



Committee on Public Works, Transport and Communications

ROAD SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE

Lisbon Inter-parliamentary Conference - A European Policy for Road Safety

Harmonisation of Concepts and Principles – Audits, Control and Goods Transport

Communication of the Member of Parliament Nelson Baltazar - 29SET2008

I remember that in 2003 I had the privilege to attend an international conference hosted by the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering, during which the main discussion topic was related to road audits, its importance in Road Safety and good practices from other countries.

Since then, several experts and politicians have specifically worked to make these audits a reality. It is important to note that this work is already producing results.

In Portugal, the technical importance of Road Safety Audits is already recognized, as well as their deterrent and preventive role in the reduction of road accidents and their respective victims.

An initial path is drawn in the preparation of this activity for the its numerous actors. What matters now is to build that same path in the respective regulations.

As a politician, I understand that these auditors have a broad range of activities that span to several areas, from high velocity highways to municipal roads, respective construction and signalization, as well as more complex environments like spaces of great urban density.

The need to enforce road audits is a concept already shared by the political thought, but it is not clearly translated in the current Portuguese law.

I believe that there are still many questions to discuss and regulate. However, we recognize that several countries like France, Luxembourg and Germany, have achieved particular safety improvements after the implementation of this concept.

Our country has reached stages of development in the construction of road infrastructures that impose increased levels of demand in the quality of the service provided to the citizens or expected by them, as counterpart of their investments.

Our mobility system needs to be able to ensure the economic development of the country, increase the competitiveness of the economy, guarantee social equity and minimize regional asymmetries.

On the other hand, it is also important to improve the development of urban centers, reduce commute times, improve the quality of life of the citizens and, above all, reach all these purposes, by promoting the right policies for road safety.

These strategies can only be achieved if we commit to a continued process of regulation and implement the use of constructive manuals on good practices and the signalization conception. In this way we will be able to ensure the technical quality of the projects and the fulfillment of their respective budgets.

In particular, in the areas of great urban density where the life between pedestrians and cars is neither pacific nor friendly, we all feel how important it is to re-evaluate some situations of the traffic environment like: poorly signalized, badly painted or wrongly located crosswalks; crossing signals with short crossing times that prevent seniors, children and handicapped people from safely

crossing.

We also need to mention the high risk that pedestrians face due to disrespect from drivers. More interesting even is to evaluate why pedestrians, who want to be respected and demand space and safety, transform themselves, as soon as, minutes later, they assume the condition of drivers. Their behavior suffers a mutation.

These questions demand a road security audit whenever a road is in its project phase and needs to be mandatory. The audits will also have to be mandatory when a determined urban section or a road, presents levels of traffic accidents with unjustified simultaneities. The audits must monitor the processes of signalization in a perspective of a safe road environment. The audits must be mandatory whenever the municipalities decide to implement forms of speed reduction, roundabouts of traffic distribution or even improve the accessibility conditions for seniors, handicapped or children.

The Road Safety audits and inspections are effectively a practice of universal applicability. We already make use of instruments developed by international organizations that have proved to be very useful. For this reason, they are an indispensable resource in the daily fight against traffic accidents and its consequences.

That is why I dare to think that the decision of the National Authority for Road Safety is of great importance, when it considers that the execution of road audits, as well as the inspection programs for road safety, is one of the 28 operational principles of the next National Strategy for Road Safety.