

RESOLUTION NO. 99/4 ON COMMUNICATION IN ROAD SAFETY

[CEMT/CM(99)16/FINAL]

The ECMT Council of Ministers of Transport, meeting in Warsaw, on 19 and 20 May 1999:

NOTES the publication of the proceedings of the International Seminar on Communication in Road Safety, held in Poland in 1997;

CONSIDERS that the use of roads and citizens' desire to travel constitute not only a right to mobility, but above all a right to responsible and safe mobility;

CONSIDERS, therefore, that communication in road safety is an indispensable tool for ensuring this mobility, in particular under the best possible safety conditions;

AWARE of the fact that the vast majority of traffic accidents are caused by shortcomings in behaviour of road users;

OBSERVES that as road accidents increasingly become a fact of daily life, communication may get neglected;

REITERATES certain elements of previous ECMT reports and Resolutions that are particularly relevant in this context:

- Concerning ways of influencing human behaviour with a view to improving road safety [Resolution No. 48 – CM(86)16].
- To exchange experience at the international level on campaigns conducted and initiatives taken, in particular regarding the media used.
- To strengthen co-operation and the exchange of information on the evaluation of effectiveness.
- To set national objectives while at the same time promoting variants adapted to the regional and local levels.
- Concerning advertising that conflicts with road safety aims [Resolution No. 56 – CM(89)37].
- Any improvement in human behaviour first calls for better quality advertising which does not prompt drivers to adopt behaviour that is aggressive, violent or to the detriment of other road users but which, on the contrary, attaches greater importance to forms of behaviour conducive to safety on the roads.

CONSIDERS, accordingly, pursuant to Resolution No. 55 [CM(89)17], that it is advisable to strengthen international co-operation in this connection within the ECMT, not only by means of an ongoing exchange of information to enable Member countries to make the most of their respective experience but also, depending on the nature of the matters concerned, with a view to reaching joint decisions in the Council of Ministers;

NOTES that communication, although it makes it possible to improve road safety, is not the only way of influencing road users, and should not be used in isolation, but always in conjunction with the other means being implemented;

EMPHASISES that there should be a systematic attempt to raise public awareness of the problem of road accidents and that it is necessary to encourage the press, radio and television to make each individual more aware of the problem and conscious of his responsibility for safe behaviour;

ENCOURAGES all initiatives in this regard;

RECOMMENDS that:

- Communication be adapted to the target group, and be based on marketing principles, in particular by using the principle of value added, i.e. ensuring that the communication achieves the expected result as fully as possible.
- The chances of success be increased significantly by:
 - Setting operational objectives.
 - Encouraging existing positive attitudes and models of behavior.
 - Aiming to ensure that the message intended for each target group personally reaches each individual in the group.
- Communication be considered as a tool to be used on an ongoing basis, the lasting effects of which will only be felt in the long term.
- An evaluation of the results be carried out after each awareness-raising campaign and initiative in order continuously to improve the quality of such campaigns and initiatives and their impact.
- All road safety measures, whether legal, technical, psychological and above all educational, be reinforced by means of a systematic communication effort.
- The communication effort be also included systematically in medium and long-term road safety policies.
- Exchanges of experience between ECMT Member countries be pursued with a view to promoting close contacts between the officials responsible for communication and to raising the awareness of the “road users” target group.

INSTRUCTS the Committee of Deputies to monitor the application of the measures recommended in this Resolution.

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COVER NOTE

A Seminar on Communication in Road Safety was held on 2 and 3 October 1997 in Jozefow, near Warsaw, at the invitation of the Polish authorities. For the first time, an ECMT event devoted to road safety was held in one of the Conference's most recent Member countries. For the Polish authorities, road safety trends are a matter of particular concern because of the growing use of private cars.

Cars = accidents: to change this equation that all too often seems inevitable, it is necessary to combine the various means available. And the fact is that of all the factors that contribute to accidents, human behaviour is by far the most important.

Communicating in the field of road safety is an integral part of the authorities' overall efforts to improve road safety. Communication is not limited only to providing information about the authorities' action, but is an indispensable tool for raising awareness of a societal problem in which all citizens must become involved on an ongoing basis and take responsibility for it.

To communicate is to inform and convince. The measures introduced can only be effective if they are widely accepted by the public. There is more than one possible approach and all new communication technologies should be taken into account.

Communication in road safety, like communication in any other field, is now often entrusted to professionals in order to ensure that it is as effective as possible. But this approach raises the problem of cost, since the authorities cannot always afford it.

The seminar provided an opportunity to review the different communication scenarios in ECMT countries and to have a very useful exchange on the different experiences. Moreover, it also allowed attention to be focused on the objectives, on the detailed strategies and the methods used for communication. Communication is essential but is only one element of road safety policy and can only work when it is integrated in a general strategy which takes account not only of the messages diffused by traditional mass media, but also of new methods of telecommunication including involving the road transport environment and surveillance techniques.

Communication requires repeated and long term efforts, and quite often produces tangible results only in the longer term. Moreover, even if accident patterns in different countries show common characteristics, it is clear that the number and seriousness of accidents vary widely between countries as a function of mobility needs, motorisation rates, lifestyles and very different social contexts.

The fact that communication is becoming global and that messages appearing in the press or broadcast on radio and television can now be received almost everywhere should however be borne in mind. It might be advisable, depending on the themes selected, national culture and the goals to be achieved, to have the possibility to exchange on information, measures to raise awareness, and policy guidance, at the national and even international level.

Nevertheless, even if the strategies and general principles and the communication itself are similar, the means and methods used must be adapted to the regional or national characteristics. While exchange of experiences and of good practice are very useful, it is essential to take account of the special characteristics of each country.