Road Safety Communication on Alcohol in the European Union: Presentation of European Televised Spot Ads

Michel Ledru

Deputy Director responsible for Road Safety Communications, Ministry of Transport, La Grande Arche, 92055 Paris la defense Cedex 04, France

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with road safety communication within the European Union. The part of such communication is always important, either on a national or at local levels. According to the countries, the authorities in charge of road communication are governmental bodies or associations. The strategies for communication remain much varied: some countries, following surveys of opinion, have put in force communication schemes over several years, while others do communicate in accordance with opportunities, without any pre-set strategy. The tune of messages can be more or less touch: some states do not hesitate showing actual accidents and victims, and their studies prove efficiency of such messages. Others do refuse them and prefer communicating objective facts without showing accidents themselves. Their surveys on the matter also make appear the efficiency of tough and “realistic” pictures of accidents in themselves and of their victims. The talk shall be completed by TV/video spots and slides.

INTRODUCTION

For several years now, a number of European countries have adopted a real road safety communications strategy. It is no longer a question of an advertising campaign now and then, but a continuous effort with national and local campaigns that involve not just advertising but press relations, distribution of documents, etc. Similarly, alcohol at the wheel is often at the centre of the fight against alcohol abuse in general. In France as in Great Britain, anti-alcohol abuse campaigns have fallen into the domain of road safety, when originally, that was not the case.

Given the language problem in the European Union (11 different languages), it is not possible to make an overall European campaign using billboards or the radio. But a television image is more easily understood.

THE CAMPAIGNS ON THE DANGERS OF ALCOHOL AT THE WHEEL

In all countries one finds similar themes (the full glass that breaks, the driving licence that disappears, etc.).
CAMPAIGNS ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

These are more recent. They are more frequent in Spain (very hard images) and in Great Britain (very hard text, with a child).

CAMPAIGNS ON LEGISLATION CONCERNING DRUNKEN DRIVING

These are common to all countries that change the authorised limit of alcohol in their system of punishment. Messages may indicate either the threshold (Belgium, France), or encourage self-control (France), or yet again, show that one can drink without going beyond the limit.

CAMPAIGNS ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE DRUNK DRIVER

These may insist on the loss of control on the part of someone who has drunk or the risk-taking factor, or lack of awareness. They are to be found in all countries and some are specifically aimed at youth (Germany).

CONCLUSION

Campaigns against drinking and driving have diversified and are aimed at all categories of the population yet providing basic information as to the risks of dangerous reactions.

The same trend is true of radio and billboard messages.

Different means are employed in most countries to aid self-control: chemicals (balloons) or electronic alcohol tests, self-control scales or grills, without really having assessed their merits, for the time being at least (except at work and in companies where it has a great success).