

TISPOL news

The newsletter of the European Traffic Police Network

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PLUS: TISPOL's questions answered by DG MOVE road safety head Szabolcs Schmidt

UPBEAT MESSAGES FROM MAY HELSINKI SEMINAR

Representatives from across Europe had the opportunity to hear the latest technical developments in road traffic enforcement, as well as to provide their own assessments and proposals addressing recent rises in fatalities on Europe's roads

TISPOL's Road Safety Strategy Seminar took place in the Finnish capital, Helsinki, at the end of May. Police representatives of every European country gathered for the event, which was opened by TISPOL President Pasi Kempainen.

Pitva Viljanen, Permanent Secretary at Finland's Ministry of Interior, thanked TISPOL for its work. "Road safety is an issue that affects everyone. There is no doubt that we have made significant progress but much more needs to be done," she said.

"Traffic safety work is based on long-term planning and the combination of a number of measures. Responsibility rests with each and every one of us.

"Let me give you a picture of what has been going on in Finland. In 1972 nearly 1,200 died in road traffic accidents in Finland. Today, if this had increased in line with the increase in traffic, then we would have reached 5,000. Instead we have reduced to under 300. The change has come about because of measures introduced by those involved in traffic safety.

"However, the situation most recently has taken a turn for the worse. 292 people died in 2011, a 10% increase on 2010. More worrying is the further increase in the early months of 2012."

Ms Viljanen concluded by stating that TISPOL has made outstanding efforts to traffic safety throughout Europe. This network has established close relations with the European Union. It's important to know that the only way we will reach our casualty reduction targets is through co-operation," she concluded.

Finland's National Police

Commissioner, Miko Paatero, told the seminar delegates: "The main area of focus is surveillance planning so that we can achieve maximum effectiveness in reducing road traffic accidents.

We believe cross-border co-operation to be crucially important, as it will give us early access to tackling new problems. For example, it was through TISPOL that we discovered how magnets are used to manipulate tachographs. In co-operation with each other, we can establish new legislation that can work in other countries.

"Changes will be brought into legislation if we persist with our campaigning. The need to treat everyone equally could, for example, be the basis for a change in the law in terms of surveillance, which we would welcome."

It is Finnish policy that every driver stopped by the police must take a breath test. Police officers carry out approximately two million tests each year. However, nearly 70 people die and 700 are injured in alcohol accidents.

"Traffic surveillance is also about all-embracing police actions in which those

guilty of other crimes are apprehended," reminded Mr Paatero. "Every year we catch a large number of people who are wanted by the police, including car thieves and fraudsters. Of course, in future the police will be needed for a whole variety of other tasks. Their business is to guarantee better standards of safety for everyone."

The TISPOL Council and the various

specialist working groups met in Helsinki and agreed their actions for the months to come. A Council discussion chaired by UK Council representative Suzette Davenport allowed the opportunity for Council members to provide their own assessments. They were also encouraged to share ideas as they considered whether financial cutbacks could be responsible for the increase, whether there had been recent changes in legislation and their potential impact, and what they would like to see the European Commission doing to support police officers and enforcement.

The feedback gathered from this important session is being collated and will be delivered shortly to the office of EU Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas.

The importance of TISPOL's feedback Ian Hamill reflects on what was proposed in Helsinki



From the results, we know that some countries have experienced increases and some have not. The discussion session allowed us to investigate common factors

that would indicate why there is an improving picture in some countries and a worsening picture in others. We also wanted to explore what actions had been taken in countries, which had brought about positive results. Our next step is to prepare a report on the discussion and to make a number of proposals to the European Commission.

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DRIVER BEHAVIOUR MUST BE THE KEY FOCUS IF WE ARE TO REDUCE CASUALTIES



Our questions answered by Szabolcs Schmidt, head of the Road Safety Unit at DG MOVE in the European Commission

What do you see as the most important challenges in your new role?

The most important operational challenge is the entry into application of the new European driving licence directive on 19 January 2013. It will bring a number of advantages, among others the replacement of currently about 100 different driving licence formats by one single European model. The Commission, together with the Member States, must ensure that the transition takes place smoothly and in a harmonized manner throughout Europe.

On a broader political scale, the great challenge is that the European Union gets back to the path of halving the number of road fatalities. For a decade, the EU has been highly successful in pursuing the 50% reduction target until, in 2011, the positive downward trend has almost stopped. We all will need to speed up efforts. In my unit's work there will be a particular focus on protecting vulnerable road users.

In which areas would you think are the biggest opportunities for making progress in casualty reduction?

Vehicles and infrastructures are safer now than ever. The area in which I see by far the biggest potential for progress is on the users'

behaviour and - more particularly - on the enforcement of existing rules, simply because user behaviour is the main cost of all accidents. About 65% of fatal accidents are caused by violation of traffic rules. In order to provide for progress, the Commission will very tightly monitor the correct transposition by member States of the cross-border enforcement directive, and I will also do the utmost to promote co-operation and best practice exchange among member States in the area of enforcement. Other areas for making more progress are the improvement of technical roadworthiness of vehicles, especially also with view to vulnerable road users, but potentially also the use of technical road safety devices such as speed limiters for vans, alcohol locks, lane departure and other IT-based warning tools such as e-call.

Where do you think are the most significant barriers to progress?

