

## SUCCESSFUL ERSCHARTER EVENT IN BULGARIA

A successful conference under the title '**Working Together to Make Our Roads Safer – Enhanced Road Safety Governance and Good Practices**' took place on the 2nd of October at the National Palace of Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria under the Auspices of the recent Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The event which was co-organized by the Bulgarian **Ministry of Interior** and the **European Road Safety Charter (ERSC) team** was marked with great media coverage and attendance. More than 90 representatives of all national stakeholders involved in road safety in Bulgaria (state institutions, private sector and NGOs), with representatives of the European Commission and leading experts from EU Member States. Further to the presentation of the aim and objectives of the ERSC and the good practices of commitments presented, Charter informative brochures were distributed to all attendants, while at the same time the participants had the opportunity to learn about the new website.

The event was opened with the keynote speeches of the representatives of four Ministries. 'Road safety is every person's right and responsibility; state institutions cannot reduce road traffic deaths and accidents if they act alone. Therefore, the civil society, professional groups, non-governmental sector, and academia participation in the joint efforts is of key importance,' Minister of Interior **Mladen Marinov** said at the opening of the thematic conference. His words were supported by the Minister of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, **Rossen Jeliakov**, the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works, **Malina Krumova**, and the Deputy Minister of Education and Science, **Tanya Mihaylova**: 'The complex, systematic approach and the coordination between state institutions as well as with the public sector represent significant factors for achieving the goal for safer roads. Each saved life is the most important indicator of the relevance of the common efforts'.

'Road safety is a moral challenge for all of us,' said **Matthew Baldwin**, Deputy Director General of DG MOVE, who is appointed for EC's High Level Coordinator for Road Safety as of 2 October 2018 empowering with his presence and speech the participating stakeholders. He shared the view of the Bulgarian government representatives about an integrated approach to road safety management and presented the idea of an EU safe system, consisting of road safety management, safer infrastructure, safer vehicles, safer road users and post-crash care. Mr Baldwin also paid tribute to the work of the European Road Safety Charter, noting with pleasure that it has also been taken up in Bulgaria.

Mrs **Vasiliki Daneli-Mylona** from the **European Road Safety Charter team** presented the ERSC new strategy and gave directions to existing and potential members on how to undertake successful Road Safety Commitments. Moreover, examples of awarded good practices from the last "Excellence in Road Safety Awards" were presented and all participants were encouraged to submit their own good practices in order to disseminate this information throughout Europe. Mrs Mylonas also expressed support for Bulgaria's efforts in the area: 'We go ahead learning from good practices together, because they are success indicators'.

Experts from **Austria, Finland and Hungary** presented their national experience in forming road safety policies, the use of efficient evaluation tools and the implementation of specific practices for reducing the number of traffic offences.

At the Final Session entitled 'Experience & Good Practices from Bulgarian Members of the European Road Safety Charter (existing and potential)' the participants had the opportunity to get informed on the activities and initiatives taken by various organizations signatories to the ERSC. **Ms Kameliya Slaveykova**, Executive Director of Shell Bulgaria, member organization of the ERSC, presented the policies and standards for "Road Safety in Shell" and how practically the organization tries to make a difference with actions that have an impact on drivers' consciousness and behavior in order to achieve the "Goal Zero" for injuries. The company focuses on behavioral elements that can significantly increase the probability of people arriving safely at their destination i.e. distracted driving, driver fatigue, journey management planning, defensive driving etc. Dr. **Nadezhda Todorovska**, Deputy Director General of the Bulgarian Red Cross Organisation (also an ERSC member), presented good practices like the first aid lessons for policemen in order to help at the first instance of a crash, the annual traffic policeman award and collaboration with other organizations on awareness campaigns concerning drink driving, youth, cyclists and other vulnerable road users. **Mr. Ivan Tabakov**, Director of Directorate for Road Safety and Planning of Activities on the Republican Road Network, Road Infrastructure Agency, presented their own good practices on various concerning infrastructure. **Eng. Dimitar Petrov**, Director of Traffic Management and Analysis Directorate, Sofia Municipality talked about the measures for enhancing Road Safety in the city of Sofia focusing on the speed management with smart traffic lights and other infrastructure interventions. Finally, **Mr. Ivaylo Tarpanov**, Marketing and Sales Director, Union of Bulgarian Motorists, presented the campaigns and initiatives carried out in order to adopt new behaviors for safe driving and improve road safety.

A common agreement was reached that integrated approach to road safety and shared responsibility at all levels is crucial in achieving the common goals to reduce the number of road deaths and serious injuries and to provide highest road safety standards.