

3d Parliamentary Conference on Road Safety in Europe

Greek actions and policy on road traffic safety

In Greece, the annual number of road accident victims is about 1.500 deceased, which is higher than the E.U average. The decrease of road accidents and the enhancement of road safety in our country comprise the highest priority and concern of the Ministry for Transport and Communications. To this end, and given that the road safety level of a country reflects its living standards and that any effort whatsoever towards its enhancement is also directed to making better the living standards of its citizens, the Ministry for Transport and Communications has undertaken a series of initiatives aiming at bringing down the road accident indices in our country so as to approach the European average.

In this spirit, the Ministry for Transport and Communications has drawn up the Strategic Plan for enhancing road safety in Greece for the time period 2006-2010. Taking into consideration the European goal set for road safety, the pursued goal of the Plan is for the number of road accident victims in Greece to decrease by 50% in year 2010 compared to the number of road accident victims in year 2000. Within the framework of the aforementioned Plan, the Ministry for Transport and Communications has launched various actions pursuing the goal set. Find attached herewith an excerpt of the Strategic Plan on Road Safety containing proposals for secondary road safety projects.

One of these actions is the adoption of L.3542/2007 "Amendments on provisions of the Road Traffic Code (L.2696/1999 O.G 57/A')" (O.G 50/A') , revising provisions of the Road Traffic Code. The principal objective of the new law is to establish a modern frame for dealing with offenses, and has an averting nature especially concerning those offenses putting human life at risk. The new law aims at effective action , also functioning in a preventive way for dealing with the problem of road safety and road traffic in general. Moreover, a new joint ministerial decision has been issued on the point system. The registering process of penalty points has been automatized via computer use. Following the implementation of the new Road Traffic Code, the data of Road Traffic Police present a decrease of road accidents by 13%.

Road traffic conduct learning for pupils and students is also included in the Ministry's for Transport and Communications overall venture. Part of this programme, mainly addressed to pupils of elementary education level, is the project for the construction and operation of Traffic Education Parks, to be materialized by Local Authority Organisations having expressed relevant interest. According to the contract signed for their construction, the Ministry for Transport and Communications has undertaken the funding for the Park's construction and the Municipality involved has the responsibility for its constant and regular operation as well as its maintenance. Moreover, manuals, cds and other materials have been sent to the mayors of municipalities having such a park, seminars are carried out for instructors, as well as an evaluation of the municipality's relevant activities. Up to the moment, 100 Parks have been constructed and are operating and recently the Minister has decided to extend the project by constructing 30 more Parks. For introducing road traffic conduct into the educational process, a nursery tale for the first grades of elementary school has been published with the title "Welcome mr Road Traffic Code". For Gymnasium and Lyceum students, a traffic education manual is in the stage of preparation, in cooperation with the Evgenidion Foundation, which has also undertaken its publication.

Another decisive parameter for enhancing road safety level, the main part of which falls within the Ministry's for Transport and Communications jurisdiction, is the training and examination of candidate drivers and drivers themselves. The Ministry for Transport and Communications, in an effort for level upgrading, is promoting the restructuring of the drivers' training and examination system. For dealing with phenomena of examination system malfunctions, the Ministry has proceeded into taking active measures such as establishing a computerized system for the theoretical examination of candidate drivers, prolonging re-examination time for candidate drivers failing to come in time for the practical examination, issuing a new ministerial decision containing penalties for instructors performing malfunctions e.t.c. Moreover, within this frame, the construction of examination tracks for candidate drivers has been decided, for performing distinct exercises (u-turning maneuvers, parking, reversing and performing angle e.t.c). The project "Planning and Development of an Information System for the Management of Committees for Candidate Drivers' Practical Examination", aiming at the automatization of the selection process of examiners, the number and type of committees e.t.c, will be

introduced to all Prefectures within this year. The Ministry for Transport and Communications is in the process of considering additional modifications to the existing terms of candidate drivers' theoretical and practical examination; the most important is the establishment of examination tracks for candidate drivers' practical examination. Certain Prefectures have already expressed their interest and the construction works are under way.

