

## **Activities by victim organisations to improve the position of road victims**

### **Activities and achievements of FEVR**

Speech by Brigitte Chaudhry, President FEVR, on 2 November 2007, Amsterdam

In June 2002, just over 5 years ago, RoadPeace, UK's charity dedicated to supporting road crash victims held its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in Westminster, London. RoadPeace was founded by me in 1992 after my son was killed as he was crossing a junction at green by a driver going through red lights.

The topic of this major conference was **Responding to road death and injury – the past, the present, the future**. It was an international and inter-professional conference attended by nearly 300 people, with the keynote speakers Ken Livingstone - the Mayor of London, and Lord Falconer, then Minister for victims at the Home Office and later Lord Chancellor.

All relevant professions were represented by speakers, and the international speakers were Prof Marcel Haegi, founder and president of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims - FEVR, our organisation, who spoke on the European victim perspective, and Mrs Loes Edzes, a Dutch colleague and friend of FEVR, who spoke on traffic safety in the Europe of the future.

As most will know, Prof Haegi sadly died in 2004. It will be very appropriate to dip into his speech at that conference when speaking today about activities by victim organisations and achievements of FEVR, not because of his death, but because much of what he had said at the time, remains relevant today.

The reason for road victim organisations being set up from the 1970s onwards - in the United States and throughout Europe - was the steep rise in road traffic injuries and the fact that victims were left completely neglected and without assistance or help. Furthermore, victims suffered twice over when the legal process offered no justice. Marcel Haegi referred to the UN resolution of 1985, which asked governments to take initiatives to protect victims' rights, improve their position in the criminal justice system, guarantee fair compensation, and provide medical, social, psychological and juridical assistance to them. He said that seventeen years later, very few governments had committed themselves to improving the situation of victims, had failed to enforce road traffic laws, and that victim organisations had been moved to fill the void left by government failures.

Many of the national European organisations which are joined under the umbrella of FEVR have as their aim to raise awareness of the plight of road crash victims, and are committed to offering assistance to victims and to advocate for measures to prevent a repetition of tragedies. Prof Haegi said that if governments faced up to their responsibilities, there would be no need for victim associations and that we were effectively campaigning for our own extinction.

We know from our work with and for victims and the global road casualty situation that the day when we are not needed is very far off and that on the contrary, FEVR needs to expand further - to embrace victim organisations from more European countries, and collaborate with more from beyond Europe.

## Who are we?

FEVR was formally founded in Geneva in July 1991, with the objectives to promote assistance to road victims at international level in Europe, work for prevention of crashes and strengthen contacts and collaboration between road victim associations from the various countries.

At the time of Marcel Haegi's speech, organisations in 21 countries were either members of FEVR or collaborated with us, and this is still the position at present, with some changes of countries. He said that FEVR was the largest international organisation of road traffic victims in the world – this is also still true, to our best knowledge FEVR is also the only victim Federation. We are in contact with Asirt, a US based organisation set up by a victim and working internationally - mainly for safety of US travellers in developing countries, we also know of MADD.

FEVR member organisations are European victim organisations, which act at national level, with their activities depending on the particular situation or problems in their own country, but also on their organisations' manpower and financial resources.

Most road victim advocacy NGOs offer ongoing assistance to victims - often through a helpline, through information written from the perspective of victims, and through person to person support, including escorts to court hearings and meetings, if and when this is possible.

They hold regular events, such as conferences, seminars or lectures, special days, weeks or even months, such as August Road Victim Month by RoadPeace.

They also campaign - they feel they are forced to campaign - on issues of road victim treatment, justice or rather lack of justice, and on road danger issues.

These few examples of advocacy activities by some of the groups show the wide range of activities by victim organisations and the importance of their work:

**ACA-M** in Portugal conducted a study on pedestrian movements and facilities for them in Lisbon, created zebra crossings made up of rows upon rows of names of those killed on the road, organised a protest against the high speed of official cars, launched a campaign of Fifteen commandments of courtesy at the wheel.

**AFè Vittime della Strada** in Italy have been calling for ethics in all professions – in the justice sector for judges, magistrates and lawyers, in the road building sector – for companies; have established collaboration with universities for analysing the effect of traffic, especially on pedestrians.

**The Ligue** in France has been working on the classification of cars in relation to safety, and is working towards a citizen car.

**AVR** in Luxemburg have campaigned on the reduction of the alcohol limit, held an exhibition on driving while tired, a round table for disabled victims and wrote many letters to politicians and the media.