In my view driver behaviour remains the most important barrier to progress. Drivers are unconsciously or sometimes even knowingly putting other road users at risk by parking their cars on bicycle lanes, by blocking pedestrian crossings, by not turning on their lights, by not using their direction

indicators, by engaging in risky manoeuvres, by drink-driving, by using the mobile phone or other devices (that also applies to pedestrians), and by not verifying the roadworthiness condition of their vehicles.

While I acknowledge that responsible behaviour cannot be imposed by a European directive, I believe that huge progress would be made if a driving culture prevails that is based on respect towards the rules in force and thus towards other road users.

How important do you see the role of TISPOL within a wider European context?

I value very highly the work of TISPOL because it regularly brings together in a very practical manner police officers from the European Union to co-operate and exchange best practices.

When entering the policy



There will be a particular focus on protecting vulnerable road users



areas of justice, law enforcement, sanctions and fines, the role of the European Commission is far more limited as for instance in transport policy. TISPOL therefore plays also a very important role as trusted partner of the European Commission with whom issues of European importance can be discussed and solved. I am very much committed to maintain a close working relationship with TISPOL.

Are there an emerging trends or patterns in road safety that give you cause for concern?

I am most concerned by the trend of increasing fatalities among motorcyclists and other powered two wheelers. And I am also concerned by the highly different road safety performance among member States. As the positive evolution in a number of cases show, bad performance cannot be explained by a different mentality or by bad infrastructure. It is rather a question of commitment and political will to change.

Why is political will important in order to ensure Europe continues to reduce road casualties?

Without political will at all levels of responsibility, it will not be possible to continue to reduce road casualties and fatalities. Society should be made aware of the social price to be paid by accidents. The horrible Bosnian war next door to the European Union claimed during its three and a half years 100,000 death which is about the same number of people who will die on Europe's roads in the coming three and a half years if we stay with the current trend. Political will is badly needed to take decisive steps to move towards the vision zero we aim for.

High level delegates at Brussels RPA Conference

SENIOR POLICE officers joined politicians, policy makers and industry representatives in Brussels for a TISPOL conference to explore strategies and partnerships in the fight against road transport-related crime.

The conference, which took place at the city's Renaissance Hotel, was opened by Ad Hellemons, Director of TISPOL. The keynote address was given by a representative of the Belgian Minister of the Interior, Mrs Joëlle Milquet. Other speakers included: Søren Schønberg, Cabinet member, on behalf of EU Commissioner Malmström; Michel Quille, Deputy Director of EUROPOL; Peter Van Dalen, Vice Chair of the EU Parliament Transport Committee; Ruud Bik, Chief Constable of the Dutch National Police Agency and Olivier Libois, Director General of the Belgian Federal Police.

Explaining the purpose of the Conference, Ad Hellemons said: "Our goal is to identify the areas where cross-border co-operation between police forces can be strengthened, and to consider the most appropriate and effective strategies and methods. It is impor-

tant that police and other enforcement agencies should work together more effectively. It is also important to look at public/private partnerships and how these can play their part.

"These three topics are fully in line with the EU policies and programmes regarding the improvement of co-operation in Europe."

The conference has an important role within TISPOL's Road Policing Activities project. It underlines the policy TISPOL has chosen in the project, which puts the emphasis on three core tasks: improving co-operation with organisations such as Europol and Frontex; the co-operation with the other enforcement agencies and also

co-operation with private stakeholders.

Ad Hellemons concluded: "In order to deal with the growing challenge of transport- and traffic-related crime in Europe, we need not only improved cross-border police co-operation but also improved co-operation between police and other enforcement agencies, at national as well as EU level. We also need improved public/private partnership working, as well as the support of the EU for this process."

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The event underlines the policy TISPOL has chosen in the RPA project
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NEWS IN BRIEF

DRIVER SUICIDES

An academic review of literature shows there is a link between single-car accident drivers and suicidal intent, and also suggests a role of unconscious suicidal motivations in some single-car accidents. The review suggests that more than two per cent of this type of accident are suicide, though the real figure may well be higher, because many likely suicides are reported merely as accidents in national statistics.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Radical changes to the rules governing learner drivers have been announced by Environment Minister Alex Attwood. Legislation to be introduced by the end of the year will permit a lower provisional licence age of 16 and a half. It will also remove the 45 mph restriction on learners and newly-qualified drivers.

The move was welcomed by the insurance industry which claims it will lead to lower premiums and safer drivers. However, the road safety charity Brake has opposed the lowering of the age for provisional licences.

POLAND

An unlicensed driver, suspected of causing nuisance to his neighbours, awoke one morning recently to find his car embedded in a willow tree.

Although no one has yet admitted how the car found its



way into the three, some local residents admitted hearing a mobile crane at work during the night. The action is believed to be retaliation for the man's 'boy racer' behaviour.

CZECH REPUBLIC

A truck driver stopped by police claimed he had been 'too tired' to notice that the nearside front wheel of his truck was missing. He told officers: "I could have sworn it was there when I set off." The truck was seized and the driver was given three penalty points and a fine.



Pics (c/w from above left): Ad Hellemons, Ruud Bik, Pasi Kemppainen, Ian Hamill, Michel Quille; the conference floor; Olivier Libois of the Belgian Federal Police; Thorsten Neumann of TAPA.