



PAVING THE WAY TO A SAFER FUTURE...

SLAIN final event highlights transnational project's achievements

SLAIN (Saving Lives Assessing and Improving TEN-T Road Network Safety) the two-year European Commission CEF-funded project with the aim of extending the skills and knowledge base of partners in performing network-wide road assessments, came to an end on Thursday 4 March with a in-depth, four-hour online event featuring keynote speeches from the likes of DG MOVE and CEDR, with invaluable contributions from every project partner and a final contribution from outgoing EuroRAP General Secretary Lina Konstantinopoulou.

Expertly organised and hosted by Project Co-ordinators EuroRAP, the final event offered an opportunity for European Policy makers, autoclubs, public authorities, industry and experts to find out how the SLAIN project has paved the way for future actions that will integrate Road Assessment Programmes in Europe, with a focus on saving lives. In total, the audience heard from 20 speakers from Belgium, the UK, Italy, Spain, Catalonia, Croatia, Greece and Australia (represented by iRAP CEO Rob McInerney), sharing policy perspectives and recommendations, and network-wide road assessment results. These included focuses on Connected & Autonomous Vehicle readiness, star ratings and investment plans, crash risk maps and the implementation of RISM (Road Infrastructure Safety Management) legislation, together with an insightful presentation from the European Investment Bank.

First keynote speaker Matthew Baldwin, DG MOVE's Deputy Director General, struck a somewhat sombre opening note (that thankfully was not in keeping with the rest of the event) with an alarming statistic – towards the end of 2020 deaths from road accidents were at a remarkably similar order of magnitude to deaths from Covid-19 globally. Baldwin's hope was that once Coronavirus becomes a thing of the past that "road safety will be viewed as a chronic pandemic that requires concerted, global action." Unlike Covid-19, however, a vaccine to drastically reduce road deaths already exists.

Yiannis Kefalogiannis, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure & Transportation for the Hellenic Government outlined his country's first "concrete, detailed, holistic road safety action plan" through administrative and legislative initiatives and proposals. One of SLAIN's goals was to engender the idea of "joined-up" road assessment programmes and Greece's approach to a "pandemic" that saw 65 road deaths per million inhabitants, one of the highest in Europe, is testament to the validity of the work being carried out by not only the nine SLAIN project members but by the road safety sector as a whole.

Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR) Secretary General Steve Philipps highlighted the vitally important role of collaborative projects such as SLAIN in helping to achieve road safety targets. "We need the projects to extend the skills and knowledge base of our partners. As we emerge from Covid, even the NRAs who have benefitted from

increased budgets and investment are highlighting staff resources as one of their key impediments.” This gives CEDR a new impetus to help develop the necessary skills through the various cooperative projects, he said. The achievements of EC projects can’t always be measured in tangible terms and SLAIN’s legacy will be manifold.

Advocacy followed by action was the theme of EuroRAP Chair Ferry Smith’s address. With critical and dedicated funding in place for the implementation of road safety measures at the local and regional levels, Smith maintained that at the national level it was not the same story. “Infrastructure is key to improving road safety and EuroRAP is addressing those challenges by developing evidence-based innovation tools – a giant step forward, but infrastructure innovation needs to be backed by policy.” Covid restrictions have seen local governments encourage their citizens to travel by bicycle or on foot but appropriate safety measures need to be implemented to protect the increase in the numbers of vulnerable road users.

“National programmes, bespoke for each country, and projects such as SLAIN, are key tools in the sharing of training, knowledge and experience.”

SLAIN may have come to end – but the work has just started.

<http://eurorap.org/slain-project/>

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