

The foundation and first results of Traffic Psychology International of the DGVP

Don M. DeVol, Margit Herle, Jürgen Merz, Karin Müller & Petr Zámečník

In 2009 the boards of the **DGVP** (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Verkehrspsychologie - German Society for Traffic Psychology) and the **VdTÜV** (Verband der Technischen Überwachungsvereine - Association of Technical Inspection Agencies) decided to form a task force for international affairs called **Traffic Psychology International** (TPI). The founding members are

Dr. Don DeVol (member of DGVP, VdTÜV and ICADTS),

Margit Herle (member of DGVP),

Jürgen Merz (member of VdTÜV and ICADTS) and

Dr. Karin Müller (member of the DGVP board and former member of EFPA).

Since many years the DGVP is committed to the general goal of implementing and establishing traffic psychology measures as traffic safety elements within the German legislation. To achieve this, the DGVP agreed on assuring already established psychological measures through scientific research and evaluation studies. The DGVP supports research projects in the field of traffic psychology and conducts in cooperation with the DGVM (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Verkehrsmedizin - German Society for Traffic Medicine) scientific congresses and symposia.

The long term intention is to expand the range of traffic psychological services on the basis of new research results and to consult the legislative authorities in the stage of planning changes of laws and regulations. Since however, many of the laws and regulations in the EU member states are at least influenced if not even determined by the European legislation, the DGVP decided to try to transpose their above described long term intention onto a European level.

One example of how the field of psychology is more or less neglected within the European traffic legislation is the annex III of the 3rd EU driver's license directive "Minimum Standards of Physical and Mental Fitness for Driving a Power-Driven Vehicle". Within the chapter concerning it is only referred to the traffic medicine expertise (the terms "psychological" are added by the authors):

ALCOHOL

*14. Alcohol consumption constitutes a major danger to road safety. In view of the scale of the problem, the medical **and psychological** professions must be very vigilant.*

Group 1:

*14.1. Driving licenses shall not be issued to, or renewed for, applicants or drivers who are dependent on alcohol or unable to refrain from drinking and driving. After a proven period of abstinence and subject to authorized medical **and psychological** opinion and regular medical check-ups, driving licenses may be issued to, or renewed for, applicant or drivers who have in the past been dependent on alcohol.*

Group 2:

*14.2. The competent medical **and psychological** authority shall give due consideration to the additional risks and dangers involved in the driving of vehicles covered by the definition of this group.*

On the other hand, it must be noted that on July 8, 2011 in the name of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism Dr. Dieter-Lebrecht Koch handed in the Report on European road safety 2011-2020. In the chapter "Explanatory Statement" under the heading of "Road behavior" it is said that

*EU citizens have a right to a high level of road safety (and) there is also a need for **psychological measures** designed to change the behavior of road users who consistently breach traffic rules*

In consideration of this situation, the DGVP Traffic Psychology International group defined its intention and goals. The TPI group intends to represent continuously the DGVP at scientific and political events on an international level and beyond these occasions to contact organizations such as CIECA, EFPA or ETSC. The TPI group aims at participating in European research projects in order to find common perspectives and strategies concerning traffic-psychological issues and to define standards as one prerequisite for implementing psychological measures. By all means, ultimately the group needs to receive recognition as a European expert group on psychological issues of traffic safety. These goals can be achieved for example in the following areas of interest:

- Introduction of minimum standards for drivers with high responsibility (i.e. dangerous cargo and bus drivers)
- Definition of psychological specifications for a common EU-regulation of alcohol-interlock-systems
- Development of a traffic-psychological concept to ensure the safe mobility of elderly people in Europe
- Introduction of a harmonized point system as one prerequisite for implementing psychological measures
- Definition of standards of education and qualification for European Traffic Psychologists

In 2010/11 the Traffic Psychology group started working and has to date indulged already in many activities:

1. The group organized the workshop "Create the Future of Traffic Psychology in Europe" and had the idea that traffic psychologists in every member state have the chance and the possibility to stand up for the traffic safety benefits of the to date developed psychological measures. Looking at the upcoming challenges for the European traffic safety system one can state that none of the member states has fully taken advantage of the resources of psychological traffic safety measures. The Workshop I. was organized in Berlin; the Workshop II. took place in Bratislava; the Workshop III. Will be organized in Vienna.
2. The TPI group wanted to initiate a communication network among traffic psychologists of other member states. The interest of the participating colleagues in sharing their experiences with the different stakeholders in traffic safety of their home countries was tremendous. Especially, information on new developments in legislation concerning traffic psychology was exchanged.
3. The dissemination of state of the art information on traffic psychology from all the different institutions all over Europe was another intention of the workshops. Therefore, presentations were held on the following topics:
 - PASS: A European model of assessment and rehabilitation of driver aptitude
 - Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the European Community
 - SPEED-02: On the efficiency of a psychological rehabilitation program

- Quality prerequisites for institutions of driver assessment and rehabilitation programs in Germany
 - EVA-MPU: Relapse rate of drink-drivers after medical and psychological assessment of fitness to drive
4. Two further activities may be described in more detail: 1. The European research project ðPhaetonö and 2. The questionnaire on the status of Traffic Psychology in the EU.