For achieving the goal of enhancing road safety levels in our country, technical controls of vehicles have been intensified and extended as well to other categories of vehicles, such as motorcycles. Moreover, by 1.3446/2006, controls as well as administrative penalties with regard to motor trucks' traffic have been reformed, aiming at averting more effectively dangerous road behavior. In this context, the Ministry for Transport and Communications has launched the function of 6 mobile units for the control of long vehicles. For controlling excess weight in trucks, the Ministry has obtained 30 portable scales for the equipment of equal number of control units and policemen.

Moreover, in the frame of enhancing security levels against forging driving licenses, set by the European Union, the Ministry is in the process of cooperation with the Ministry for the Interior, which is already equipped with the necessary material and technical infrastructure, so that the passport issuing services can issue the new driving licenses in the form of a plastic card. The plastic form of driving license has already been decided upon by the European Parliament and the E.U Council. The transposition of the relevant directive has already been realized. As of 19/1/2009, the driving licenses will be issued by the Directorate for Passports of the Police Headquarters.

By implementation of directive 2003/59, as of September of this year, both the initial and the periodical training of professional truck and bus drivers is ensured, in fields such as safe cargo loading, economical and ecological driving practices, safe road behavior e.t.c. In the frame of transposing the aforementioned directive, the National Polytechnic is in the process of preparing manuals for professional drivers' training.

Special emphasis is also given in the field of constant information and awareness of the public, both on changes brought about by the revision of the Road Traffic Code and, more generally, in an effort for changing citizens' mentality and emphasizing individual responsibility. That is why adequate time was provided from the law's publication until its entering into force and, moreover, through communication policy projects of the Ministry for Transport and Communications, an effort has been made for informing the citizens for the upcoming changes. More specifically, the Ministry produced information material titled "Life sets the rules"¹, containing useful information on the Road Traffic Code's changes for the proper and safe road traffic, which was handed out in thousands of copies. In addition, an awareness campaign is being conducted through the mass media, for the prevention of offenses presenting high-risk indices, such as drinking and driving, not wearing safety belt or helmet, in an effort to sensitize the new drivers. Recently the Ministry has proceeded to arrangements with both the national and private TV stations broadcasting countrywide, for broadcasting gratis its messages on road safety.

For citizens' information and aiming at the promotion of road safety, the briefing leaflet on the New Road Traffic Code has been published in 2.000.0000 copies, briefing seminars on Road Traffic Code changes have taken place for all Chiefs of Road Police, the Ministry's website has been updated containing information material, the new Code, its informal Encoding and relevant decisions on the use of alcohol, safety belt, helmet and cases for exception.

The direct future goals of the Ministry for Transport and Communications are summarized as following:

- Completion of the Traffic Education Parks project
- Continuation of candidate drivers' tracks construction
- Revision of legislation concerning the education and examination of candidate drivers
- Production of presentation materials to children , classified in terms of age groups
- Production of a cd promoting road safety for elementary school pupils

- Upgrade-enhancement of theoretical teaching materials for candidate drivers, as well as of examination questionnaires
- Elaboration and development of a new questionnaire data basis in the Information System for the Theoretical Examination of Candidate Drivers and its simultaneous translation to foreign languages
- Production of questionnaire for the theoretical examination of illiterate or gipsy origin candidate drivers
- Completion of implementation of the electronic programme for the selection of examiners' committees throughout the country
- Conducting and following research by higher education institutions on the education, initial and periodical training of truck drivers and collecting road safety data
- Setting up an internet site for promoting road safety within the Ministry's for Transport and Communications website, containing information, directions and advice for citizens and engaging into a communication policy for promoting road safety
- Developing a data basis for controlling drivers' behavior
- Special emphasis is about to be given in enhancing the road traffic behavior and conduct of elderly drivers.

Additional issues to be discussed and possibly dealt with in a wholesome way by the competent EU organs are:

- Road safety and elderly drivers
- Developing data basis on the control of driving licenses(also in the frame of the EUCARIS programme)
- Educational programmes for schoolchildren

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