European Night Without Accidents – A peer-to-peer action against driving under influence with effective elements

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Abstract

Background
Since 3 years FACTUM participates, as the partner in Vienna, in a Europe-wide action which aims at promoting road safety, at increasing public awareness and at showing to youngsters that drinking and driving do not mix: the European Night Without Accidents (ENWA). Created 1995 in Belgium by ‘Responsible young drivers’ (RYD) it covers the whole European Union. It is financially supported by the European Community. This year the action will be carried out in each Austrian federal state and will be cofinanced by the Austrian Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT).

Aims
Main aim of the campaign was the promotion of road safety focusing on young drivers, increasing public awareness and showing to youngsters that drinking and driving do not mix. The goal is to meet the youngsters in their own world. The presentation will provide an overview over the campaign elements, and will establish a link with the state of the art of campaigning according to the criteria of the EC project CAST how to carry out campaigns.

Methods
Young volunteers, positioned outside discotheques should encourage groups of youngsters to choose a “designated driver”, who would stay sober and drive the other ones home safely. These “designated drivers” receive a bracelet, to be recognised when leaving the discotheque. Using a breathalyzer it could be made sure that they really are sober. This peer-to-peer action allows communicating more directly and successfully.

Results
In the year 2012, at the three discotheques involved in Vienna, three volunteers at each nightclub have been present, and 200 youngsters were approached. 75% of all who agreed to be a “designated driver” and stay sober, could stick to this (this percentage is in accordance with the average outcome of all participating member states). The others could be convinced by the volunteers not to drive.

Discussion and conclusions
The campaign was meaningful and the approach, namely with use of the peer-to-peer communication has been effective in achieving the goals. The procedures applied in the frame of the ENWA are in line with the recent state of the art regarding campaigning.
Introduction

The European Night Without Accident (ENWA) was created after observing the huge number of deathly accidents where young people were involved especially during weekends. The project “Responsible Young Drivers” (RYD) wanted to react.

For the first time in 1995, RYD organised a specific action to increase public awareness and to show youngsters that drinking and driving do not match. The ENWA was born. In the meantime it is co-funded by the European Commission D.G. Mobility & Transport.

The goal

The goal is to meet young people in their own world, on their grounds and communicate with them directly; these are the elements, which meet the targets of a good road safety communication campaigning (according to the Manual for Designing, Implementing and Evaluating Road Safety Communication Campaigns, Delhomme et al 2009).

The concept of ENWA is that young volunteers, all between 17 and 29 are positioned outside discotheques or nightclubs. There they should encourage groups of youngsters to choose a designated driver, who would stay sober and drive the other ones home safely. Persons who volunteer to act as designated drivers receive a bracelet so that they can be recognised when leaving the discotheque. It should be made sure and proven that they really are sober when leaving the discotheque.

From 1995 on, once a year on the third Saturday of October, RYD have been present in many nightclubs in Belgium (~40). Step by step other EU countries joined and in the meantime ENWA covers the whole European Union. In Austria, from 2010 to 2012 the campaign took place at three well known discothèques in Vienna, organised by the research institute FACTUM OG.

How the action took place

The action took place in two phases. First, the volunteers, all between 17 and 29, were settled in each nightclub. The team of volunteers welcomed the drivers at the entrance and encouraged them to take up a responsible attitude behind the wheel. They encouraged each group to choose a “designated driver” who would commit him/herself to stay sober in order to be able to drive a car, later on. If they participate, the volunteers ask them to wear a bracelet to be recognizable as a symbol of their commitment.

Second, when the “designated driver” leaves the nightclub, he/she has the opportunity to voluntarily undergo a breathalyzer test to check if the commitment was kept. Also, a sample of drivers was asked to try a drug test, of course on a voluntary basis. In this way they could prove to their friends and passengers that they are “clean”. If this was the case, the “designated driver” was rewarded with some gifts offered by our partners and sponsors. If not, the person was encouraged to leave his/her car on the side or to entrust the car to a friend who had not drunk any alcohol nor taken any drugs.
In all cases it should be avoided to send a negative message. On the contrary, all volunteers working in the campaign always tried to discuss with the group so they would find the most reasonable solution to return home safely.

When the “designated drivers” left the nightclub, they could voluntarily have a breath analysis made (volunteers had breathalysers with them), in order to check if they still were legally allowed driving. If the analysis showed that this was the case the “designated drivers” were rewarded with some gifts offered by sponsors. If not, the volunteers would encourage them to let their car parked on the side or to hand over the keys to a friend who had not drunk any alcoholic beverage.