**RoadCross** in Switzerland carried out campaigns on prevention in schools, provided assistance in selected court cases, reacted to relevant press articles and launched a campaign aimed at young women asking them to leave the cars of risk-taking boyfriend drivers.

**Pat-Apat** in Spain took part in a Pilot programme where bereaved family members gave testimony of their experiences to pupils of driving schools, i.e. learner drivers.

**RoadPeace** in the UK launched a Justice Campaign, part of which is an All Party Parliamentary Group for Justice for Road Traffic Victims, it is calling for law change

It is clear that victims want to see lessons learnt from their tragedies, so that they are not repeated. A quote from the father of a 28-year old young man, who was killed in the UK while cycling home, said:

*“we want to make our contribution with RoadPeace to change the law, so that the penalties and deterrents are changed in order to reduce the killings...if we can do that, it means that our son and so many others won't have died in vain.”*

Crucially, victim organisations are calling on all governments and authorities to include post crash care and services for victims, as well as a legal response appropriate to the loss of life or quality of life, in their road safety strategies.

Many countries have set themselves targets for the reduction of road casualties – up to 50% within 10 years. This means that even if these targets are achieved, there will occur thousands of deaths and millions of injuries each year. In the UK alone, these envisaged deaths and injuries from 2000 – 2010 will amount to 25,000 and 300,000 - 750,000 respectively. But casualties are only partially a measure of safety!

Virtually no provision is made in government road safety strategies – for care, for services or other responses for these planned for and expected victims.

In the UK, we have used the Haddon Matrix to analyse the Government's Road Safety Strategy of March 2000, which showed that out of 150 recommendations for action, only one single one related to the post crash stage. Even then there were no detailed plans, merely the statement: *“We must not forget the victims of road accidents and their relatives. While police officers are trained to deal sensitively with tragic events, the effects can be long lasting. The victim support charities do a very good job in producing advice for people – their members often have personal experience.”* But there is no government funding for that work mentioned; victims themselves have to fund this support.

The Haddon Matrix analysis ought to be applied in all FEVR member countries in respect of post crash stage actions contained in their Governments' road safety strategies.

### **What has FEVR achieved?**

I will go back to Professor Haegi's conference speech in order to include past FEVR achievements with present ones.

- The Federation has NGO consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and takes part in relevant UN working parties representing the perspective of road crash victims
- The Federation provides co-operation and best practice exchanges between national victim associations
- In 1997, FEVR published the report of their EC supported international enquiry on the impact of road death and injury on victims and families. This pioneering work showed the desperate situation of almost all of them.

- In 1998, FEVR held an international Collogium at the UNESCO in Paris on the potential contribution of the Justice, Insurance and Media sectors to road safety, this event was also supported by the EC.
- In 1998 FEVR participated at a session of the European Parliament on Road Safety a Shared Responsibility.
- In 1999, FEVR held a High Level International Roundtable in Luxemburg on proposals for the next 10-year road safety programme in Europe
- In 2001, the European Parliament approved a Resolution (Final A5-0381/2000) on a 2002-2010 European road safety programme, including most of the proposals made by FEVR, in particular increased controls on speed and alcohol limits, regular road safety meetings, improved assistance to victims. The implementation of this resolution was discussed by FEVR with Mrs Loyola de Palacio, Commissioner for Transport of the EC.
- In 2000, for United Nations Road Safety Week in May, with EC support FEVR produced and distributed 1.5 million leaflets in seven languages, distributed during manifestations and actions in favour of vulnerable road users throughout Europe.
- In 2001, on the initiative of FEVR, the United Nations have approved a Resolution on assistance to road crash victims, including first alert, emergency response and pre-hospital care. The post emergency assistance to victims and relatives, which FEVR also asked for, was postponed and has yet to be taken on board.
- In 2003, Prof Haegi and 5 FEVR delegates were invited by the World Health Organisation to a meeting of 12 NGOs to discuss the World Report on Road Injury Prevention, which was due to be published in April 2004. Comments on the report were invited and Quotes from FEVR member organisations were printed on the cover of the report.
- The meeting led to the creation of an informal network of organisations advocating for road injury prevention and identification of areas of joint activities. FEVR was invited to be a member of the UN Road Safety Collaboration Forum, with meetings held twice a year from 2004 on.
- On 7 April 2004, the World Report was launched in Paris on the WHO anniversary day dedicated for the first time to the major public health problem of road death and injury, under the slogan '*Road Safety is no accident*'. At the same time, another UN Road Safety week was held, on aggressive driving, and FEVR participated at the Geneva conference with a speech about impact on victims and a display on aggressive car adverts.
- From 14-15 April 2004, FEVR participated at the UN meeting in New York, where the historic resolution was passed electing the World Health Organisation as coordinator for tackling the global road safety crisis.
- Sadly Prof Haegi could not take part in these important April events, which he had so eagerly anticipated – he died just before - in February 2004
- 2004 was therefore a tumultuous year for FEVR, when we had to sort out many administrative matters, not least of all draft bylaws and confirm memberships, so that a new president and board members could be elected. All this is now completed – a president and Board are in place, principles for the areas of support, justice and road danger reduction agreed, and a new website set up, with plans for its regular maintenance.

