

eSafety Forum prepares for new political challenges and adopts Strategic Research Agenda

The 6th eSafety Forum Plenary Meeting was held in Brussels on 8th November 2006. It adopted the Strategic Research Agenda to be implemented under RTD Framework Programme 7, learned about changes in the policy setting in which the Forum is placed and gave green light for two new working groups.

Fabio Colasanti, Director-General of DG Information Society and Media of the European Commission, opened the Plenary Meeting. In his introductory remarks, he highlighted the evolution in the political environment in which the Forum is acting: the Forum is now the first pillar of the Intelligent Car Initiative. This strengthens its position and increases the importance of its coordination and consensus-building task. In addition, the essential role of ICT and eSafety for the transport sector and its competitiveness are nowadays clearly recognised. "ITS and eSafety are getting to the core of the EU and national transport policies."

DG Colasanti thanked the Forum and, in particular, its RTD Working Group for the elaboration of the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). The ideas it delivers already had a significant impact on the ITS part of Work Programme 2007/8 and, formally adopted later that day, will influence the research agenda throughout the 7th European RTD Framework Programme.

In her turn of opening remarks, **Ms Monica Sundström**, chairperson of ERTICO's Supervisory Board, underlined the need for a systematic approach to the implementation of eSafety systems. Three elements were crucial for this approach: the technology, the organisational model and societal conditions. Referring to the latter, she diagnosed the need to raise public awareness of the availability of eSafety systems and of their benefits and to look into incentives for the take-up of such systems.

Concluding the high-level opening statements, **Mr Ivan Hodac**, Secretary-General of the Association of European Car Manufacturers (ACEA), stressed the fact that ACEA was still waiting for the breakthrough in the commitment to eCall that is the signature of the eCall Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the British and German governments. He emphasized that ERTICO and ACEA had signed the MoU several years ago. ACEA would stay dedicated to eCall but not work on it alone.

Mr Rudolf Strohmeier, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Reding, gave a keynote address on ITS-related political developments. At the first Annual Event of the i2010 Initiative in Helsinki, in September, ITS (Intelligent Transport Systems) and Mobility were presented as belonging to the most promising applications of the Ubiquitous Information Society. However, as emphasised in Helsinki by Commissioner **Viviane Reding**, the key challenge remains to get users on board by showing the practical benefits of the Information Society.

eCall is a good example of such benefits. Regrettably, some Member States are slow in making the necessary infrastructure investments. According to Strohmeier, the Commission would not exclude European legislation if further efforts failed to bring eCall back on track. The current priority however is to take a much wider view on possible instruments for the deployment of eCall. Strohmeier mentioned the synergies study of the Trans European Networks, the new Competition and Innovation Programme (CIP), the Cohesion Funds and, last but not least, Pre-commercial Procurement.

Another instrument, in which the Commission is participating as observer, is the eSafety Communications Platform *eSafetyAware!*. Led by the FIA Foundation and with 31 partners so far, it aims at raising consumers' awareness of eSafety systems and their benefits. The first campaign, highlighting Electronic Stability Control (ESC), will be launched on the 8 May 2007. The subsequent one might focus on eCall. Both the "Eurobarometer studies on Users' attitudes towards intelligent safety systems in vehicles" are valuable sources of information for *eSafetyAware!*.

The adoption in June 2006 of the Mid-term Review of the White Paper on European Transport Policy was another political success cited by Strohmeier. For the first time the Mid-term Review recognises the contribution all modes, including road transport, are making to a cleaner and more efficient transportation system. The document also acknowledges the positive role of ICT and eSafety for safer, smarter and cleaner mobility in Europe. Based on the Mid-term Review, action is already taken in different fields of transport-related policies.

