

Lisbon 29 – 30 September 2008

Ladies and gentleman,

It is a great honor for me to be in Lisbon for the Intergovernmental Conference concerning “A European Policy for Road Safety”. It is also a big responsibility, since I represent Greece, a country that its figures on road accidents, stand at the top of the European Union.

Certainly, during the years, there has been some progress on road construction and diminishing road accidents; however there are a lot of things still to be done. In fact, I believe that it is imperative to implement all the necessary measures in order to confront the problem. Needless to say that such a problem cannot and must not be examined as single dimensional and cannot be tackled without the coordination of different stakeholders.

But first of all I think that it would be useful to start with the reasons that Greece has such a high number of accidents. I will try to be as brief as I can:

-There is no holistic policy on road safety. All attempts so far have failed badly, mainly because they try to tackle the problem using fragmented approaches. The 1500 deaths each year are the unquestioned result of this failure

-The Greek National Road Network can be seen a major reason for the large number of accidents every year. Most of it is quite old and narrow as well. At the same time in its majority there is no barrier in the middle that can prevent from fatal or serious accidents. A serious aspect on the National Road is the lack of lights, which can be very serious, since this lack causes a lot of accidents.

-The drivers training process need to be improved. At the moment, the training process consists of theory and practice and finally exams. The result is to generate drivers that can drive. That is not the case. The case is to generate drivers that possess driver consciousness, driver awareness. We need to have drivers that respect the pedestrians and the other drivers on the road.

-The short of information that the Greek citizens receive through the mass media, the school, their work environment, their everyday life.

-There is no reliable accident record system. As a result, there are not enough quantitative and qualitative elements to examine and work on them.

-The undersized number of technical and engineering tests to cars. There are a big number of cars in Greece that are still on the road even though they are over aged.

-At the same time there is an overlap of competences, not only between Ministries, but also among different degrees of Governance.

As far as the solutions to this multifaceted problem, allow me to invoke a recent Research that was developed by the National Polytechnic University of Athens. According to that Research, the actions to confront the problem should be:

From the Ministry of Transport and Communications:

-The development of a behavioral control system for drivers.

-Better and more comprehensive measures both for new and old drivers that face accidents frequently.

From the Ministry of Interior and Public Administration:

-More and better targeted controls to drivers, both in day and night.

-Low cost measures on the National Road Network

From the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works:

-Large maintenance works throughout the National Road Network, focusing on those roads that face the biggest and the most serious problems.

-Construction of new Road Network that is safer.

From the Ministry of Health:

- Developing an emergency call system at the majority of the Greek National Road Network.
- Improving the coordination and the cooperation between the hospitals and the ambulances.
- Construct on the National Road Network, Health Centers specializing in car accidents and car injuries.

From the Ministry of Education:

- Integrate on the daily school program modules that will assist on the development of tomorrow's drivers' consciousness.
- Improve the safety of school transportations and the moving of students to their schools.
- Improve the function and the role of "Driving Parks".

Ladies and Gentleman,

I do believe that this conference will help us draw useful conclusions. Conclusions, that we must implement on our national policies in order to minimize the number of accidents and the number of seriously injuries and deaths that occur each year in Greece.

Thank you

Yiannis Skoulas