



European Youth Forum

for Road Safety aims to change mindsets



© RYD



Traffic accidents remain the largest cause of death among 15-24 year olds in Europe. This fact, added to young people's potential to influence future road users' behaviour, makes the organisation of the fourth European Youth Forum for Road Safety in Brussels on 24-25 November 2011 particularly welcome.

The event is organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport and coordinated by the Responsible Young Drivers foundation (RYD). It brings together young delegates involved in road safety across Europe and beyond.

Since its launch in 2008, the Forum has grown in importance. Thanks to extensive promotion of the outcomes of the 2010 event, the 2011 edition is set to arouse further interest from road safety actors worldwide. This is tribute to the Forum's peer-to-peer communication approach which is helping to change young adults' views of risky behaviour.

The emphasis this year is on planning for the future. A key aspect is the adoption during the event of a strategy setting out the Forum's activity for the coming decade.

This should ensure the Forum's sustainability, while aligning its work with EU road safety policy orientations for 2011-20. This period has been designated United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety and much of the Forum's future work will be carried out against this background.

As part of the Decade of Action, a new youth road safety declaration is to be drawn up in order to attract support from private stakeholders. The future strategy is to include development of a dissemination plan for this declaration as well as the designation of national youth road safety ambassadors. The Forum will also continue to support NGOs at all levels in their attempts to promote road safety awareness.

For more information, please visit <http://www.eyfrs.eu>

RYD European Project Director, Axel Druart:

"By bringing young people together to spread a common message that you can be responsible while still enjoying life, we can cut risks to a minimum. I am determined to increase road safety among young people all around the world and to make the next generation of leaders more aware of the issue."





Tackling the roots of risky living

Irresponsible behaviour is the direct cause of many health problems, particularly among the young. Nowhere is this truer than on the road where it is thought that human error is responsible for around 95% of accidents.

Given that risk-taking on the road is particularly prevalent among the young, it is essential to positively influence their behaviour. This can be done by instilling in them at an early age an awareness of the dangers of irresponsible behaviour and the need to guard against risks. The European Commission supports a number of projects in this area.

Training has a vital role to play but can only be effective if coupled with an understanding of the intended audience. The **ICARUS*** project thus set out to identify the main psychological and social characteristics behind risk-taking.

The project set up a network of trainers from national road safety bodies around Europe, police officers and expert researchers. This network studied a large sample of young drivers in order to identify common and national risk factors and high-risk groups.

It considered individual variables influencing behaviour including attitudes to road safety, tendency towards anger, moral disengagement, alcohol consumption and driving expertise and habits. The researchers concluded that while safe and risky drivers are present in all of the countries studied, specific factors such as overconfidence or aggression are much more in evidence in some countries than in others.

Safety on film

The findings have subsequently been used to develop training which focuses on tackling the various factors. One element is the involvement of police officers in awareness-raising activities in schools, thus helping to transform

* http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/icarus.pdf

** http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/heroes.pdf

students' views of the role of law enforcement from one characterised by punishment to one focused on prevention and protection.

Another key outcome of the project is the film, "Young Europe" which depicts the behaviour of road users in four different countries. The film is part documentary, part comedy and part drama and aims to educate while entertaining. It is due to be screened for the first time at the European Parliament in Brussels in September.

Young people are often more receptive to messages conveyed by their peers. The **HEROES**** project brings together youth volunteer and road safety organisations and other bodies working with young adults and peer educators to make young people more aware of the risk engendered by certain types of behaviour.

The project identified a range of good practices which formed the basis of 13 campaigns aimed at promoting responsible behaviour in several areas of life, not only on the road, but also in terms of aspects such as alcohol, drug consumption and AIDS prevention. This is done in order to appeal to youngsters and increase efficiency by cross-fertilising different aspects, thus reaching as many young people as possible. Among other things, these have borne fruit in the form of an awareness campaign on drugs, alcohol and road safety in universities, driving simulator events and the production of tools such as "AlcoVision Goggles" which sensitise young people on the effects of alcohol on driving.

Driving under a positive influence

Getting to the root cause of risky behaviour also involves going to the places in which it is likely to occur. In the case of road safety, few environments have the potential to lead to more risk-taking than nightclubs.

