

## Strong UK Leadership Needed for Safer Roads

**This Memorandum outlines ETSC's priorities for the UK Presidency and suggests how the Presidency may secure progress on specific policy areas.**

Naturally, ETSC would wish the UK to give transport safety a top priority during its EU Presidency. Beyond the fact that ETSC always advocates science based priority safety initiatives, the current EU policy agenda does provide unique opportunities to advance transport safety.

Indeed, the UK takes over the driving seat of the EU at an auspicious moment for the future of road transport safety. The mid term review of the 3rd road safety action programme is due to be one of the major transport dossiers to be considered during the UK Presidency of the European Union. The UK Presidency thus has an opportunity both to place safety centre stage in EU transport policy making and highlight its own considerable achievements in this area.

Moreover, the third Verona meeting of transport ministers on road safety is due in November 2005. We therefore call on the UK government to grasp the opportunity this timing provides in order to advance transport safety and prevent the continued unnecessary high loss of life limb across the EU.

### Political leadership

Everyone is in favour of improving transport safety – or at least no one would claim to champion increased road danger. Nevertheless, securing real progress in transport safety is contingent on political commitment and strong political will. The UK will therefore need to demonstrate political leadership during the Presidency, especially to deliver a sufficient response to the mid term review of the 3rd road safety action programme. This will entail some tough political stances – particularly in relation to a vocal segment of the domestic audience frequently hostile to both the EU and improved road safety law enforcement. The UK government should continue to pursue policies based on rational assessment of proportional measures demonstrably effective. Indeed, the U.K. should ensure that the UK's high level of performance and commitment to reducing road deaths is duplicated across Europe.

A concrete example the UK could set in demonstrating such political leadership is to sign the e-call "Memorandum of understanding" at an early stage of their Presidency. They would then be able to call on other Member State governments to similarly support this most pressing of e-safety initiatives.

### Verona process

The signing of the Verona Charter under the Italian Presidency in 2003 and the follow-up meeting of the Dutch Presidency in 2004 have initiated a political process. This evolution could result in a process for road safety similar to the Cardiff or Lisbon processes. The principal aim of the Verona Process must be to ensure political will and leadership in a policy area where effective measures are well-known and ready to be implemented, but simply lack the commitment and responsibility from the top-level. ETSC urges the UK Presidency to promote the "road safety process" that continues to engage the highest political level in debating what measures are necessary to improve road safety across the EU.

### Mid term review

The mid term review of the third road safety action programme is set to be characterised by an inequality of road risk across the EU. The target of halving road casualties by 2010, originally established in the White Paper on the Common Transport Policy, was meant to see improvements across the EU. Enlargement has exacerbated the unequal distribution of road risk across the EU, with the new Member States having considerably higher road risk than the old EU-15. The mid term review is set to highlight this with an outline for each of the Member States of their road safety performance.

The UK government has ample experience of using "league tables" in a variety of public policy areas and so will be aware of the negative reaction that a publication of such material can elicit from those highlighted as "underperforming". The UK Presidency should therefore ensure that the discussions of the mid term review focus on what can be done by all Member States as well as how those with the greatest challenge can be assisted in decreasing their levels of road risk.

The mid term review should also be accompanied by concrete policy initiatives – a proposal on the introduction of mandatory day-time running lights, a package of measures on improving infrastructure and a proposal on addressing cross-border enforcement of traffic law.

### Day-time running lights

ETSC has long highlighted how effective mandatory day-time running lights are. In fact this was the most cost effective road safety measure examined in ETSC's 2003 publications: "Cost effective EU transport safety measures". The UK Presidency should therefore advance this dossier as a priority.

### Infrastructure package

ETSC believes that road infrastructure improvements can make a significant contribution towards reducing the frequency and seriousness of road traffic accidents. The Presidency should ensure that the European Commission fulfils its commitment to developing best practice guidelines in the fields of urban safety management, speed reduction, low cost measures and safety audit. ETSC welcomes the Commission's intention to introduce a framework Directive on road infrastructure safety under the UK Presidency. This Directive will introduce a system for the harmonized management of "high risk sites" and road safety audits for roads on the Trans-European Transport network. As part of this, the EU Presidency should also consider safety audits and safety impact assessments to be a condition for all EU-funded infrastructure projects.

### Driving licence

ETSC strongly supports the progress made in the European Parliament on the current recasting of the Directive on driving

licences and further encourages progress to be made by the Council. This harmonisation would contribute to the ambitious EU target of halving road deaths by the year 2010, especially in relation to improving cross border enforcement of traffic laws as well as the fight against fraudulent access to driving licenses. The EU Presidency should continue the process of developing the Driving Licence Network (RESPER) to facilitate the administration and sharing of information between authorities.

### Cross border enforcement

ETSC supports the conclusions adopted at the informal Verona Council in 2004 which include a strong focus on the enforcement of traffic law. The UK Presidency should ensure that EU Transport Ministers continue to account for the progress made so far in implementing the Commission's Recommendation on enforcement in their Member States. The UK Presidency should also support Member States' efforts to promote the use of in-vehicle technologies such as seat belt reminders and alcohol interlocks, and to stimulate the development and use of intelligent speed adaptation devices. Moreover the EU Presidency should work with the European Commission to prepare legislation to facilitate cross-border enforcement. The Presidency should also support Member States who are forging ahead with a network of information exchange to serve this purpose.