

Report of the Vienna workshop on assessment of non-DUI drivers.

General remarks on the presentation

Recidivism is a kind of habitude. Behavior is easier to change when there is a negative consequence or feeling. If there is a more positive connotation (risk could be very attractive – sensation seeking tendency) it's very difficult to change.

People with a lot of traffic offences have probably also a lot of 'difficult' behavior in other situations than traffic.

Culture background is also an important factor (see level 5 of the GDE-matrix). And with the immigration flow, this could be an important issue in the coming years for Europe.

Overview of existing psychological assessment systems.

GERMANY: The MPU or 'idiotentest'

During 15 years it was based on more projective techniques like the Rorschach test, extended with interview techniques and observations. Afterwards it was put aside because it was going too deep into personality testing and it gave the impression that it criminalized traffic offenders.

MPU for this kind of offenders contains a short medical screening and a more elaborated psychological testing. Most of the MPU's give a positive report: 'apt to drive', but from a psychological point of view most of the results must be 'negative', but there is not enough 'hard' evidence to do so. Results on skill-tests (like reaction speed, risk perception, ...) are very good for most of these people, but these high scores correlate also with recidivism rates and overestimation of the own capacities. A lot of these offenders are also very interested by technical aspects.

On the basis of the test results, 50% of the candidates are advised to follow a DI-course. On the other hand there is not much evidence to indicate a positive effect on this kind of courses (non-DUI offenders; DI-courses for DUI-offenders have, on the other hand, a lot of positive outcomes). Non-DUI offenders do not feel enough negative consequences of their behavior, on the contrary, they receive a lot of positive consequences most of the time.

AUSTRIA:

There are no fixed scenarios for testing non-DUI offenders. The general idea is to test the 'compliance with rules'. This assessment must give some evidence about personality (BIG5), emotionality in driving, risky behavior in traffic and in life (financial, physical, ...). Margit indicates that there is an integrated system with tests and courses in Hungary.

PORTUGAL

Topics are the personality structure, relationship with the environment, ... People have to recognize they have a problem, otherwise they can't get involved in a change process.

Results of the discussion groups on cases.

Case 1 ANNICK



Female, age 20 – student

Hit & run accident, only material damage (parked car). She had a probationers driver's license and was driving during restricted time (Saturday night)

No criminal or traffic offences in the past.

Her explication: *"It was an important event—I had to be there and I had no other possibility than to take my own car. I had to go there. When I came back, the road was a little bit slippery and I must make an emergency break because I thought there was a cat running over the street. At that time I loss a bit of control over the car and crashed into a car. I was in panic! I didn't know what to do. There was no one else in the street, so nobody was hurt and I didn't know who was the owner of the car. I was completely "out of senses". So I drove further home to calm down. The next morning, after talking to my parents, I decide to go to the police to make things in order. I didn't mean to run away, but the panic hold me in his grip".*

Issues for assessment:

- Find out if her version of the story is true: other offences at that time (alcohol, drugs, speeding...) What happened the day before and just after the accident?
- What's her status of emotional stability? (BIG5)
- Status of emotional development? What's her personal history, how is she dealing with friends, family, school.... Can she deal with emotions and stress?

'Cut-off points'

- Alcohol or drug problems
- (extreme) emotional immaturity or instability
- No willingness or possibility to learn from this experience.

Case 2 DIEDERICK



Male, 41 years old – CEO

Speeding with motorbike on the highway (25 km/h above limit. It's his 5th ticket in 3 months' time.

No criminal record, several minor speeding offences (20 each year).

His explanation: "I am a very good and experienced driver. I have a very important job and I have to run a company with more than 100 workers on the pay roll. They depend on me, so I must be quick and try to be on time. Speeding is not dangerous, if you can drive well. So there is no problem. I can pay the fine; it's calculated in my bookkeeping".