Despite the fact that more and more people are choosing a designated driver on nights out, too many people still drive under the influence of alcohol. Tellingly, Friday and Saturday nights tend to be the most dangerous of the week in spite of the relatively low numbers of cars on the road.

One cause of this may be peer pressure which leads people to drink to excess or take drugs, even if they then plan on getting behind the wheel. To combat this, each year on the





Logo of the European Night without Accident

third Saturday of October, on arrival at over 200 nightspots all over Europe clubbers are greeted by a team of their peers who encourage drivers to commit to staying sober.

Those 12 000 or so drivers who sign up to the [European Night without Accident](#)*** each year are given a bracelet so that they can be recognised. When leaving the club, they have the chance to be breathalysed or to take a drug test to see if they have been true to their word. If so, they receive a present; if not, their team of peers encourages them to find another way of getting home.

The impact of the European Night without Accident is borne out by the fact that, in past years, of those who agreed to enter into the spirit of the event, some 80% kept their promise to stay within the limits.

Hard-hitting ways of raising awareness

Road accidents can hit victims hard and the consequences of reckless driving often need to be put across in an equally hard-hitting way. One such way is to give a young person who has been involved in a serious accident the chance to tell their story to learner drivers face to face.

Research shows that young drivers who are confronted with stories of severe accidents are less likely to drive recklessly. The peer-to-peer aspect also increases the direct impact on the listener in a way that is not possible using books or even audiovisual footage.

In order to put the negative experiences of young drivers to positive use, [Module Close To II](#)**** is developing a practical teaching method which integrates this type of discussion session into the theoretical part of driving courses. Young offenders, victims or witnesses visit driving schools to recount their experience of an accident and its after-effects, thereby giving the learning process a more personal and, in some cases, emotional aspect.

However, awareness raising should not simply start with those learning to drive. Rather, people tend to be more open to behavioural changes at a young age. The first step in the method proposed by the [ROSYPE](#)***** project is to emphasise road dangers to all youngsters aged 6 to 25 by making road safety a mainstay of educational curricula.

Once the children reach the age of 12, they can play a bigger role in road safety through training in the safe use of bikes and subsequently of vehicles such as scooters. Finally, simulating real accident conditions for young adults conveys the importance of safe driving in a different and yet similarly direct way to that used by Module Close To II.



© iStockphoto/Felix Manuel Burgos-Trujillo

*** http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/enwa.pdf

**** http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/module_closesto.pdf

***** http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/projects/rosype.pdf





Posters to provide springboard for road safety community

Although the dissemination of Youth Forum activities has been a proven success, new communication tools will help to consolidate the Forum's actions. A poster competition will be organised within the framework of this year's edition, aimed at a road safety information campaign for young people.

The competition is open to people aged between 18 and 25 and a dedicated website will be set up on which technical specifications for the posters and eligibility criteria will be published. Various road safety themes will be chosen to design a poster for young drivers.

The launch will take place on 1 September and the deadline for the submission of posters is 21 October 2011. Ten posters will be pre-selected and put online. The posters will be put to the public vote from 31 October until 18 November and the winner will be presented with an award during the European Youth Forum for Road Safety on 24 November.

The poster competition is not an end in itself. It should help to nurture the development of an online road safety community for young people which can be maintained through Facebook both during and after the competition.

Following the Forum, regular updates will be posted via the Facebook page on a range of road safety subjects relevant to young people such as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, use of mobile phones while at the wheel, or helmets for cyclists and motorcyclists. This should help to generate extensive discussion of road safety among young Europeans all year round.



Any further promotion of the Road Safety website <http://ec.europa.eu/roadsafety> is welcome.

We would like as many people as possible to be aware of the site and the important information it contains about staying safe on the road.

Thank you in advance for helping to keep Europe's roads safe and for raising awareness of Road Safety Europe.

© European Union, 2011
 Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.
 Published by: Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
 European Commission – BE-1049 Brussels
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index_en.htm

Legal notice: The contents of this newsletter are prepared by officials of the Mobility and Transport DG and represent their personal views on the subject matter. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the European Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission or the Mobility and Transport DG.