A second keynote address, *Meeting Europe's Challenges in Mobility and Sustainability in the Member States*, was delivered by the representative of Finland's EU presidency, **Mr Matti Roine** from the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Among other things, he confirmed the presidency's viewpoint that ITS was essential for the Knowledge Society. In Finland, there is wide support for eCall. That is why the country is taking steps for a real and committed eCall co-operation, namely the promotion of the single European emergency number 112 and its location-enhanced version E112, and the upgrading and modernising of the emergency centres. Roine underlined that eCall would be the first real European-wide telematic service. As all the other speakers, he regretted however that progress in the implementation of eCall was too slow, and said that faster advancement and stronger commitments were needed.

In the first part of the Strategy Session, the Forum Plenary was presented the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). Under the chairmanship of **Mr Ulf Palmquist** it had been put together by the eSafety RTD WG incorporating the results of the Commission services' consultation process with the research community on future RTD needs held earlier in 2006. In the debate that followed the presentation, **Ms Rosalie Zobel**, Director at DG INFSO, underlined that the SRA was not just a guideline for the Commission. Industry should also use it in their RTD efforts. In fact, it is a programme for all the eSafety research being done in universities, research labs, companies etc. Following the discussion, the Forum Plenary adopted the document as *Strategic Research Agenda ICT for Mobility*.

Strategy Session part two focused on the 3rd Commission Communication on eSafety "Bringing eCall back on track – Action Plan". The Communication was presented to Forum Members by **Mr Juhani Jääskeläinen**, Deputy Head of Unit 'ICT for Transport', DG INFSO. It had become necessary to draft a 3rd Communication because after the adoption by the European Parliament of its report on eCall a new communication was needed to report on the progress made in 2006. Some Member States are not on track with the investments enabling the rescue services to process eCalls. Due to these delays, ACEA had written a letter in which it said that without clear commitment from the Member States it would not take any further steps and, consequently, the Europe-wide implementation of eCall had already been put off for one year, to 2010. The Communication addresses these problems through actions for the Member States, including a time-table for infrastructure deployment, the quest for a renewed commitment from industry and actions facilitating the deployment of eCall to be taken by the Commission.

At the time of the eSafety Forum Plenary, the Communication had only been a draft. Meanwhile it was adopted by the Commission on 23 November and, after presentation by Ms Reding to the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, published on 11 December 2006.

Apart from the opening remarks, the keynote addresses and the Strategy Session, participants in the Forum Plenary listened to a presentation entitled

- *Reducing Market Introduction Risk through Code of Practice* (**Mr Jürgen Schwarz**, DaimlerChrysler),

and received updates on the following working groups:

- *eSafety Effects Database and Survey on Deployment* (**Mr Risto Kulmala**, VTT)
- *Real-time Travel Information (RTTI)* (**Mr Heinz Friedrichs**, Bosch)
- *International Co-operation* (**Mr Jacob Bangsgaard**, eSafetySupport)
- *Communications* (**Mr Uwe Daniel**, Bosch)
- *Digital Maps* (**Mr Rob van Essen**, Tele Atlas)
- *Service Oriented Architectures*
- *ICT for Clean Mobility*.

Both the last two working groups listed are new bodies. Their establishment was welcomed and approved by the members of the eSafety Forum Plenary meeting.

Participants also received the latest details on

- *eSafetyAware! – the eSafety Communication Platform* (**Ms Kristin Oxley**, eSafety Support)
- *The Intelligent Car Initiative* (**Mr Fabrizio Minarini**, European Commission)
- *The Commission Recommendation on HMI – the new European Statement of Principles* (**Ms Valérie Moutal**, European Commission)
- *Towards the Common Communications Architecture in Europe* (**Mr Karl-Oskar Proskawetz**, COMeSafety).

Comprehensive information on eSafety and all its activities can also be found on http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/esafety/index_en.htm .

If your need for information goes beyond the content of the eSafetySupport and the aforementioned web sites, please send an e-mail to eSafetySupport (info@esafetysupport.org) or Mr Juhani Jääskeläinen, European Commission, Deputy Head of Unit 'ICT for Transport' in DG Information Society and Media (info-esafety@ec.europa.eu).