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Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY
ON ITS FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION**

(Geneva, 18-21 November 2008)

Addendum

REVISION OF THE CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION ON ROAD TRAFFIC (R.E.1)

Driving under the influence of substances that negatively affect the capacity
to drive vehicles (except alcohol)

Note by the secretariat

1. The members of the WP.1 will find hereafter the text relating to the driving under the influence of substances that negatively affect the capacity to drive vehicles (except alcohol) (background document: ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2008/6) as adopted by the Working Party at its fifty-sixth session (see ECE/TRANS/WP.1/120, paragraph 30).
2. The contents of this text will be included in the Chapter 1 of the revised R.E.1 as section 1.3.

Revision of the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (R.E.1)

Chapter 1 General rules concerning behaviour in traffic

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1.3 Driving under the influence of substances that negatively affect the capacity to drive vehicles (other than alcohol)

Definition

For the purpose of this section, substances that negatively affect the capacity of driving vehicles include drugs, narcotics, psychotropics, chemical substances and medicines. Throughout the section these terms will be grouped and used as “substances”.

1.3.1 Context

It is well known that driving requires concentration, attention, the right skills, common sense and a concern for the safety of everyone on the road, especially for the vulnerable user. Alertness, perception of the dangers and reaction time can make the difference in the interaction between the driver and the external environment. The substances mentioned above can seriously impair the perception of the driver, lessen his/her ability to interact and deal safely with unforeseen or unexpected events and may lead to lethal outcomes both for drivers and for other road users.

Studies and research suggest that each year a significant number of people are killed or permanently disabled as a consequence of road traffic accidents associated with driving under the influence of substances.

In general, authoritative lists of all the types of substances which may impair driving do not exist. Moreover, while solid documentation exists on the relationship between blood alcohol level and crash risk, the same extent of documentation is not yet available for driving under the influence of substances. During a roadside check it is difficult to identify and classify if a driver is under the effects of substances at that moment.

1.3.2 Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing and contrary to driving under the influence of alcohol, driving under the influence of substances is a thorny problem for which most Governments have not yet identified a common effective strategy, both from the legislative and from the operative point of view.

Bearing in mind this context, the following measures are recommended to be taken by national competent authorities:

1.3.2.1 Policy

- (a) Governments should encourage research and exchange of best practices to define a common, shared classification of substances which have a well-known or potential negative effect on driving a vehicle.

Governments should therefore set a harmonized strategy for developing legislation and enforcing it, for planning education schemes and information campaigns to address the problem;

- (b) Government policies should be based on the results of experimental and epidemiological studies measuring the influence of substances on driving performance;
- (c) Special policies should be elaborated and put in place and resources should be allocated with the aim of discouraging driving under the influence of substances;
- (d) Governments should elaborate and enforce comprehensive programmes to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries caused by driving under the influence of substances;
- (e) Driving under the effect of substances could also be the indication of a broader social problem. After consideration of the cultural and socio-economic situation, governments should consider and set specific programmes to fight driving under the influence of substances including planning of actions for communication, enforcement, and rehabilitation.

1.3.2.2 Legislation

- (a) Legislation should enable the central and local governments to enact dedicated measures to prevent the problem of driving under the influence of substances;
- (b) Legislation should be worded in a manner which reflects clearly the grave danger of driving under the influence of substances. When drafting legislation, data arising from studies and research should be widely used;
- (c) Enforcement measures aiming to prevent and limit driving under the influence of substances should be included in the road safety related legislation and programmes;
- (d) National legislation should contain all the necessary enforcement measures of an organizational, institutional and practical nature. In particular, legislation should contain special operative measures to detect drivers under the influence of substances and should define the procedures to be followed by the control authorities: recognizing impairment (reduced coordination, slow reaction time, decreased inhibition, euphoria, bizarre behaviour, talkativeness, increased confidence, and agitation), determining the causes and testing for the presence of substances;

- (e) Governments should consider setting or increasing penalties for the offence of impaired driving caused by consumption of substances and for refusing to submit to testing;
- (f) In order to prevent repeated offences, legislation should include provisions obliging the drivers addicted to the use of substances to follow special customized recovery treatment. Their driving licence should be given back only after they have completed the treatment and successfully carried out specific examination;

The above recommendations should not prevent governments from taking measures that are more severe, such as “zero tolerance”.

1.3.2.3 Education

- (a) Government programmes should be put in place to raise the awareness about the potential reactions and consequences of the use of substances with an emphasis on the enhanced risk resulting from the mixture of the different drugs or by the use of alcohol with drugs and medicines;
- (b) Governments should motivate civil society to participate in the education process and should benefit from their experience and means, especially at local level;
- (c) Governments should establish education strategies and plans for their enforcement to influence the behaviour and risk perception of persons driving under the influence of substances;
- (d) Schools at all levels, education institutions including driving schools should include in their curricula information about the temporary and permanent effects of substances on perceptual and motor skills.

1.3.2.4 Road user information/Raising awareness

- (a) Governments should provide regular awareness and set information campaigns to alert the public about all the possible consequences of the use of substances on driving;
- (b) Governments should also regularly plan and conduct campaigns to publicize the strict enforcement of rules concerning driving under the influence of substances;
- (c) Information campaigns should also be used to create social norms prohibiting driving under the influence of substances. As in the case of alcohol, increasing drivers’ perception of the risk of being detected is one of the most effective measures of preventing impaired driving;
- (d) In addition, to provide a general deterrent effect and for an efficient enforcement, governments should regularly publicize the police activities to combat driving under the influence of substances;

1.3.2.5 Enforcement

- (a) In addition to clear and comprehensive legislation, detailed instructions for the use of traffic police officers in charge of enforcement should be drawn up helping them to best combat driving under the influence of substances;
- (b) Governments should allocate resources for specialized continuous training of the competent persons. Moreover, resources should be allocated to upgrade the enforcement equipment and to follow the technological development in order to secure efficient tools to fight the problem of driving under the influence of substances. The competent persons involved in enforcement actions should be trained in recognizing driving problems related to the use of substances. Because of the difficulty of immediately discerning the use of drugs when stopping a suspect driver, the police should be continuously updated and trained in recognizing the cues indicating potential impairment;
- (c) Depending on the situation, enforcement should be carried out through the setting of roadside checking stations. Taking into account that:
 - (i) Testing for substances by the roadside is not as easy as it is for alcohol;
 - (ii) Few substances are detectable by the roadside, even with the use of oral fluid (saliva) screeners;
 - (iii) Blood or urine tests could be more indicative, but collecting these fluids by the road is quite a cumbersome and complicated process;
- (d) Specially equipped sites for roadside checks should be planned to allow routine enforcement all year-round, as well as more frequent checks during high risk periods (week-ends) or in special occasions (mass events such as concerts, sport activities, festivals);
- (e) The competent persons designated for the enforcement roadside checks should receive specific training on how to use and maintain the medical equipment in conformity with the standards and how to properly perform the examinations and interpret test results.

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