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IDEA TO ESTABLISH AN EU ROAD SAFETY AGENCY MOVING FORWARD

The new EU coordinator for road safety, Kristian Schmidt, told MEPs that discussions are going on within the European Commission on the establishment of an EU road safety agency, and that the idea is 'gaining ground'.

The European Parliament echoed ETSC by calling last year for the setting up of a road safety agency, in recognition of the need for better coordination of road safety issues in the EU, especially in light of new targets, KPIs and the rollout of complex automated vehicle technology with the accompanying need for in-depth crash investigations. There are EU agencies for maritime, aviation and railway safety, but not for road transport, which kills thousands more people every year. Mr Schmidt said that external consultation would take place, but the establishment of an agency would not happen 'overnight'.

Mr Schmidt is the current director of land transport in the European Commission's mobility department and will remain in that role while taking on the road safety brief.

[More information](#)



6000 CHILDREN DIED ON EU ROADS IN TEN YEARS



The European Transport Safety Council is calling for renewed action and specific targets to protect child road users as its latest report showed that more than 6000 children up to the age of 14 died between 2011 and 2020 in road collisions in the European Union.

Among some 40 recommendations to national governments and the EU, ETSC is calling for safe cycling and walking routes to schools. Just seven countries in Europe reported setting compulsory lower speed limits around schools, according to the new study. ETSC says roads around child care facilities and in urban areas with lots of cyclists and pedestrians should be designed for 30 km/h and low volume traffic. The default speed limit on these roads should be 30km/h even where these design criteria are not yet achieved and ETSC is calling on the EU to make this a formal recommendation.

ETSC also warns that 16 European countries allow children to ride a moped at 14 or 15 years old, despite a recommended EU minimum age of 16. Above the age of 14, 20% of child road deaths are moped riders, the vast majority of which are boys. ETSC says the minimum EU recommended age for driving should not be lowered for any vehicle.

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STUDY SHOWS LORRY DRIVERS SPENDING 9% OF DRIVING TIME ON THE PHONE

A small-scale observational study in France has found that lorry drivers spent an average of 9% of driving time using their mobile phone.

The research was carried out by the independent research agency Cerema on behalf of the Association of French Motorway Companies (ASFA), and involved installation of internal and external cameras on lorry cabs. The drivers were aware their behaviour was being recorded. On average, drivers used their telephone ten times per hour while driving, for an average duration of use of 32 seconds, according to the research.

The duration of the period where drivers stopped looking at the road was 2.4 seconds on average, with a maximum of seven seconds, representing distances of 60 and 175 meters travelled at 90 km /h respectively.

ASFA warned that increased distraction is part of wider degradation in road user behaviour since the Covid-19 pandemic. 136 people were killed on French motorways between 1 January and the end of September 2022, compared to 126 over the same period in 2019, the last comparable year in terms of traffic.

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WARNING ON RISING GERMAN ROAD DEATHS

According to preliminary results from the German Federal Statistics Office for January to June 2022, a total of 1,238 people were killed and 163,800 injured in road collisions in Germany. The TÜV Association, an ETSC member, has warned that new measures will be needed to prevent road traffic deaths returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Marc-Philipp Waschke, road safety officer at the TÜV Association, said: “Historically low crash figures were one of the few positive side effects of the pandemic. The crash figures for the first half of 2022 have risen significantly again compared to the two previous years and are approaching the pre-pandemic level. The figures clearly show that the pandemic has only had a short-term impact on crash occurrences in Germany and that there has been no significant reduction in road crashes over the past ten years.”

“Sustainable measures must now be initiated to protect vulnerable road users in particular, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The development of an infrastructure that prevents serious collisions, for example through safe crossing facilities and continuous cycle paths, must be consistently promoted in both urban and rural areas. Similarly, dangerous areas on rural roads, such as sharp bends and tree-lined, fast-moving avenues, must be tackled.”

