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Position on the Commission Recommendation on enforcement in the field of road safety

ETSC¹, ACPO² and TISPOL³ welcome the recent adoption of a Commission Recommendation on the enforcement of road traffic rules.

As shown in several publications⁴, intensive enforcement actions addressing the three major problems in drivers' behaviour (speeding, drink-driving and non-use of seat belts) are an important means of enhancing road safety. Such actions, if carried out according to best practice standards, can lead to a rapid and massive reduction in deaths and injuries in a very cost-effective way.

The Commission's proposal takes the form of a Recommendation. In case the progress made during the next three years proves insufficient to achieve the EU's objective of halving the annual number of road deaths in the EU by 2010, the Commission commits itself to table a proposal for a Directive.

¹ The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is an independent non-profitmaking organisation dedicated to improving transport safety in Europe. It has 26 members in 11 European countries.

² The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) brings together 280 senior officers from the UK's 44 police forces to develop common policing policies for the country's Police Service as a whole.

³ The European Traffic Police Network (TISPOL) was formally established in 2000 to promote the development of road safety and law enforcement in connection with roads policing in Europe.

⁴ ETSC: Cost-effective EU transport safety measures (2003); ETSC: Police enforcement strategies to reduce traffic casualties in Europe (1999)

Our three organisations take the view that the European Commission should have proposed a Directive. Only by means of a legally binding instrument, we believe, can the EU achieve proper commitment by all Member States and at all levels of political decision-making.

As the cost-benefit study carried out for the Commission⁵ has shown, enforcement based on the measures proposed in the Recommendation can reduce the number of fatalities across the EU by about 14.000 per year. This means that through intensified enforcement alone the EU can achieve about two thirds of the total drop in fatalities that it has set itself as an objective for the year 2010.

This remarkable success will however not be achieved unless all, including the acceding, Member States, meet the proposed standards of enforcement. It should therefore not depend on the Member States' good will whether or not they wish to carry out the recommended measures.

Following the adoption of its Recommendation, the Commission must now ensure that the recommended measures are appropriately implemented by all current and future Member States, and it must monitor the countries' actions closely. As soon as it becomes apparent that there is no sufficient political will to fully implement the Recommendation in all Member States, the Commission should come forward with a proposal for a Directive.

ETSC, ACPO and TISPOL welcome the Commission's important initiative in the field of enforcement. However, in view of the general importance of reducing the appallingly high number of road casualties in the EU, and the EU's own ambitious target in this respect, we believe the Commission should strictly monitor the implementation of its Recommendation, and propose a more binding framework for the enforcement of road safety legislation as soon as any non-compliance becomes apparent.

⁵ ICF Consulting: Cost-benefit analysis of road safety improvements (2003)