Issues for assessment:

- His lifestyle; he drives as he works? What is his general strategy for success? Can he make a difference between business and driving? = more a moral judgement...
- Does he solve everything with his 'money'? Can he imagine things that cannot be bought?
- What's his experience in traffic with accidents or near accidents and how did he deal with responsibility?
- Overconfidence?
- Does he see a possibility that the 'danger' could also come from others – by his behavior he counts on the fact that everyone else is following the rules....

'Cut-off points'

- Anti-social personality (detectable in one assessment session and thereby not a good criteria?)
- Is there a psychological factor that is strong enough to withdraw his license, or is it only on juridical evidence that a judge can decide to ban him from driving?

Case 3 HICHAM



male, age 26 sales man

Speeding offence on a highway near road works – 70 km/h above the limit (140 instead of 70)

No criminal offences, 8 tickets for speeding and 2 for using cell phone (not hands free)

His explanation: "It was a calm night: no traffic... No one was working on the scene. So what's the problem? I was driving as usual."

Issues for assessment

- How does he deal with rules and regulations?
- What about the other life domains?
- What about his emotional intelligence, lack of empathy, self-reflection, ...
- Hazard perception: hazard recognizing, choosing the right (safe) response, (over-) estimation of his own capacities,...

'Cut-off points'

- General noncompliance with all kind of rules, or just a non-acceptance of speed rules?
- No competence of self-reflection
- Extreme sensation seeking tendency without inhibition competences.

Case 4 JURGEN



male, age 38 – sportsman (professional)

dangerous and aggressive driving (tailgating, speeding, frequently changing lanes, using emergency lane to pass a slow driving truck).

No criminal offences; 4 previous tickets for speeding.

His explanation: "I can't stand people who can't drive. They are the cause of all the trouble in traffic. They are the reason for the traffic jams. How is it possible they have a license, or is it a license to kill? That's making me very nervous. They have to clear the road, or to speed up and follow the traffic flow. I have no time to be patient with them. I try to make my own way, to pass them as soon as possible".

Issues for assessment:

- How is he dealing with rules? In traffic the same as in football?
- How strong is his tendency for competitive and aggressive behavior?
- BIG5: social conflicts, impulsivity, stress coping, introspection, ...
- Emotional intelligence: empathy possible? How strong is his 'me and them' feeling?
- Hazard perception: hazard recognizing, choosing the right (safe) response, (over-) estimation of his own capacities,...

'Cut-off points'

- General noncompliance with all kind of rules, or just a non-acceptance of speed rules?
- No competence of self-reflection
- Extreme sensation seeking tendency without inhibition competences.
- Borderline personality?

Case 5: MARK



Male, age 31 clerk

Aggressive assault (blocked a bike at an intersection, left his car, threw the bike on the road in front of his car, slapped the biker in his face. Drove over the bike.

No criminal offences, 4 tickets for minor speeding offences.

His explanation: "Suddenly a cyclist came on the carriageway, just before my car. My friend, who never wears her safety belt, smashed her head against the window. The cyclist laughed at her! I got out of my car, and pulled the man from his bicycle. First, I hit him in the face and then, I drove over his bike. Ok, I will pay the damage, but what did he have to complain about, the coward? Yes, it's right: I have to control myself. But he is not allowed to laugh either!".

Issues for assessment:

- Coping with stress, frustration,... also in other life domains
- How strong is the tendency for aggressive reactions?
- Self-reflection competences: can he take some emotional distance from that what happened? Can he see his one role in the incident?
- Moral development

'Cut-off points':

- Serious aggressiveness problem
- High risk of recidivism, especially in traffic situations
- No willingness or possibility to learn how to cope with stress and frustration

Case 6: MARTHA



female, age 52 – peasant woman – no permit

driving a car without a license – no other offences.

No criminal offences, second time that she was caught driving without a license.

Her explanations: “I have no driver’s license because it is very uncommon that I drive, only when my husband is not in the possibility to drive. I can drive, very good actually: never have any tickets or accidents. It ‘s not worth to take all the trouble to get a license.

Issues for assessment:

Social awareness.

Is there an assessment necessary? If she want to drive, she has to follow a driver school and complete the examinations.

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