POLIS RESPONSE TO EC CONSULTATION PAPER ON

Driver training and Traffic safety education (2009)

The EC Consultation Paper on "Driver training and Traffic safety education"

In April 2009 the European Commission launched a consultation on road safety: driver training and traffic safety education. The objective of the Commission's consultation is to provide a framework to help define guidelines and recommendations for efficient driver training and traffic safety education in the European Union.

The main target group for driver training and traffic safety education is novice drivers, but other drivers will also be encouraged to continue formal life-long learning after they have passed their driving test. Young novice drivers are the group most at risk and for whom investment is most worthwhile.

The driver training models that currently exist in European Member States often focus on driving techniques and the use of the vehicle. External factors such as goals behind driving objectives, the driving context and personal motives, are rarely considered. Yet, these personal and contextual factors play an important role in a road user's behaviour.

The Commission's consultation paper suggests some specific recommendations to improve driver training and road safety education across the EU. It is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/consultations/2009_06_22_training_education_en.htm.

Polis response

Polis, the European network of cities and regions for innovative transport and mobility solutions **aims at making mobility more sustainable across Europe; this entails the need to guarantee the safety of all traffic actors in any circumstance**.

Polis welcomes the Commission's paper and its objective to **improve traffic behaviour** in Europe. Polis shares the view of the Commission that this requires the development of **new training tools and education methods.**

Polis believes however, that these tools should better take into account the **cross-border aspects of transport and road safety**, the presence of **advanced technological in-car devices,** and the need for an **integrated approach towards a more sustainable mobility**.

With this in mind, Polis would like the European Commission to consider the comments listed below:

Polis Aisbl – 98 rue du Trône – B – 1050 Brussels - Belgium
Tel. +32 2 500 56 70 – Fax. +32 2 500 56 80 – polis@polis-online.org – www.polis-online.org

1) Give road safety education and driver training a "European dimension"

Driving a car, riding a bike, walking or using public transport abroad has become a reality for many European citizens, who are often confronted with (formal and informal) traffic rules that appear to be different from those applicable in their country of residence. Therefore, Polis believes that road safety education and driver training across Europe should be given a stronger "European dimension".

This does not imply that road safety education and driver training should be the same in all EU Member States. Europe's cultural and climatic differences have an impact on how people move and behave on the road, which means that there should be some diversity in road safety education methods and training content.

Although road safety education and driver training should not be unified across Europe, Polis considers that the inclusion of some comparative elements should be made obligatory in the education schemes (*e.g.* different priority rules, the use of car lights during daytime hours, the unrestricted access of one-way streets, the use of bus lanes, *etc.*).

In other words, the cross border dimension of road safety education and driver training needs to be harmonized across Europe.

2) In-car technological devices: giving the power (& responsibility) back to the human

Modern cars are equipped with technological in-car devices which aim to increase the safety and comfort of the driver, or to offer her/him real-time information, entertainment or other services. Such services can include, for example: anti-lock braking system (ABS), cruise control, intelligent speed adaptation, onboard computer, cooperative systems, park-distance control, navigation systems (GPS), Bluetooth, MP3/ video player, etc.

These devices (and others) are expected to become more common in the future as deployment of ICT-based systems and ITS take a stronger foothold in the transport world.

These devices can have both positive effects on the driver's safety (*e.g.* early anticipation and avoidance of obstacles; decrease in the driver's stress and mental load, etc.) or negative effects (*e.g*. lower attention level on the road, unjustified feeling of confidence, etc.), depending on the driver's ability to use the devices in the correct way and at the right time.

For this reason, Polis considers that specific *training modules* on the possible effects and adequate use of technological in-car devices should be included in the current driving and road safety education schemes.

3) Integrating road safety into sustainable mobility education

As well as road safety, other policy objectives for local, regional, national authorities and the European institutions include environmental objectives (such as reducing CO2

emissions, improving air quality, reducing noise emissions, etc.) and social and economic objectives (such as the accessibility, the affordability and viability of transport solutions).

A "fragmented" approach to mobility may lead to policies which negatively impact on objectives which were initially not taken into account: for instance, the number of injured cyclists or pedestrians might rise as a consequence of a modal shift when the number of cyclists increases and the road users and road infrastructure are *unprepared* for the new mobility conditions. An integrated approach can help to identify 'win-win' measures, which fulfill several objectives at once, and to facilitate their implementation (*e.g.* speed reduction, eco-driving, and real time information). For this reason, Polis encourages all authorities, and especially local and regional authorities to engage in an integrated approach, notably through the creation of sustainable urban transport plans (SUTP).

As a consequence, Polis believes that road safety education and driver training must not be limited to pursuing exclusively the objective of road safety (even less of only 'safe driving'), be it in school or in driving schools.

The Commision's consultation paper on "Driver training and Traffic safety education" suggests that three levels of environmental awareness be integrated into effective driver training and testing (4.3.8):

- *general principles related to the environment and transport (e.g. using alternative, less polluting transport modes, avoiding unnecessary travel),*
- *pre-driving decision-making (e.g. choice of car, trip-planning, regular checking of tyre pressure);*
- *practical environmentally-aware driving techniques*

As far as the 'general principles' are concerned (first bullet point), Polis suggests enhancing the presentation of the environmental impacts of possible transport modes by including a description of the different modes of transport, so that it is not simply the environmental impacts of transport that are considered, but an understanding of the different modes of transport that use the road network. Additionally, all users on the roads need to be made aware of all of the rules that apply not only to themselves but to all modes of transport on any segment of road, and of possible technical constraints and difficulties they may encounter.[1]

Polis believes that

- either the items mentioned above should be included in the current driving and road safety education schemes;

- or that road safety and driving techniques be included (together with these items) in broader "sustainable mobility courses", which could be made compulsory in all European (driving) schools.

Polis Policy Contact: Oliver JUNG (ojung@polis-online.org)

[1] The "European dimension" and presence of advanced technological devices mentioned under point 1 and 2 should be also taken into account.