European Transport Safety Council

PRESS NOTICE

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SAFER CITIES – Brussels Conference

The greatest everyday danger to people using towns and cities comes from the use of motor vehicles. Even in EU Member States where the risk is lowest, fatality risk needs to be reduced by a factor of seven to bring it into line with the risks in a typical mix of other everyday activities.

Urban planners, safety experts, and policymakers came together today in ETSC's Safer Cities Conference to discuss best practice strategies and measures implemented in some of Europe's towns and cities to reduce the risks and consequences of road crashes.

ETSC Board Chairman, Professor Herman De Croo MP said:
"As the European Commission states in their recent consultation paper on road safety: preventing road death and disabling injury means better adapting traffic systems to the needs, errors and physical limitations of road users. We need to cater much better for citizens in the design of our towns and cities, and in the design of the vehicles used there if we are going to meet the highly ambitious new EU-wide target to reduce road deaths by 50% by 2010.

"Increasingly, the measure of the progress we make in civic society is how well we protect the most vulnerable amongst us. In no other area is the need greater than in how we safeguard the lives of those vulnerable citizens who use the roads, particularly children and our senior citizens. The challenge before us all is how we can ensure that our traffic system works for all its users, young and old, in cars and outside cars. "

Professor Richard Allsop, ETSC Working Party Chairman, outlined the three main strategies which several national and local policies are now starting to address, with examples presented in Best in Europe from different Member States:

1. Reducing the number of vehicle kms travelled by: promoting localisation of some activities so that they can be reached on foot or by bicycle, or at least by shorter car journeys than before; centralising other activities so that they can be served better by public transport; improving the quality of public transport to extend the range of circumstances in which it is chosen in preference to the car; and discouraging access by car where there are reasonable alternatives.

2. *Reducing the risks of death and injury while walking or cycling for example by* creating attractive and convenient routes for the journeys on foot or by bicycle that people would actually like to make, routes with less proximity to motor traffic and safer provision for crossing roads and moderating the speeds of motor vehicles (90% of pedestrians survive impacts at 30 km/h or less).

3.Reducing the risks of death and injury for motor vehicles users, for example by: matching the use of each road to the functions that the road serves in terms of space, access and through movement; separating faster vehicles from slower ones and lighter vehicles from heavier ones, and separating vehicles that are making conflicting movements; making the road system self-explaining to its users; and achieving high levels of use of protective devices and understanding of how to drive to reduce risk.

Case studies were presented of successful activity in several Member States in which some cities are now starting to embrace these challenges.

- Long term strategies implemented in Vienna (eg. improvements in public transport, pedestrian areas, traffic calming, systematic treatment at high risk sites, speed control) led to an accident rate which was 67% lower than the surrounding country.

- Setting a city wide casualty reduction target and applying urban safety management and engineering measures reduced deaths and serious injuries by 48% in Gloucester, UK.

- 40km/h zones with road humps in Morkhoj, Gladsaxe, Denmark delivered a 76 % reduction in traffic accidents.

- An urban road safety management plan created and implemented in Cottbus, Germany resulted in a decrease in the average accident costs from 180 Euro per inhabitant to 130 Euro and a decrease in motor vehicle occupant casualties and pedestrian child casualties.

- Implementing sustainable road safety engineering measures in Zoetemeer, the Netherlands, led to a re-classified road network with speed limits and road layout and design set according to road function which preserved existing low casualty levels against large increases in population.

- Implementing the Swedish Vision Zero concept in Trollhattan (eg. Raised pedestrian crossings, speed humps, improved traffic signals, roundabouts, central guard rails, separated bike lanes and footways from the carriageway) received large support (75%) from local people.

- Traffic calming in Cattolica in Italy led to reports of road accident reduction and high public acceptability.

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