



Friedrichstraße 136
10117 Berlin
Deutschland
Tel. +49 30 760095-400
Fax +49 30 760095-401

johannes.naeumann@vdtuev.de
www.vdtuev.de

TÜV®

Statement Dr. Klaus Brüggemann
5th Fit to Drive-Congress, April 7th and 8th 2011 in Den Haag

In the name of the Association of the TÜVs, I would like to welcome you most warmly to the International *Fit to Drive* Congress here in The Hague.

This exchange of experience between experts in the area of road traffic is now taking place for the fifth time. The focus is on human beings in their role as drivers and other road users. Well-known experts from very different disciplines - psychology, medicine, law and administration - will be taking part in the discussions. The objective is to further reduce the number of deaths on the roads. Alcohol, drugs and aggressive behaviour play a role in this - as do detection, prosecution and rehabilitation.

First of all I would like to extend our very sincere thanks to our Dutch partners and hosts. There is hardly any city in the world which is more suitable when it comes to the search for consensus, settlement of conflicts and negotiation of just solutions. The Hague can be considered as the international city of justice. This is where the International Court of Justice has its home and, since the end of the First World War, The Hague has been seen as a Mecca for human rights representatives from all over the world. And if, against all expectations, conflicts and disputes should arise during our Congress, we can call upon the famous Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure that it will not come to this. Our four previous Congresses in Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Tallinn have already shown that our discussions and our work, crossing borders and combining different disciplines, is both objective and impartial. The most important outcome of our work is certainly that the *Fit to Drive* Congress is now firmly established and plays a significant role in European traffic policy, as an input provider and expert advisor.

When we think of problematic behaviour behind the wheel, alcohol is the first thing that comes to mind. In fact, alcohol has been consumed since mankind's earliest history. The oldest German brewery still in operation was established in 1040. Just think of the part that wine plays in French civilisation and society or of whisky in Scotland: alcohol is rooted deeply within our European culture. And still today, according to findings of the London Institute of Alcohol Studies, the European Union leads the world when it comes to alcohol consumption, with eleven litres of pure alcohol drunk per head of population each year.

The *Fit to Drive* Congress is not about fighting alcohol as such. Alcohol consumption is in any case falling in many European countries - such as in Germany for example. The question for us is rather this: how can we make sure that a strict dividing line is drawn between alcohol and driving - now and sustainably into the future?

The drop in the consumption of alcohol in Europe has certainly also led to the reduction in the number of those killed in traffic accidents. This positive trend, however, must not blind us to the fact that alcohol continues to be a problem on the roads, and that scientists, traffic policymakers, the justice system and official bodies must continue to concern themselves with it.

Please allow me to state a few figures to make this clear:

- The annual total of traffic deaths in Europe currently stands at 35,000. A report by the EU Commission from the year 2006 regarding the problem of alcohol consumption in Europe, states that the number of alcohol-related road deaths in Europe is estimated at 10,000. If the number of these deaths is to be sustainably reduced, the subject of "drink driving" has to be at the very centre.
- In Germany, around 22,000 alcohol-related road accidents with injury to persons were recorded in 2009, of which 440 resulted in death. Measured in terms of the total number of such accidents in Europe as a whole, this is disproportionately low.
- According to the official statistics of the German Road Safety Council, around 200,000 cases of driving while under the influence of alcohol were recorded in Germany by the police. However, according to expert opinion, these statistics are in stark contrast to the probable number of actual cases, estimated at around 120 million. This corresponds to a risk of detection of 0.16 per cent.

And there is another problem, which is of increasing concern to the experts: it is not only alcohol which affects driving capability; the police are increasingly identifying drivers who are under the influence of medicinal or so-called recreational drugs. In Germany alone, the number of drug-related assessments within the medical and psychological driving capability examination increased by 9,4 per cent within one single year. And then we also have to consider impaired driving capability which has nothing at all to do with intoxicants - phenomena such as driving fatigue and medical conditions such as diabetes, for example, but also aggression or a simple and stubborn refusal to learn from mistakes arising from repeated disregard of traffic regulations.

It is therefore clear that in addition to the legal profession, medical practitioners and psychologists working in the area of road traffic play a vital role in finding strategies for reducing the number of accidents and in fact avoiding them completely.

In the end we have to find an interdisciplinary European model which is composed of the elements of "prevention", "recording", "punishment" and "rehabilitation".

- The high number of undetected drink drivers shows that the police are reaching their limits. Even a doubling of the risk of detection from the current 0.16 per cent would not have the desired sustainable effect. We must therefore turn our attention most urgently to prevention.
- "Recording" means that – as is already the case in many countries – drink drivers are registered by means of a points system, so that repeated offending leads to serious consequences.
- The consequence for the individual must consist of punishment. According to expert opinion, the important factor here is not the severity of the punishment, but its proximity to the event.
- The final stage must be that of rehabilitation. It is at least as important as the two previous elements. The driver must seriously consider his own problematic behaviour and at the end of the process must be able to demonstrate convincingly that he is able to draw a strict dividing line between drinking and driving.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the objective of our Congress is to support the EU as regards its road safety policy. Last year, the EU Commission presented us with a statement regarding a new road traffic safety programme. According to this programme, the number of traffic deaths in the EU should be halved from its current total of 35,000 by the year 2020. The VdTÜV particularly welcomes the fact that in this safety programme, special emphasis is also placed on the 1.5 million people who are injured in road traffic accidents.

According to information from Brussels, there are estimated to be 10 serious and 40 slight injuries for each fatal accident and four accidents leading to permanent incapacity, for example to damage to the brain or spine. In addition to the individual suffering that is caused, the annual cost to society amounts to 130 billion euros.

To gain control over this problem, in addition to technical innovations and improved traffic infrastructure, the EU is placing drivers at the centre of its programme. The Commission expressly states that the effectiveness of road traffic safety policy depends in the last analysis on the behaviour of road users themselves. Driver education, training and further training, and also enforcement of rules and regulations are deemed to be of fundamental importance.

And we can only agree.

Therefore I now have the honour of opening the 5th *Fit to Drive* Congress. I am sure that we will all enjoy and benefit from many interesting discussions. In seeking our solutions, let us be inspired by the long international tradition of The Hague.

Thank you!