[More information](#)



IN ITALY ROAD SAFETY IS ON THE FRONT PAGE, BUT SYMPATHY FROM POLITICIANS IS NOT ENOUGH. IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

The 18-year-old son of two journalists of the Corriere della Serra newspaper was killed by a car driver while walking along the pavement on a street in Rome. In an opinion article in that newspaper, ETSC's Executive Director Antonio Avenoso makes a passionate call to action, citing progress in Spain as an example for Italy to follow.

First the shock. Then the sadness. Pain, grief and emotion were on display last week with the announcement of the death of young Francesco Valdiserri. The devastation of his parents, two journalists of Corriere della Serra, is unbearable to witness. Politicians say they will walk with this family in their pain. Sympathy is kindness. Sympathy is human. But only action can stop this devastation.

As an Italian, I feel another emotion: anger. In twenty years at the European Transport Safety Council, I have watched my beloved home country go from 16th place among European countries for road safety in 2001 to...16th place today. We are still in the bottom half of this table.

For those that say road deaths are part of life: take a look at Spain, which was worse than us 20 years ago, and is now among the safer countries in Europe.

How did they do this? The answers are not difficult or complicated. Better infrastructure. Enforcement of speed limits, including with cameras. A recognition that cars do not own the roads in our cities. Since 11 May 2021, 30 km/h has been the default speed limit on Spanish roads in urban areas. In Bilbao, every single road has that limit. When will we hear serious talk about 30 km/h in Rome?

[More information](#)



BRUSSELS 30 KM/H LIMIT HAS LED TO LONG-TERM REDUCTIONS IN SPEED



The average speed in Brussels fell sharply following the introduction of a general 30 km/h speed limit in January 2021, and new data show speeds have stayed lower two years later.

Analysis of speed measurements at 80 locations indicate a visible and constant decrease in the average speed on all roads, including the limited number of 50m/h roads, according to the city authorities. The improvement has occurred during the daytime and at night.

According to the research, travel times have also not increased when compared to the pre-Covid period in 2019. There has been a continuous downward trend in the number of pedestrians killed and seriously injured in traffic in the city. The figures for the third quarter of 2022 are the lowest observed in Brussels since 2004.

In related news, the city of Amsterdam has announced that it will switch most roads to 30 km/h by the end of 2023.

[More information](#)



DO ELECTRIC CARS CRASH MORE FREQUENTLY THAN CONVENTIONALLY-POWERED CARS?

The Swiss branch of AXA, an insurer, says its data show electric vehicles crash 50% more often than conventionally-powered cars.

The company says the reason for this is likely to be the higher acceleration of, in particular, the more powerful electric cars. The underlying data have not been published. AXA's German branch said, in a separate news release, that its data from the German market did not lead to the same conclusion.

The company also looked at the question of the additional weight of electric vehicles and says this can create additional risks in crashes involving older conventional vehicles. AXA says modern conventionally-powered vehicles should not fare worse in a crash with an electric vehicle.

[More information](#)



CONDITIONAL LICENCES AND ALCOHOL INTERLOCK REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES IN THE REVISION OF THE EU DRIVING LICENCE DIRECTIVE 2006/126

The European Commission is preparing to revise the EU Driving Licence Directive 2006/126. A stated objective of the legislation is to enhance road safety: contributing to 'Vision Zero' and the target of reducing road deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2030. This briefing looks at provisions for conditional driving licences and alcohol interlock rehabilitation programmes and changes which could be made to facilitate their use within the revision of the Driving Licence Directive 2006/126.

[More information](#)



TEENAGE LORRY DRIVERS WOULD WORSEN ROAD SAFETY

The European Commission is coming under pressure from the road transport industry to decrease the recommended minimum age of professional drivers in all sectors to 18, with training allowed from aged 17. In a new briefing, ETSC says the evidence shows younger drivers would increase the risks to all road users.

