



MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

29 January 2008

Crossing the street in Europe is not child's play!

Harmonisation needed on national traffic rules for pedestrian crossings

New EuroTest survey reveals more action is needed to reduce pedestrian crossings fatalities

When it comes to crossing the street in Europe, an internal market of safety does not apply! EuroTest reveals that pedestrian crossings need to be made safer. Automobile clubs insist that pedestrian crossings must be safe places for pedestrians to cross the street. And they must be fully integrated in the urban and rural mobility network.

Europe's motoring and touring organisations' have piloted a EuroTest survey of pedestrian crossings across Europe. The high number of children and elderly people still being the main victims of accidents occurring on pedestrian crossings shows that despite the improvements achieved in Europe more can still be done to decrease pedestrian crossings fatalities.

A new pan-European study led by the major automobile clubs in 10 European countries¹, all members of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) within the scope of EuroTest and under the leadership of the Touring Club Suisse (TCS) reveals that across European travellers are faced with different national rules being applied to pedestrian crossings and their rights and obligations when crossing the street. In the face of this myriad of rules the study recommends the harmonisation of road traffic rules for drivers and pedestrian crossings in Europe.

The study shows that in Norway, Switzerland and Italy have the highest rates of fatalities occurring on pedestrian crossings, in comparison with other countries. In Spain and Great Britain, pedestrians account for the majority of road fatalities. However, most of these victims are killed outside of pedestrian crossings. So using a pedestrian crossing is safer. A special award has to be given to the Netherlands, the country which almost always scored the best result.

"No tourist travelling in Europe would ever think to find out about crossing the street outside of their own country. It's not information that you would find in any guidebook. But this survey reveals that the rules everywhere in Europe about how when and where you can cross the street are not the same. Pedestrian crossings are not the same and your chances of crossing safely using them vary significantly." said Caroline Ofoegbu of the FIA European Bureau.

The Methodology

The study undertook a risk analysis of pedestrian crossings across Europe. An in-depth examination was carried out of existing national regulations and directives governing when where and how pedestrians may cross the road and the responsibilities of drivers as well as designs for commonly found pedestrian crossings and equipment. The goals of this study include:

¹ ÖAMTC (Austria), TCB (Belgium), AL (Finland), ADAC (Germany), AA (Great Britain), ACI (Italy), ANWB (Netherlands), NAF (Norway), RACC and RACE (Spain), TCS (Switzerland)

- To highlight the risk potential of using pedestrian crossings in the different countries.
- To make the users (drivers and pedestrian) aware of their rights and obligations.
- To highlight, in each country, the best and the worst pedestrian crossing design.
- To draw the attention of national authorities to the measures urgently required to reduce fatalities and accidents occurring on pedestrian crossings.

This study draws its conclusions from the analysis and compilation of various sources of information such as:

- Statistical data analysis (e.g. severe injuries and fatalities) on pedestrian crossings
- Rules and directives about the use of pedestrian crossings
- An inventory of legislation about pedestrian crossings facilities in each country (related to aspects such as design, equipments, criteria of implementation)

The Findings

Among the plethora of traffic laws and guiding principles, one principle remains and is clearly specified in all countries: the driver is asked to pay special attention when approaching a pedestrian crossing and he has to give right of way to pedestrians. It's not only the action of using a pedestrian crossing which gives right of way, but also the evident intention from the pedestrian to cross the road. However, this last point is not mentioned at all in the Italian legislation. Furthermore, in Belgium, the way of using of a pedestrian crossing is not specifically mentioned to the pedestrian.

The study also reveals:

- The rate/share of pedestrian fatalities that occur on and outside of pedestrian crossings shows a significant diversity of results for the different countries.
- Rules and directives governing the right of way on pedestrian crossings have a common basis in all countries: the driver has to give right of way to pedestrians. However, there are wide differences in the description and definition related to this mandatory requirement.
- Pedestrian crossings planning and design may significantly differ among the countries. Frequently identified as a problem was the poor recognition that a pedestrian crossing was in place either due to poor visibility of road markings, use of different coloured road markings, cars parked too close to the crossing thus obscuring pedestrians from sight, cars approaching a crossing too quickly.

