

European Automobile Industry is Active Partner in eSafety Aware Campaign

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“A lack of awareness of the benefits of electronic stability control in vehicles is the main obstacle for a wider implementation rate in Europe. The European car manufacturers therefore fully support the Europe wide ‘Choose ESC!’ campaign.” This was said by Secretary General Ivan Hodac of the European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association ACEA, at the launch of the ESC campaign near Rome on May 8.

ESC, or electronic stability control, is an active safety measure that helps to prevent accidents in critical situations. ESC seeks to stabilize the vehicle to avoid skidding and can reduce road crashes by more than 20 percent, especially in wet or icy conditions.

The European manufacturers, who invented ESC, increasingly equip their vehicles with this safety feature, both standard or as an option. Unfortunately, the take up rate is still disappointing. In many cases, customers prefer comfort or entertainment features instead. The equipment rates of new vehicles vary greatly, therefore, from below 30% in Greece to over 90% in Sweden. In the main European markets, the picture is very different as well. Italy had a 31% equipment rate in 2005, UK 36%, France 42%, and Germany 72%

A key obstacle to better market penetration is a lack of knowledge about the benefits of ESC, as shown by a recent Eurobarometer poll. ACEA has from the beginning actively supported the consumer related activities from the Commission’s eSafety Programme and has joined the eSafety Communication Platform and subsequently the eSafety Aware Campaign.

“The event today is an excellent starting point for a Europe-wide awareness campaigns for ESC”, said Hodac. “Other activities need to follow to bring the benefits of ESC to the people in each market. ESC is not something one can touch like a seatbelt. ESC needs to be experienced, practiced, seen, and compared, for example on road shows or during driving license training. Education and training can take away the fear of being at the mercy of technologies and on the other side make it clear that safety technologies are not there to encourage aggressive and unsafe driving behaviour.”

Over the last 30 years, the number of traffic casualties has been cut by half as the number of motor vehicles on the road has risen three-fold. This achievement has been accomplished mainly through improved vehicle safety features, such as seatbelts and ABS. To underline its long-standing, on-going commitment and efforts, the industry has signed the European Road Safety Charter last year.

Road safety is a shared responsibility. Around 95% of all accidents are due to pure drivers misjudgements and mistakes. The automotive industry will fulfil their part in further increasing the safety of Europe’s roads, and so must traffic law enforcement,

infrastructure design and driver behaviour. When combining efforts in an “integrated approach” involving all relevant parties, the EU objective of halving road casualties by 2010 is within reach.

ACEA represents the thirteen major European car, truck and bus manufacturers. They provide direct employment to 2.3 million people and support the job of another 10 million employees. Members are: BMW Group, DAF Trucks, DaimlerChrysler, FIAT, Ford of Europe, General Motors Europe, MAN Nutzfahrzeuge, Porsche, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Renault, Scania, Volkswagen and Volvo Trucks.

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