



Road Safety Newsletter



4th

European Road Safety Day

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Youth take action to cut road deaths and boost safety

From young people working on the ground with high risk drivers, to policy makers battling to bring down the number of people dying on the EU's roads, everyone at the 2012 European Youth Forum for Road Safety Conference held in Cyprus, had one thing in common – a passionate commitment to save lives.

Statistics show the commitment is needed: in the EU alone 30 500 people died in road traffic crashes last year. Over the past decade, 2001-11, 471 200 people were killed on our roads, the equivalent of 3 162 Boeing 737s crashing and killing everyone on board. "It seems as if people think of road fatalities as part of the cost of mobility", said Floor Lieshout, one of the founders of Youth for Road Safety (YOURS), "Internationally we lose 400 000 young people every year and we're like 'yeah, yeah it's the price we have to pay'. It has to stop."

Presentations covering policy directions and academic findings set out facts for consideration throughout the morning, feeding into animated discussions. Afternoon workshops on education and training, enforcement and risky behaviour gave the delegates the chance to hear how others working in road safety are trying to turn the situation around.

What's the bottom line?

As youth safety workers, scientists in the field of toxicology, members of the police and policy makers shared their ideas and experiences, certain bottom line messages became apparent: young men are

disproportionately likely to provoke an accident and be killed; far too many 18-25 year olds believe that road fatalities are inevitable and that crashes happen to other people, and the best way to educate risk-takers is through peer-to-peer awareness-raising.

Arrive alive

Youth workers in the field are showing great creative energy, leading to many highly effective projects that promote a common message. "Safe is Cool! We equip young people to make the best decisions either as a driver or as a passenger", says Wale Yusuff, director of Safety, Awareness, Mentoring, Education (S.A.M.E. Academy). "We ask young guys to consider how they would drive if their grandmother were sitting in the car next to them, and how they would drive if it were their girlfriend in the passenger seat. It's about getting them to re-think risk."

As the number of road safety fatalities across the EU in 2011 dropped by the smallest margin seen throughout the decade, (only 500), and as road traffic crashes are still the main cause of death amongst Europe's young people, the conference was both timely and inspiring.



RISK, ENFORCEMENT AND TRAINING – THE CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS COVERED A LOT OF GROUND, HERE ARE SOME OF THE MESSAGES TO COME OUT OF THE DISCUSSIONS...

Risk-taking – What provokes it? How to curb it?

In 2010, 37% of road deaths in the EU occurred in collisions involving young drivers aged 18-25, and an average of 164 men per million inhabitants were killed across the EU. This is four times the number of women, which stood at 40. On average, between 2008 and 2010, the road mortality for 15-30 year olds across the EU was 103 people per million – almost double the average for all other ages, which stood at 61.



Death by road traffic accidents is far higher for young males than for any other sector of society. The workshop on risk asked 'Why?' and 'What can be done to bring the numbers down?'

Car drivers are frequently responsible for crashes involving two-wheelers and there were no doubts that a range of dangerous behaviour patterns put drivers, passengers and pedestrians at risk.

A speaker from a forensic toxicology unit based in Cyprus reported a rapid increase in the number of people driving under the influence of drugs. Cannabis use is the second highest cause of crashes on the island. This trend is reflected elsewhere: "If the cops are checking alcohol, youngsters sometimes say they'll take drugs instead", said Axel Druart, European Project Director for Responsible Young Drivers, Belgium.

“If you could only make kinetic energy visible, people could think of a head-on car crash as having the same effect as jumping out of an apartment block window and falling onto concrete. How many people would choose to jump out of the window? People need to remember 'Road Safety is no Accident'”

Floor Lieshout, president YOURS

"But they also adapt their behaviour based on financial penalty. In Belgium you get fined over €1 000 if you have cannabis in your blood, so kids are saying 'It's only a €150 fine for being a bit over the alcohol limit – I'll get pissed then.'" Druart added that he's often asked how many joints are safe to smoke before driving: "We have to be very careful to promote a clear message of zero tolerance, there's no safe maximum."

