

EUROPEAN TRAFFIC PSYCHOLOGISTS WORKING FOR SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Jens Schade

Convenor of EFPA Standing Committee Traffic Psychology, www.efpa.eu

EFPA STANDING COMMITTEE TRAFFIC PSYCHOLOGY

In 2009, 35 000 people died in road accidents across the EU – 36% less than in 2001, when the commission first set its target of cutting the annual death rate by 50%. Young people and motorcyclists are among those most at risk. The UK, the Netherlands and Sweden had the lowest death tolls in 2009. Greece and Romania had the highest.

Speeding, driving after drinking alcohol and not wearing a seatbelt are some of the leading causes of road deaths. But unsafe vehicles and poorly maintained roads also pose unnecessary risks. In 2010 the Commission presented new guidelines for the next ten years, reaffirming the commitment to half the number of road deaths. The new EU programme addresses:

The Standing Committee, traffic psychology

Since the year 1993 the former Task force traffic psychology, today a Standing Committee, has been focusing on the following topics:

1. Role of traffic psychology

What should traffic psychologists do?

The answer depends on; what traffic psychologists can do in the society, and which tasks that only can be performed properly by traffic psychologists.

2. Main working areas

Drivers' diagnostics and driver improvement, both in connection with drivers' licensing are the areas that, by far, the highest portion of traffic psychologists in Europe deals with. Several hundreds of colleagues work in these areas. There are many serious arguments to support this work of traffic psychologists, to improve their quality, and to enhance interdisciplinary work in the area (with driving schools, physicians, etc.).

3. New areas

As it is more and more understood that "traffic is behaviour" the role of psychology becomes more obvious to most people. Therefore, in connection with the discussion of what traffic psychologists should deal with the question led to many suggestions. Infrastructure, vehicle construction, user compatible new technologies, etc. were listed as topics of future activities, and today psychological work in these areas is already going on.

During the last years, the following working areas of traffic psychologists have developed (further), with colleagues working both academically and in practice:

List of relevant future issues and projects

Knowledge	Topics
Driver licensing	Testing
Ageing	Driver rehabilitation
Dementia	Psychological intervention in the licensing process
Support for accessibility	Support for older drivers
Learning psychology	Reducing young drivers' accident risk
	Law enforcement and other ways of influencing behaviour
	Traffic education for all and spreading of psychological knowledge
	Infrastructure design (psychological issues)
	Design of on board and driver assistance systems

It is the firm belief of the committee that psychologists can and should play an important role in the work towards a safe and sustainable transportation system. To promote this aim the Standing Committee has formulated a number of goals.

The scope and main tasks of the Standing Committee Traffic Psychology are:

- To formulate common guidelines for the practice of Traffic and Transport Psychology in Europe
- Harmonise proposals for a curriculum for education in Traffic and Transport Psychology and what counts as equivalent qualifications across Europe
- Clarify and improve the structure and delivery of Traffic and Transport Psychology across Europe, involving networking with other psychologists beyond EFPA and where appropriate with medical doctors
- Act as a voice to promote Traffic and Transport Psychology in Europe

Today National Psychology Associations from 14 Nations are working together in the Standing Committee Traffic Psychology

Present members of the Standing Committee Traffic Psychology

Country	Name	e-mail
Austria	Ralf Risser	ralf.risser@factum.at
Cyprus	Panayiotis Kalogirou	pkalogirou@hotmail.com
Czech Republic	Martin Koran	martin.koran@homolka.cz
Denmark	Lisbeth Harms	lisbeth.harms@psy.ku.dk
Germany	Jens Schade	schade@verkehrspsychologie-dresden.de
Italy	Giovanbattista Tiengo	tiengo_gb@tin.it
Luxembourg	François D'Onghia	f.donghia@cpats.lu
Slovenia	Vlasta Zabukovec	vlasta.zabukovec@ff.uni-lj.si
Spain	Hector Monverde I Bort	hector.monverde@uv.es
Sweden	Lars Aberg (Convenor)	lars.aberg@psyk.uu.se
Switzerland	Markus Hubacher	m.hubacher@bfu.ch
Turkey	Yesim Yasak	yusak@marketweb.net.tr
United Kingdom	Patricia McKenna	mckennapk@cardiff.ac
EFPSA	Andro Pavuna	apavuna@ffzg.hr
The EC Liaison officer	Pierangelo Sardi	pierangelo.sardi@multiwire.net

Today's working areas

Traffic behaviour is a part of daily behaviour when people are moving to different places for different activities. For the society this is connected to big problems: People normally behave in such ways that both safety and sustainability are threatened.

This may be related to a number of different factors like:

- Infrastructure – e.g. misleading information
- Travel mode-characteristics – e.g. Provocative vehicle design
- Social characteristics – e.g. media trivialising effects of speeding
- Communication characteristics – e.g. road user interaction causing bad feelings
- Individual characteristics – e.g. values, attitudes and habits promoting risk behaviour

How behaviour is by impulses from these areas is up to psychologists to deal with – psychology is a discipline that deals with mental processes and behaviour. "Dealing with" involves both analyses (for understanding of mental processes) and treatment (taking measures that influence mental processes and behaviour).

Some immediate tasks have been identified:

Traffic psychologists should provide the EU omission with expertise within the traffic psychology area.

It is also of great importance for Traffic Psychologists to take part in discussions of various topics aiming for a safe and sustainable transportation in Europe like:

- screening of aging drivers
- the use of Demerit point systems.
- education and training of drivers

Finally, we invite national representatives from all EU-countries to join the Standing Committee Traffic Psychology