Submission by ECMT to the 3rd Pan-European Transport Conference

Declaration on “Vulnerable” Users

adopted in Berlin, 21-22 April, 1997
DECLARATION ON “VULNERABLE” TRANSPORT USERS

1. The development of an efficient and coherent pan-European transport system should be of benefit to all users. ECMT considers it as its obligation in this connection to attach special attention to groups of transport users who risk being overlooked in transport policy. These ‘vulnerable’ users include:

− Elderly people: they constitute a large, and over the next few decades, increasing part of the total population. (In many cases it is this group which is seriously affected by road accidents.) Maintaining their mobility by ensuring their access to transport facilities and their safety when using them is an essential prerequisite for their integration into social and cultural life.

− People who are impaired or restricted with regard to their mobility: they constitute a considerable and growing share of the population of all ECMT countries. For them, the decisive criterion for their mobility is, in particular, their access to transport means and related facilities.

− Children: they think, feel and act differently from adults and are especially at risk in transport. Although, happily, the number of accidents with children has been decreasing for some years, too many children are still involved in road accidents.

− Adolescents: they are exposed to special risks due to their lack of experience in traffic matters and their readiness to take risks. Adolescent users of motor bicycles are involved, to a very high degree, in road accidents.

− Pedestrians: all transport users are pedestrians as each trip starts and ends on foot. For elderly people and children, walking is, in many cases, the only option. Encouraging and supporting walking through safe and secure provisions is an important objective.

− Users of two or three-wheeled vehicles (bicycles, motor bicycles, motorcycles): they are exposed to special risks owing, among other factors, to the characteristic features of the vehicles (low stability, lower passive protection). In relation to their participation in traffic, cyclists and the riders of motor bicycles are more than proportionally involved in road accidents.
2. The ECMT Ministers consider the creation of safe and accessible mobility for these more vulnerable transport users as an important objective of their transport policy.

The starting points for the development of transport for these groups must, therefore, be:

- their special needs and requirements;
- their accident risks and circumstances;
- the visible demographic developments over the next few decades.

3. The Council recalls that during the last few years it has dealt with aspects of the problems faced by these vulnerable transport users several times, e.g.:

- several published reports, recommendations and resolutions on Transport for People with Mobility Handicaps;
- Resolution (No. 91/3) on the Improvement of Road Safety for the Elderly;
- Recommendations by the Joint ECMT/Council of Europe Conference on Road Safety Education for Young Children and Teenagers.

The Council urges all countries to implement these resolutions/recommendations if this has not yet been done.

4. The Council notes some progress:

- the review of progress on Persons with Mobility Handicaps (CEMT/CM(95)18) shows that this subject is being given greater importance and that the access to some transport means has been significantly improved;

- the 1994 Joint ECMT/Council of Europe Conference on Road Safety Education for Young Children and Teenagers has shown that the general approach was becoming similar in all of the then 31 ECMT Member countries;

- in road safety, policies and measures adopted in many Member countries during the last few years have resulted in reductions in casualties and fatalities.
5. Nevertheless, the Council is aware of the fact that much remains to be done. On the one hand, access to the different transport means must be improved, and on the other, safety needs to be enhanced. Actions in different areas according to the group in question is needed.

- It must be the aim to make the overall system more accessible to people with mobility handicaps (transport means, infrastructure, stops, terminals, operational procedures, the transmission of information, training of staff).
- For all groups, an integrated approach to safety is required. This includes, behavioural improvements by all traffic users, the shaping of infrastructure in line with safety requirements, technical safety of vehicles as well as education and information campaigns.

The Council is aware of the fact that it would be unrealistic to promote one single model applicable to all cases. It will be necessary to develop different strategies which consider and integrate the geographical, economic, social, sociological, cultural, administrative and procedural differences. What is important is to build on existing good practice through continuous exchange of experience concerning the different approaches.

6. Therefore, the Council will continue to adhere to the ECMT approach, this being:

- to take a forward-looking approach to policy development;
- to give recommendations to governments or the competent organisations/institutions on the basis of which they can develop and apply suitable and appropriate regulations of their own;
- to contribute, by way of co-operation with the directly involved bodies and organisations, to developing strategies to bring about changes, including behavioural ones, which cannot be achieved by legal provisions alone.

7. At its Session in Berlin, the Council has taken the following measures.

Adoption of:

- a comprehensive resolution on Persons with Mobility Handicaps to bring together the substantial work in this area and to give it a new impetus;
- a resolution on reciprocal recognition of parking facilities for people with mobility handicaps;
- a report and resolution on safe cycling.
8. The Council confirms its intention to make swift progress with the work contained in its work programme 1996-99 and, if necessary, with the follow-up action. This includes:

- an examination of how and where legislation can help to improve access to the transport system;

- an examination of how best the whole transport chain can be made accessible, including practical work with operators and people with disabilities on how the improvements in access can be built upon;

- preparation of a ‘good practice’ guide on accessibility;

- preparation of a report on policy issues in connection with the ageing population;

- preparation of a report on the safety of pedestrians;

- preparation of a report on the safety of motorcyclists and moped riders.

9. The Council asks the Deputies to progress speedily with this work, where appropriate in close co-operation with other organisations.