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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

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Item 5(c) of the provisional agenda
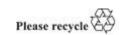**Amendment proposals on distracted Driving**

Distracted Driving

Submitted by WP.1 Chair

At the last session, WP.1 agreed that the discussion on distracted driving should go beyond the use of mobile phones and address "infotainment" and distraction in a wider context. This document, submitted by the WP.1 Chair, aims to underline this concept.

I. Distracted Driving

A. Context

1.   Driving a car is a complex task, and it requires complete attention. Distracted driving is any activity that takes away driver's attention from the road. Several studies[1],[2] have identified three main types of distraction: visual distractions (driver's eyes off the road), manual distractions (driver's hands off the wheel) and, cognitive distractions (driver's mind off the driving task). Distracted driving is also classified as driver's inattention, driver's distraction, and critical activities for safe driving[3]

2.   More often than not, national traffic codes still refer to distracted driving with a focus on the use of mobile phones. Legislation frequently prohibits and punishes the use of hand-held phone, while tolerating the use of "hands-free" mobile phone kits. However, even in this case some national laws provide for driver's liability in the event of an accident (i.e. cognitive distraction).

3.   Nowadays, distracted driving has become synonymous-both in terms of frequency and media attention-with driving while using nomadic devices. These devices include: mobile phones, tablet computers, Portable Navigation Devices (PNDs), hand held music players, and television/video players (Infotainment). The use of such devices while driving has been shown to be a causative factor in 30 per cent road accidents in the EU[4].

II. Educational and Awareness

4.   Distraction can be prevented.

5.   Countries should prohibit the use by drivers of hand–held phones in a moving vehicle, as is already provided for under the Convention on Road Traffic, 1968, (Art 8). Countries should also require the use of hands-free devices by motorists making or receiving calls. In addition, proper regulatory consideration should be given to the use of PNDs, music players, and also TV/video players, while driving; or whenever the vehicle is in motion and there could be inferred distraction of the driver. Educational measures should be promoted in order to increase public awareness about the hazard of distracted driving in each of the mentioned aspects: such as, for example, texting while driving, which is a very common cause of fatal crashes where distraction is reported.[5]

6.   Countries should pay specific attention to warning trainee drivers of the risk inherent with devices that are liable to cause distraction. In particular they should include

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[1]   Driver crash risk factors and prevalence evaluation using naturalistic driving data: Thomas A. Dingusa,1, Feng Guoa,b, Suzie Leea, Jonathan F. Antina, Miguel Pereza, Mindy Buchanan-Kinga, and Jonathan Hankeya

[2]   http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/specialist/erso/pdf/safety_issues/hazardous_behaviour/04-driver_distraction_en.pdf

[3]   http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2016/wp1/ECE-TRANS-WP1-2016-INF-7e.pdf

[4]   http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/news/nl22_en.pdf

[5]   According to research from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, texting while driving is associated with the highest risk of all cell phone-related tasks. The research found that text messaging causes drivers to take their eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds over a six-second interval. That means at 55 miles per hour, a texting driver would travel the length of a football field without looking at the road. Nation's Health, February 2012, Issue 42

appropriate provisions about distraction in the training qualification both for private and professional drivers.

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