



News release

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Immediate release

Transport research agenda up for grabs

An industry interest group masquerading as a transparent and inclusive European stakeholder group is to help set Europe's transport research policy. Launched today in Brussels, the European Road Transport Research Advisory Council (Ertrac) is already controversial: NGOs are calling on the Commission to distance itself from it, while research commissioner Philippe Busquin is its most prominent patron.

NGOs warn that Ertrac's launch continues a worrying trend in which industry-sponsored 'advisory' groups come to dominate the research agenda. This, they say, is dangerous for Europe's research priorities, which will not only shape how tax-payers' money is spent but also the direction which policies take over the longer term.

Ertrac is tasked with establishing and promoting a strategic research agenda for safe, clean, convenient and efficient road transport in an enlarged European Union. Ertrac is not an EU body. But the Commission is involved in the process, so it looks like it plans to take Ertrac's recommendations seriously.

"This takes the concept of independent transport research ad absurdum," said ETSC's executive director, Dr Jörg Beckmann. "At the moment, it looks like industry can set the research agenda to suit its own interests, get money to do that research and then benefit from the results in the market-place and legislative arena, before going back to start the process all over again."

"Ertrac appears to be a blatant example of lawmakers and big business cosyng up to one another," continued T&E director, Beatrice Schell. "As it now stands, industry appears to be buying the ability to shape transport policy for the bargain price of organising an 'advisory' body and holding a few workshops. If this is what dialogue means, we have yet to move away from the mirror. We call on the Commission to not have anything to do with this group."

The group theoretically involves key stakeholders in the European road transport system: its terms of reference say that, "the range of stakeholders will reflect the need for maximum transparency." Yet not a single NGO has been invited to join, despite the fact that both T&E and ETSC were proposed for membership.

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