While collisions involving HGVs are fewer in number than those involving cars, they are more deadly due to the size and weight of the vehicles. A 2020 ETSC PIN report on the safety of goods vehicles in the EU showed that, per billion km travelled, HGVs are considerably more likely to kill other road users than non-goods vehicles.

The EU is currently reviewing the rules for driver licenses across all vehicle categories, with updated legislation expected to be proposed in 2023. ETSC has gathered data on collision involvement among young drivers in general as well as statistics from countries including Finland, Germany and Poland that already allow 18-year-olds to drive the largest vehicles, under certain conditions.

[More information](#)



MANDATORY DISTRACTION WARNING SYSTEMS WON'T DETECT MOST IMPORTANT TYPES OF DISTRACTION

ETSC has written to the European Commission to warn that draft specifications for mandatory distraction warning systems, required on new types of vehicles from 2024, won't detect distraction from infotainment systems or mobile phones mounted on the dashboard.

Distraction warning systems are a requirement of the EU's vehicle safety technology package agreed in 2019. But detailed technical specifications are in the process of being agreed in technical working groups.

ETSC is warning that the draft specification will only detect prolonged gazes towards the lap or feet, and not those toward the dashboard where infotainment touch screens are located, and where mobile phones are frequently mounted. The systems will also not be required to detect when a driver has turned around, for example, to attend to children in the rear seats.

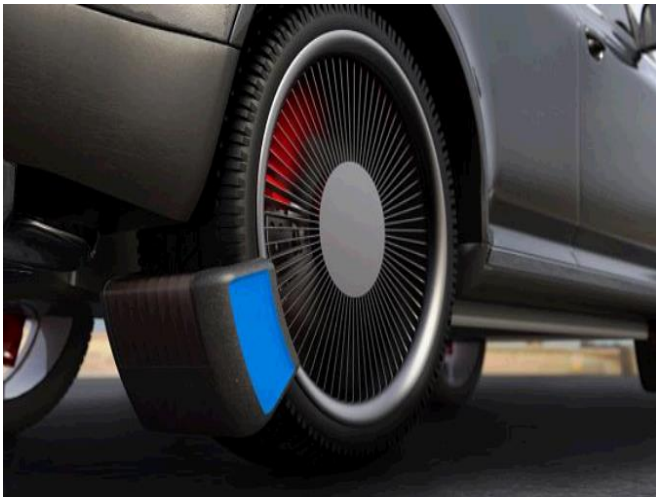
Scientific evidence shows that glances away from the windscreen that last longer than two seconds are linked to a doubling of the risk of a collision.

The weakened requirements appear to be directly linked to car industry groups, who proposed deleting sections of the draft rules that corresponded to distraction involving the dashboard area as well as increasing the delay to the warning time period.

[More information](#)

ROAD SAFETY IN THE MEDIA

Device that captures microplastic particles from tyres as they are emitted



University students have invented a way to capture harmful tyre dust - a major contributor to air and water pollution.

According to the UK government, the dust it emits is the second-largest microplastic pollutant in our oceans. Over a million tonnes of tyre particles are produced every year in Europe. The problem gets worse with the increased weight and torque of electric vehicles.

Chemicals released from tyres have even been linked to mass salmon deaths in Australia and the US.

The team has created a device which attaches to a car tyre. It uses electrostatics and the airflow of a spinning wheel to collect the tyre dust as it's produced. Once the particles are collected they can be upcycled into a kind of different kind of rubber that has a variety of applications.

[More information](#)

Parents ordered to pay \$13,000 after child draws on 10 new Audis with rock

Most parents have a story or two about their children drawing on the walls with crayon or maybe painting the dog, but how many can recount a story about that time their three-year-old cost them half-a-year's salary in new vehicle repairs?

That right might be reserved for these parents in China, whose small daughter, when left alone in the dealership for a few moments, picked up a rock and went full Picasso on 10 new cars, including an Audi Q8. The father was sued for \$37,500 for repairs, but ended up settling for around \$13,000. Hey, at least now he knows where his daughter's passion lies.

[More information](#)