

RESOLUTION NO. 39 ON THE ROAD SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

[CM(79)21]

The Council of Ministers of Transport, meeting in Paris on 23rd November, 1979

- Deeply concerned about the large number of children and young people struck down by road accidents every year in all Member countries.
- Noting that 1979 has been declared the “International Year of the Child” by the United Nations Organisation.
- Taking this opportunity to take stock of everything that the European Conference of Minister of Transport has done over 15 years or more to promote the road safety of children and young people.
- Also bearing in mind the work of other international organisations in this field.
- Wishing to continue this long-term effort with a general recommendation summing up the thinking on the subject during that period and the new lines of thinking which it judges likely to improve the situation in this field.

FIRST POINTS OUT

- That, in June 1974, it adopted a Resolution on road safety problems concerning two-wheeled vehicles which contained a series of technical, regulatory, educational and other recommendations to make users of the various types of two-wheeled vehicles better aware of the road traffic hazards they are particularly vulnerable to.
- That, in June 1975, it adopted a Resolution recommending that it be made compulsory – unless there is good reason for not doing so – for children to be carried at the rear of motor vehicles if they are too young or too small to use seatbelts.
- That, with the co-operation of the Council of Europe, the ECMT organised two joint conferences of government experts on road safety education in schools (Paris 1963 and Vienna 1971).
- That both these conferences gave very good results and helped to give the necessary impulse at political level to improve the situation in this field.

- That a restricted group of experts of the ECMT and the Council of Europe then met at Strasbourg in September 1974 to follow-up and, where necessary, co-ordinate the application of the proposals and recommendations of the Vienna Conference of 1971 on Road Safety Education in Schools.
- That, in 1978, discussions were held with the Council of Europe with a view to organising, at the earliest possible date, another joint conference for the purpose of taking further action in certain directions and filling certain deficiencies.
- That bearing in mind the ECMT's previous Resolutions, the work done by other international organisations and the main gist of the conclusions adopted by the conferences held in Paris (1963) and Vienna (1971), the action to be taken in the field under review should pay due regard to the following points.

1. *Environmental adjustments to suit children's psychological and biological development*

Such adjustments are concerned with the fact that children's behaviour differs from that of adults because their psychological and biological development is not yet complete (involving difficulties of sight or hearing for perception of traffic situations). They are spontaneous beings, their reactions are impulsive and their powers of concentration and risk appraisal are slight.

The public authorities concerned should give due consideration to these factors and accordingly adapt the environment in which children live, that is, by taking measures in such fields as urban planning, road and school construction and traffic regulations, and by banning the parking of vehicles near pedestrian crossings and in the vicinity of schools and playgrounds.

Barriers, for example, should be erected near schools, i.e. between the footpath and the highway, to prevent children from running out suddenly and unexpectedly into the road and causing accidents.

A last point in this connection, is that the creation of 'residential zones' where children can move about and play without constraint and where vehicles can be driven only slowly is a good way of reducing accident risks considerably. The provision of pedestrian precincts also has great advantages in this respect.

2. *The role of parents*

It must be borne in mind that parents have a pre-eminent role to play in making their children road safety-minded as part of their education. This parental role is particularly important if children are to learn, at a very early age, elementary principles such as the fundamental difference between the parts of the road reserved for vehicles or pedestrians or how to cross the road.

Beyond this, parents should gradually extend their children's knowledge of basic traffic rules (traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, etc.) and make them better aware of traffic conditions and hazards by direct experience.

It is essential that parents should do this irrespective of what may be done to develop road safety education in schools.

Furthermore, parents cannot hope to train their children suitably to cope with road traffic hazards unless they themselves, throughout this educational process, set a good example both as pedestrians and

as drivers, for it must always be borne in mind that children acquire much of their knowledge by imitating adults.

3. *Road safety education as part of school curricula*

If road safety education is to be effective, it should be dispensed as a compulsory subject systematically and continuously in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Problems treated from a theoretical angle must subsequently be subject to tests in real life, in road traffic itself or on training grounds.

The ways and means whereby this road safety teaching should proceed is doubtless part of the planning of school curricula, but the details of such arrangements are of lesser importance as long as this education is in fact effectively dispensed.

A minimum number of hours, between 10 and 20, should be allocated for road safety education on the basis of the scale drawn up by the Vienna Conference in 1971 for the different classes and levels.

4. *Content of road safety education*

In the main, the outline programme approved at the 1963 Conference in Paris, which divides subjects by age groups (5–10/10–15/over 15) should be applied.

The primary object of road safety education should be:

- To instil the knowledge that is necessary for compliance with road traffic and safety rules in children's own interests and those of others.
- To teach the right behaviour in the various traffic situations and to make children aware of the importance and utility of road safety measures so that they may become responsible road-users.

5. *Methods to be applied*

This is a matter for the educational authorities, but attention can be drawn to the use of present-day facilities such as audio-visual aids and all the handbooks and instructions for practical exercises that are now widely available. It need hardly be said that the value of the education dispensed depends on how far the teachers themselves are suitably trained.

6. *Safety on the way to and from school*

(a) Parents and educational authorities should be urged to ensure that pupils wear bright coloured clothes and reflective or luminous safety devices.

Parents should be encouraged to accompany their children to school, particularly the youngest, or have them accompanied, and then gradually get them used to going on their own.

(b) School patrols (of children aged from 14 to 16, police, teachers, parents or senior citizens) are recommended to look after children at dangerous points on the road to school and in particular in the vicinity of the school itself. School patrols not only provide better safety for their members, they also improve their road safety education and give them more sense of responsibility.

(c) School bus services should be promoted, notably for very young children, and more especially if the school is some distance away from their homes. Vehicles used regularly for this purpose should carry rear signplates conforming to Sign A 12 in the Vienna Convention (1968), i.e. a rectangular panel with black silhouettes of children on a yellow ground.

To ensure that these services are operated in the safest possible way, special attention should be given to the qualifications of the drivers concerned, to the roadworthiness of the vehicle, to the siting of bus stops and to proper supervision of child passengers.

(d) Young bicycle and moped-riders should be given special instruction with particular emphasis on their vehicles being properly equipped (so that they can see and be seen at night, be able to stop, etc.) and on the risks to which they in particular are exposed on densely trafficked roads. Moped riders should also be recommended or required to wear helmets.

(e) Representatives of the local authority, teachers and police, in consultation with parents, should jointly select a number of routes for children's journeys on their way to and from school so as to bypass dangerous roads and enable children to cross the road via traffic light-controlled pedestrian crossings and/or subways.

7. *Publicity campaigns for children's road safety*

As children are so vulnerable because of their specific morphological and psychological make-up, notably their spontaneous behaviour and unexpectedly impulsive reactions, the importance of conducting national road safety campaigns periodically for the benefit of children cannot be over-emphasized, whether such campaigns are directed to children themselves, their parents, their teachers or other road users. On this last point, it is particularly necessary that motorists should be urged to exercise special care because of the above—mentioned aspects of child behaviour.

To ensure that these campaigns will have the required impact, they should be conducted through a wide range of media including posters, press, radio, television or other suitable means.

8. *Co-ordination*

In the light of the foregoing considerations, achievement of the desired results will depend on:

- Sustained efforts by the authorities, organisations or individuals who have responsibilities as regards the road safety of children in connection with road traffic problems.
- Continuing coordination of these efforts, both in a general sense and through the practical measures which can be taken in situ notably by co-operation between parents, teachers, local authorities and the police force.

Recommendations

That the policy for the road safety of children which is to be adopted and applied in Member countries should pay due regard to the foregoing guidelines and recommended measures.