The Recommendations

Following the results of this survey the EuroTest partners recommend that improvements focus on:

- Enforcing the quality of data acquisition related to accidents on pedestrians crossings. This can be accomplished with the help of each national statistics office.
- Road traffic rules for drivers and pedestrians on pedestrian crossings need to be harmonised across Europe. The main goal is that all new drivers are forced to learn the same rules in the driving license theory test. All drivers and pedestrians should have the same behaviour whenever approaching or using pedestrian crossings in Europe. Special attention must be given to children, elderly people and disabled or visually impaired people.
- Forcing national and regional authorities in Europe to establish relevant guidelines and tools for road designers aiming to secure and build safe pedestrian crossings. Simple measures can be applied and should be considered on a short-term basis.

Pedestrian crossings must be safe places for pedestrians and they must be fully integrated in the urban and rural mobility network.

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Notes for the Editor

Through EuroTest, 16 automobile clubs in 15 countries, members of the FIA, have been putting the quality and safety of mobility in Europe to the test since 2000 for the benefit of their members and all mobile consumers in Europe. The EuroTest partners have constantly called for a Europe where the mobile consumer can circulate freely using quality infrastructure and in safety.

The results published here represent the first phase of a three year study co-financed by the FIA Foundation that will develop a full assessment programme for examining the quality and safety of Europe's pedestrian crossings.

This three year project aims to produce in year 1, a "State of the Art" overview of the current situation of pedestrian crossings in Europe (task lead by TCS in collaboration with ACI). In years 2 and 3, pedestrian crossings facilities in major European cities will be assessed (task lead by ACI in collaboration with TCS).

The assessment carried out in year 2 and 3 will target the 14 countries which are represented in the EuroTest's partnership. This work package will consist of an assessment of pedestrian crossing facilities found in a selection of major European cities (two per country and per year), focusing on the common pedestrian crossing design equipments for persons with a reduced mobility and the extra facilities.

Assessment Objectives:

The assessment has several goals, which will concern essentially the walking route among some very important locations of the visited city (e.g. between the main railway station and the commercial or historical centre). Those poles of attraction for tourists and working people often generate conflicts with pedestrian and drivers.

At the end of years 2 and 3 of the assessment, an international benchmark will be proposed based on the results of each tested city. The benchmark will also be connected to the State of the Art report made in year 1. The annual assessment report will also propose recommendations for drivers, pedestrians and recommendations for public administrations.

The project also envisages producing and distributing a leaflet containing tips to drivers and pedestrians which will be delivered as an additional educational support aiming at increasing the public awareness on the pedestrian safety issues.

Statistical findings:

In 2005, the **pedestrian fatalities (in and outside pedestrian crossings)** per 1 million population has the worst rate in Spain with a ratio of 15.7. Italy and Great Britain follow both with a ratio of 11.5 and Belgium rates 10.3. At the opposite of the ranking, we can find the Netherlands with a ratio of 4.6, followed by Norway (6.7) and Finland (7.2).

On pedestrian crossings, this international comparison shows a different result for Norway, which has the highest rate of fatalities with a ratio of 3.7, followed by Italy (3.4) and Switzerland (3.0). At the opposite, we can once again stress the excellent situation in the Netherlands (0.6), followed by Great Britain (1.2). So, from a statistical point of view, the fatalities ratio on pedestrian crossings is 6 times higher in Norway than in the Netherlands.

Outside pedestrian crossings, this international comparison confirms the situation previously observed in Spain, which has the higher rate of fatalities with a ratio of 14.4, followed by Great Britain (10.3). At the opposite, Norway has the smallest ratio with 3.0, followed by the Netherlands (4.0) and Finland (5.1).

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