**Outcome**

In 2012, during the European Night Without Accident, more than 776 volunteers were present in about 142 nightclubs located in 23 EU Member States. In Austria, at the three discotheques involved in Vienna, where three volunteers at each nightclub have been present, 200 youngsters could be approached before entering the clubs. 124 bracelets were distributed during the evening. 81 who had taken the bracelets came back before 4.00 in the morning to do the breathalyzer tests (i.e. before our assistants left). Out of these 81 respondents, 70 (75%) were sober. This is in accordance to most other countries where the mean percentage of sober youngsters lay at 82% (see: http://www.europeannightwithoutaccident.eu/enwa-2012.php).

Interestingly, there were many more who wanted to use the breathalyzer and find out their status concerning alcohol. However, they did not officially take part in the action because most of them came without a car. Anyway this interest in the action was an important sign that the campaign was meaningful and the approach, namely with use of the peer-to-peer communication has been useful in achieving goals.

![Figure 1: Action ENWA and campaign material in front of discotheque.](image)
Most of those who had drunk alcohol were below 0.5%. Only one had more than 1.0%. However, as in Austria young drivers who still have a preliminary driving licence (which is the case for two years after passing the exam) are only allowed a BAC < 0.1 any BAC > 0 was noted as “not sober”.

If youngsters were sober at the end of the night they were given small gifts (cakes, safety jackets, etc.), information leaflets and a one-way promille tester. If they were not sober there was a discussion between volunteers and youngsters how they could make their way back home. As both discotheques are situated close to subways, and taxis were standing close to the entrances it was easy to show them a safe way to get back home.

**Cooperation with night club owners, authorities and press**

The nightclub owners have been estimated as very cooperative and interested in the traffic safety of their clients. They accepted the campaign to be carried out in front of their nightclub already across three years.

In 2012 authorities of some districts in the vicinity of the nightclubs have shown interest in the action and supported it with some amount of money so that more posters and leaflets could be printed out.

The press was informed extensively before and after the event, which should contribute to raise public awareness. Basic materials like guidelines for press releases had been provided by RYD in advance, in order to make the project more homogeneous.

**Discussion and conclusions regarding efficient campaigning**

Based on previous definitions, road safety campaigns are defined by the CAST (http://www.cast-eu.org/) consortium (EU-project CAST Campaigns and Awareness-Raising Strategies in Traffic Safety, Delhomme et al 2009) as:

“Purposeful attempts to inform, persuade, or motivate people in view of changing their beliefs and/or behaviour in order to improve road safety as a whole or in a specific, well-defined large audience, typically within a given time period by means of organised communication activities involving specific media channels often combined with interpersonal support and/or other supportive actions such as enforcement, education, legislation, enhancing personal commitment, rewards, etc”.

Campaigns are assumed to be more likely to succeed if they tackle only one, well-defined theme and select a specific target audience. Moreover, any campaign should be based on extensive research and relevant theoretical models, which help not only in identifying the main predictors of the problem behaviour but also in designing the campaign message. It is also necessary to understand whether or not the behaviour is intentional.

Next, it is important to understand the motives behind the unsafe behaviour as a starting point for the social marketing framework that was applied to influencing the target groups’ behaviour. A major requirement is that researchers, decision-makers and practitioners work closely together to make the campaign a success.
According to CAST, the effects of any campaign should be shared with a large audience, by means of a final report, publications, presentations etc.. Systematic reporting on past campaigns and collecting feedback can provide valuable input for future initiatives. Furthermore, evaluation activities, e.g. in the frame of meta-analyses, should be carried out in order to assess the success of any campaign and to identify key elements likely to lay the foundation for such a success.

In the frame of ENWA all these topics have been taken into consideration. Based on research about traffic accident statistics as well as methods concerning peer-to-peer education, the message of the RYD is simple and clear - “Young people convince other young people about the importance of responsible behaviour behind the wheel”; “responsibility” in this case is connected to alcohol consumption. The message is credible, with young people as the campaign personnel who forward it to other young drivers. Peers use to understand motives and attitudes of group members of their own age easier and are more accepted by them. The method used is insisting on the need to modify young driver’s attitude as well as behaviour “on the spot”. This seems to be one promising way to obtain permanent results. To compare the results of the evenings within the member states who participate and across the years evaluation material is provided by RYD. Further on publications about the campaign and the results are a must within the ENWA since the beginning of the project. Participating institutions (NGOs, research institutes and practitioners) work together with decision-makers and stakeholders. All these parts can be taken as signs of an efficient campaign according to the suggestions of CAST.

References

