



PRESS RELEASE

Report Calls for Better Assessment of Drivers' Vision by EU Member States to help halve road death by 2020

Brussels, 15 June 2011

A report released today highlights substantial variation in the assessment of drivers' vision across Europe, and recommends that the European Commission should act to harmonise assessment in EU Member States to the standards in the best performing countries.

The EU has committed to halving road death across the EU by 2020. The goal is to achieve this by legislative means that change driver behaviour, raise the technical standards of vehicles and improve road design. The visual requirements to drive safely in the Driving Licence Directive 2009/113/EC are currently being implemented by EU Members States. The report has found this is failing to harmonise assessments of vision.

The report notes a number of European countries continue to rely on an out-dated assessment of vision known as the 'Licence Plate Test', which is not consistent with the underlying EU standards. In addition, seven countries have no requirement for on-going assessment of vision for non-professional drivers, while many others only have limited assessment in place.

The Driving Licence Directive has failed to harmonise the assessment of drivers' vision across the EU and the report recommends that the Commission should revisit the underlying conditions for vision testing in the upcoming review of the Directive.

The report was jointly developed by the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) and the European Federation of Optical Lenses, Frames and Instrument Manufacturers (EUROM I) and the European Federation of Contact Lens Manufacturers (EUROMCONTACT).

Mark Nevin speaking on behalf of ECOO said: 'The European Commission should be alert to those member states that are dragging their feet and refusing to implement appropriate assessments of vision, before issuing a first licence and during the driving career. Given that 90% of sensory information when driving comes from vision and poor vision impacts on driving performance, this must be an area with potential to deliver improvements in road safety across the EU.'

Bertrand de Limé speaking on behalf of EUROM I said: 'We have been working to achieve better vision for safer driving and we would value the support of the European Commission to deliver change in the poorly performing EU Member States.'

Anne-Marie Wolters speaking on behalf of EUROMCONTACT said: 'The European Commission should carefully monitor Member States' implementation and consider revising the Driving Licence Directives if this important issue is not adequately addressed. We are ready to support the European Commission to ensure better vision on European roads.'

Armin Duddek from ECOO added: 'It is also important that drivers have a choice of where to have their vision assessed. As the report states this should include medical practitioners such as ophthalmologists, doctors, optometrists and opticians, who have the equipment and expertise to assess any drivers' vision.'

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Notes for Editors

1. The Report can be found online at:
<http://www.ecoo.info/mm/ReportonDriverVisionScreeninginEurope.pdf>
2. EU Position on Road Safety
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/kallas/headlines/news/2010/07/20100720_roadsafety_en.htm
3. ECOO website
www.ecoo.info
4. EUROM I website
http://www.eurom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=5
5. EUROMCONTACT website
<http://www.euromcontact.org/>
6. EC Directives 2006/126/EC and 2009/113/EC
7. ECOO position paper on driving and vision
http://ecoo.info/mm/ECOO_Position-Paper_Vision-and-Driving.pdf

About ECOO

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) represents the 75,000 optometrists, opticians and optical retail outlets across Europe.

About EUROM I

EUROM I represents the national associations of manufacturers of corrective lenses, frames, and instruments for opticians (700 companies).

About EUROMCONTACT

EUROMCONTACT represents the national associations and the international manufacturers of contact lenses and contact lens care products.