits and safety impact assessment on the Trans-European Road Network. The Directive will help Member States to implement highly cost effective instruments.

Infrastructure which is constructed making it obvious what sort of behavior and speed is expected from the drivers is also part of reducing speed. The layout of a road should automatically enforce the desired speed and so reduce the probability of a crash and their severity.

Enforcement

The Slovene Presidency should together with the Commission place enforcement of road traffic law high on its political agenda and engage in discussions with other Member States including the future Presidency holder, France. The European Commission committed itself to proposing a Directive in case insufficient progress towards the 2010 target was made. As this is the case, a legislative proposal should introduce minimum requirements to achieve high standards in the enforcement of traffic law in the areas of speeding, drink driving and seat belt use. It should include the cross border dimension of enforcement and envisage mechanisms to ensure that drivers respect the traffic law in whichever EU country they are driving. A cost benefit analysis carried out for the European Commission assessed that increased enforcement in these three priority areas could reduce road deaths annually by 14,000 in the EU 15 (even more in EU 25). Following a Consultation on possible legislation in October 2006 ETSC expects a proposal to be published in the first part of 2008 under the Slovene Presidency. ETSC hopes that the Presidency will stress the massive road safety gains from such a piece of legislation.

Support Legislation on Daytime Running Lights

ETSC welcomes the Commission's intention to adopt the UN ECE Regulation on the equipment of low energy consumption Dedicated Daytime Running Lights on new vehicles. However, ETSC regrets that this measure will not be accompanied by the requirement

for existing vehicles to use dipped headlights and calls on the Presidency to work towards the mandatory use of DRL for all vehicles.

Verona Conference on Road Safety

ETSC welcomes the initiative of the Slovene Presidency to organize a Verona Conference on road safety together with the Italian government. This annual event is an excellent opportunity for Transport Ministers from across the EU to discuss road safety and consider future co-operation at a European level. This conference also enables Ministers to review national road safety policies and discuss efforts to reduce road deaths in their own countries. ETSC stresses the benefit of opening up the conference to input from other road safety stakeholders including civil society.

Speed Reductions and CO2 Emissions

The Slovene Presidency should also raise the issue that speed reduction on Europe's roads would also directly lower the level of CO2 emissions. Road transport generates about one fifth of the EU's CO2 emissions, with passenger cars responsible of around 12% and these emissions have risen between 1990 and 2004 by 26%. Efforts to promote 'Eco-driving' and speed limit enforcement can also contribute to reducing CO2 emissions. Furthermore the Presidency should look to promote intelligent speed assistance as a tool to save lives and reduce greenhouse gases in the EU. Legislation which will contribute to reducing speed on Europe's road including the Directive on Infrastructure and possible Directive on Enforcement must be fast-tracked within the context of tackling not only safety but also the EU's climate change agenda. The European Union is committed under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and this March 2007 EU leaders committed to a 20-30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Notes to editors:

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. The Council brings together 39 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

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