How can young drivers be persuaded to be safe? Sometimes it's a question of providing them with a viable alternative to getting

behind the wheel. "Are governments ready to invest money to save lives?" asked Druart. Public transport has to provide young people with a choice: "If you have a night service that ends at 1am it's of little use – people are going to either party or not party. If they party, they're not going home at 1am." He called for the provision of safe, timely and affordable public transport subsidised by public money. Comparisons were made with Quebec, where parents can buy taxi tokens for their teenagers to make sure they don't spend their fare on anything less useful, and with Tallinn, Estonia, which will provide completely free public transport to everyone in 2013.

RISK WORKSHOP AT A GLANCE

No safe maximum for drink or drugs behind the wheel

With all the focus on drinking and driving it's vital to take on board the increased use of drugs.

Bikers – think beyond the rules!

Staying on the right side of the law might not be enough to keep you safe on a powered two-wheeler so anticipate and drive defensively, make sure you are wearing the right gear and your bike is well maintained.

Distracted driving kills – there's no room for a mobile phone behind the wheel

Young people send 200 texts a day on average, it's imperative to convince them to take a break from texting and calling if they are driving.

Give people an alternative to risk-taking

Secure, timely and affordable public transport is vital if we are to keep partying youngsters off the road at the end of a night on the tiles.

Training youngsters to stay safe

No child is too young to learn about road safety – the one key message to come out of the workshop on training. "My little niece is four and she reaches for her safety belt and buckles herself in – that reflex keeps her safer for life", said Gabriel Simcic, Eco-driving project manager with FIA Brussels. While it is clear that small children love to imitate, how can one educate rebellious teenagers?

Wale Yusuff from the S.A.M.E. Academy had some ideas. His organisation goes into schools to talk to teenagers, peer to peer. "We strip away the 'school atmosphere' and make it interactive", he said. S.A.M.E. shows a film with young actors having a night out that ends in a fatal car crash. Moving from fiction to fact, they also explore case studies of people who have died, "We're trying to show all the guys there that they aren't invincible. It could be them." Another idea in the pipeline is to bring in repeat offenders to talk to the kids about risk and the results when it all goes wrong.

All delegates agreed on the need to empower women to say no. It is very hard for a teenage girl to refuse to get into a car when her boyfriend is drunk behind the wheel, delegates heard. Norway has



created an internet group for girls covering how to handle a drunk boyfriend who wants to drive.

Some NGOs are training youngsters to make safer choices, others are training them to be safety advocates. YOURS works to make sure youngsters have the latest information about the causes of accidents and helps them design effective projects targeting road safety among their peers. “Young people are engines for change, but they need to be taken seriously and for that, they need to be well informed”, said Lieshout. From Beirut to Berlin, YOURS helps youth globally to become knowledgeable advocates. They have just published a Youth and Road Safety Action Kit that sums up reports on the subject, gets all the stats in one place and presents the bottom line to young people equipping them to make a difference.

Most young people have to drive, and since many accidents take place just after someone has qualified, in France the push is on to teach learners to drive safely, not just to pass the test.

Joël Valmain, advisor to the Interministerial Delegate for Road Safety, France, explained how the system works: A recently qualified driver starts with six points on their probationary licence and receives two more each year for three years if they commit no driving offence. Learners at 16 can choose to gain experience while accompanied by a qualified driver (usually a parent), after some formal lessons and a theory test. If they decide to use this system they have to drive 3 000 kilometres in a year. At 18 they can take the test; the pass rate, if they opt for this choice, is 75%.

TRAINING WORKSHOP AT A GLANCE

Train well, train early

The first trainers should be parents who can set a good example. Teachers are the best placed trainers when children are very young but once they hit adolescence then peer-to-peer is most effective.

Let those who have been affected most by car accidents speak to young people

Victim associations and young offenders should put forward their experience.

Passing a driving test is just the start of a new phase

Many accidents are caused when young drivers have just passed their test; phases leading to full qualification are needed.



PARALYSED VICTIMS OF CAR CRASHES MEETING SCHOOL CHILDREN

We have five young people who have all been in car crashes and are now either quadraplegic or paraplegic. They help us by coming into primary, secondary and high schools and universities to tell people that one second is all it takes to turn your life upside down.

Our group goes out to two or three schools every week. We get up around 5am to prepare and get everything ready – some times we are needed in the evening for parent/teacher meetings. Everyone works voluntarily.

