



NEWS RELEASE

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ETSC calls for a "Verona Process"

At their last meeting chaired by the outgoing Dutch Presidency, Europe's Transport Ministers will formally adopt the conclusions of their second informal meeting on road safety of 25-26 October in Verona. ETSC¹ welcomes these conclusions as a commitment to improving road safety in all of Europe's 25 states.

ETSC's principal recommendation as set out in its Memorandum to the Luxembourg Presidency is to launch a new instrument of European road safety policy - the "Verona Process".

The "Verona Process" would build on the past progress on road safety made in Verona under the Italian and Dutch Presidencies. ETSC's recommendation is to use the EU policy-making method of open co-ordination successfully applied in other sectors, for instance in the "Lisbon Process" on economic development. This new Process would serve primarily to create the political leadership needed for action on road safety through an annual review based on performance indicators.

ETSC's Executive Director, Jörg Beckmann, today called upon Lucien Lux, the Luxembourg Transport Minister, to use his Presidency "to establish a Verona Process that will prompt his Ministerial colleagues to accept the responsibility and leadership necessary to reduce the number of their electorate that die or are seriously injured on the road".

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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. It brings together 26 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

ETSC Memorandum

to the Luxembourg Presidency on the European road safety policy

Prioritising Road Safety and Sustaining the Verona Process

Action is needed for safer roads in our new Europe. Despite the fact that Europe has both an ambitious road safety target and a comprehensive strategy there is an increasing imbalance of road risk across the enlarged European Union. Closing the road risk gap between the North and the South, the West and the East of Europe is a task of historic proportions requiring strong political leadership.

The EU-15 is well on its way to halving road deaths and injuries by 2010. The implementation of effective road safety measures, such as effective traffic law enforcement, has turned countries formerly known as "unsafe", such as France, into road safety champions – with a 20% reduction in fatalities from 2002 to 2003. One can find other Member States such as Sweden, the UK or the Netherlands, which have continuously improved

and implemented their road safety strategies, making them the best-performing EU countries.

Still, despite these singular national achievements, the EU road safety policy is far from being a success story. In fact, the gap between the best- and the worst-performing Member States is widening making the Baltic States 8 times as unsafe as the UK and still causing more than 46.700 road deaths per year (EU-25).

Unfortunately, these figures do not speak for themselves – they do need a strong *voice* to trigger effective action across Europe. The Luxembourg Presidency should raise its voice and take the kind of political leadership that turns good intentions on paper into successful interventions on the road. Luxembourg has the opportunity to lend its voice to a process that will transform EU road safety policy from a declaration of good will into political action well beyond 2010.

The 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 top-level political decision-makers. Therefore, ETSC urges the Luxembourg Presidency to host the 3rd Verona Meeting during its Presidency, thus launching the Verona Process with the mid-term review of the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme as its main agenda point.

By employing the so-called 'Open Co-ordination Method' the EU can establish common aims, guidelines as well as indicators, and identify best practice in the area of road safety. The Verona Process should serve to create political leadership in road safety by reviewing both the Union's and national road safety policies on an annual basis. As a result of this annual review the Transport Council shall nominate a **European Road Safety Champion** amongst one of its members. The championing Member State shall then take the lead in implementing effective road safety measures within its territory and thus provide an excellent example for taking responsibility in saving lives and preventing injuries.

Bull Bars

ETSC supports rapid adoption of the proposed Directive banning rigid bull bars. ETSC also notes that such a ban was a principle part of the Council response to the industry commitment to stop fitting bull bars as original equipment under the voluntary agreement on pedestrian protection. The Council recognised that such a legislative ban would need to cover bull bars supplied as independent items for the after sales market as well as those supplied with new vehicles. The proposal before the Council does this, as well as defining the performance characteristics of a non-rigid bull bar. Yet the precise stringency of this definition rests upon the test protocols that are to be defined by the Commission at a later date. ETSC therefore calls on the Council to ensure that the text adopted includes specific guidance for the Commission to base these test protocols on the EEVC tests.

Driving Licence

ETSC strongly supports the progress made under the Dutch Presidency both in Council and in the European Parliament on the current recasting of the Directive on driving licences. 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.

Road Infrastructure

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 Luxembourg 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 network. As part of this, the EU Presidency should also consider safety audits and safety impact assessment to be a condition for all EU-funded infrastructure.

Traffic Law 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 Luxembourg 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 Luxembourg 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.

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