The European research project ðPhaetonö:



There are 7 partner organizations from 6 EU-member states that handed in a grant application for the European research project ðPhaetonö which are presented in the table below. The aims and objectives of the project ðPhaetonö are to help to improve the work in the field of **Driver Improvement** by providing new and adapting/improving existing training materials.

SALVUS	Slovakia	private medical facility + training center
KTP	Czech Republic	non-profit organization for adult education
FACTUM	Austria	private research institute for traffic psychology + sociology
TÜV Süd	Germany	private organization for driver improvement
CDV	Czech Republic	public transport research center
RTTEMA	Latvia	university research institute for transport + traffic psychology
PRU-UVEG	Spain	university research unit for traffic + safety psychology

The aim of this project is to help improve work in the driver improvement area by providing new and adapting and improving existing training materials. Usually, organisations who offer courses have to show that they have acceptable materials at disposal, but then daily routine and work accumulation prevent systematic work with these materials. After a certain time it now turns out that many of these materials are still usable, but could be considerably improved ó among other things modernized (making use of ITS etc.). This again would effectively and efficiently support the work of trainers, the education of new trainers, also in "new" countries, i.e. in countries where there are no courses foreseen, or carried out, yet.

Besides the didactic development within the driver improvement area, the project follows an important general aim to promote the area of traffic psychology as a highly potential field for the establishment of several new occupations or partial specialisations in many European

countries, such as traffic therapists, traffic doctors, etc. The overarching goal can be split up as follows:

- To create a training toolkit to be used within the educative part of driver rehabilitation measures, mainly driver improvement courses in the countries of the partnership and in countries represented by the associated partners
- To establish a platform for further development of interactive training materials which would cover the entire field of traffic psychology and traffic safety
- To contribute to the development of strategies for the future cooperation among traffic psychology institutions in Europe
- To contribute to the international cooperation aiming to establish an European framework with a common approach in key policy and strategy making
- To promote the toolkit among institutions providing rehabilitation, among psychologists and providers of such measures
- To raise the awareness about the driver rehabilitation measures among both the expert and general public and to promote existing rehabilitation options
- To raise the interest in e.g. defensive driving and civil responsible driving style in general via interactive media
- To provide small, manageable sections to help to organize and absorb information better, which till now in existing materials is not considered continuously

The project outcomes can also help to define a European approach towards the rehabilitation of drivers with problematic driving history and create a common training product to be used Europe-wide by traffic psychologists and other rehabilitation course providers. The European added value consists of establishing a common platform and unifying the theoretical and conceptual framework of traffic psychology in Europe. The decision on the grant application will probably be taken in June, 2012.

The questionnaire on the status of Traffic Psychology in the EU:

This questionnaire was developed by the TPI Group and aims at finding out more about the application and work-field of traffic psychology in various European countries. Altogether 18 participants from 14 states took part in the survey. There were 3 main topics that were dealt with in the questionnaire:

1. Qualification
2. Organizations
3. Legislation

In the table below first rough results are presented:

QUALIFICATION: Opportunity to receive a training in traffic psychology at universities:	No opportunity to receive a training in traffic psychology at universities:
Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden	Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Austria

ORGANIZATION: Professional associations for traffic psychologists exist in:	No professional associations for traffic psychologists exist in:
Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Germany, Austria, Switzerland	Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands
LEGISLATION: Laws concerning traffic psychology:	No laws concerning traffic psychology:
Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy	Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands

The TPI group believes that it makes very much sense to fully take advantage of the resources of psychological traffic safety measures and to profit from the field of traffic psychology in order to advance the European traffic safety system. Therefore, what Traffic Psychology needs is

- recognition as a science based field within the traffic safety system
- implementation of evaluated psychological measures, i.e. in assessment and rehabilitation
- communication between EU-member states and between different traffic safety disciplines
- promotion of education and research in traffic psychology on a European level

Currently, the TPI group consists of members representing the following 9 EU member states

Austria
Belgium
Czech Republic

France
Germany
Great Britain

Italy
Poland
Slovakia

who are ready to take responsibility and determined to contribute their share to traffic safety in Europe and therefore needs the support of all stakeholders in traffic safety. Colleagues who would like to participate in the TPI activities or even take part in the workshops or project groups should please get in contact with the group by email: trafficpsychology-eu@dgv-verkehrspsychologie.de