But it is all worth it when the children see with their own eyes how their future lies in their hands and they hear mothers of those paralysed asking them not to put their own mothers through the same pain. The bereaved mothers feel they are doing this in their sons' memories.

We have received thousands of letters from kids thanking us for opening their eyes and some of these have now been published by the Ministry of Education in a book called Lessons of Life.

Nadina Theodorou, founder member and coordinator of the volunteer Road Safety Initiative Group, Cyprus

The balance between prevention and enforcement

The police have a tricky path to tread: they have a role to play as partners supporting members of the public but, at the same, delegates at the workshop on enforcement all agreed, “Too nice doesn’t work.” People need to understand that it is injury, not fines, that they should be trying to avoid.

“We need to encourage educated enforcement, sometimes fines are needed, but enforcers should judge carefully. Other times it might be that education would be better”, said Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of the Road Safety Unit of the European Commission.

One thing is clear, NGOs and the police need to work closely.

“If the police are cracking down on speeding then NGOs working on safety would do well to support that, rather than focusing on drink driving”, said Nellie Ghusayni, YOURS Programme Officer based in Beirut, Lebanon. All agreed that the expertise of the police combined with the outreach capacity of youth NGOs could make for a highly effective partnership.

One legal move that will be making a difference across the EU is the new system of qualification for powered two-wheelers, coming into force in 2013.

The standard minimum age for 125cc bikes will be 16. To drive 35kW the minimum age will be 18. In most cases theory and practical tests will be necessary.





“Cyprus embraces peer learning
‘Close To’ is an EU programme we have embraced here in Cyprus. It is based on peer awareness-raising, where a young person involved in provoking a serious collision shares his/her experience with his/her peers. In our case we work with young soldiers aged 18-20 who serve in our National Guard. We aim to involve psychologists in the training of the mentors and to introduce Close To into universities and possibly high schools. We are also in touch with parents’ associations to encourage them to be actively aware of the issue of educating their kids.”

George Morfakis, Head of Road Safety Unit, Republic of Cyprus

ENFORCEMENT WORKSHOP AT A GLANCE

Rules have to be understood to work

People need to see the logic if they are going to comply.

The police and NGOs can benefit from working together

NGOs’ outreach and police know-how make for potentially useful teamwork.

Differing permitted levels of alcohol are confusing

Member States set their own limits, but for people travelling across the EU this can lead to confusion.

Alcohol interlocks work

Devices that block a car if the driver fails an onboard breathalyser test should be more widely used.

2012 Road safety award goes to Hungary

Hungary are the winners of the 2012 Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme Award for their impressive reductions in the number of road deaths. Zoltán Schváb, Hungarian Deputy State Secretary for Transport, explained the secret of their success.

“Young people face higher risks than other road users. In Hungary, the system of probationary driving licences provides basic protection for young novice drivers. We intend to introduce targeted measures aiming at reforming the system of traffic education by integrating road safety into public education. Students will have the necessary theoretical knowledge to be able to ride a moped by the end of primary school and drive a car by the end of secondary school. Hungary will use state-of-the-art educational technologies; this year e-learning was used for driver training.”

Eco-Driving boosting the “stay safe” message

“Rally driving has taken me all over the world. When I got to Argentina and saw how beautiful the natural world was there, I realised that I wanted my children to be able to see that. I became very aware of bringing down the consumption levels of my cars”, explained internationally renowned rally driver, Spyros Pavlides.

He was there to challenge drivers to test their green driving skills using a simulator, as part of an awareness-raising project set up by Gabriel Simcic, Project Manager at FIA. “Eco-driving goes hand in hand with safe driving”, says Simcic. Both require the driver to anticipate conditions – in the case of eco-driving to reduce the need to brake and accelerate all the time and to keep the drive efficient in terms of energy consumption.

Not only will this help the environment, it is also safer and cheaper – saving money at the gas station. As electric cars become more and more popular in the future, it will also be a case of getting your battery to take you further on each charge.

Find out more...

If these subjects have revved up your interest, then check out the new road safety website at: ec.europa.eu/roadsafety European Youth for Road Safety (EYFRS) also have a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/EYFRS Visit these sites for inspiration and information

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