Throughout these few years of consolidation, FEVR's work continued and the key activities are listed hereunder:

- FEVR continued to be represented on the UN WP1 in Geneva, and to contribute to its 2-3 annual meetings
- From 2004 onwards, FEVR participated in the twice yearly UN/WHO Collaboration Forum meetings, as the only organizations with experience of supporting victims and of knowing their perspective, therefore our presence at this forum is clearly important for road crash victims
- The Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, which was initiated by RoadPeace in 1993 and observed by all FEVR member countries as European Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims for a whole decade, from 1994 onwards, was suggested by us as a common day on which to highlight the impact of road deaths and injuries worldwide - World Day of Remembrance- and was elected as a 'product' of the Collaboration
- In 2005, FEVR responded to a UNICEF consultation on violence against children – with the aim of putting onto the UNICEF agenda the need of protecting our children from traffic danger, which seems to be overlooked and which causes such immense harm to our children.
- In March 2005, an international initiative 'Women for worldwide peace on the roads' was launched in London, with questionnaires sent to all FEVR members for a survey on the true scale, priority for road danger reduction and rights of road crash victims in various countries – this survey has yet to be completed.
- In 2005, FEVR became a member of EuroSafe, the European organization for Injury prevention and safety promotion and agreed to take part in their 1<sup>st</sup> conference on injury prevention.
- On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2005, the United Nations adopted our Day of Remembrance as World Day of Remembrance, with Resolution (A760/5), calling on all Member states and the international community to recognize this day as “the appropriate acknowledgement for victims of road traffic crashes and their families.”
- 2005 - FEVR and RoadPeace have been commissioned by the WHO to draft an Organiser's Guide for World Day of Remembrance, to be launched at the 1<sup>st</sup> Global road Safety Week in April 2007
- 2006 – FEVR president was a plenary speaker at the 1<sup>st</sup> EuroSafe conference in Vienna in June, opened by Austrian's Minister of Health.
- 2006 – FEVR completed a questionnaire on best practice road safety measures for a European fact finding project. FEVR supported measures to control speed – fixed speed cameras and traffic calming. We also recommended black boxes, speed limiters and pedestrian friendly cars, and under the topic 'Changing the System' - that road death and injury should become both a health and justice priority.
- At their annual meeting in Zuerich in October 2006, it was agreed that FEVR and its member organisations would pursue a road danger reduction approach – an approach aiming to create a safer environment by reducing danger at source and linking road safety to wider sustainable transport objectives. Further agreed was FEVR's position regarding the quality of support for victims and their access to fairness and justice.
- In December 2006 – FEVR president attended a meeting in Brussels by EuroSafe in connection with an EC supported project involving safety of vulnerable road users, with a follow-up meeting in May 2007

- April 2007 – FEVR participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> UN/WHO Global Road Safety Week, when the Guide for World Day was launched and FEVR produced a briefing sheet on black boxes, highlighting the benefits with regard to safety, justice and pollution and calling for strict liability laws.
- April 2007 - the Guide for World Day was launched:  
[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/road\\_traffic/activities/remembrance\\_day\\_handbook/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_traffic/activities/remembrance_day_handbook/en/index.html)
- May 2007 – FEVR president attended the London conference by TISPOL, the European Traffic Police Network, on the topic Making Europe's roads safer and calling for standardized laws on alcohol limits, speed limits and other regulations to be applied across Europe.
- FEVR president was invited to represent FEVR at ETSC's PIN Talk: Road safety in the UK Achievements and shortcomings in the European context.
- FEVR, who had become an ETSC member in Prof Haegi's times, has also attended several other events by ETSC and plans to be represented regularly from now on at their valuable events.
- FEVR has taken up contact with EC representatives and plans to continue presenting road victims' concerns before the European Parliament.

This month – in two weeks' time - all FEVR member organizations are going to observe World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, supported by individuals, organizations and governments from all over the world, all of whom will give due recognition to the pain and suffering of the bereaved and the injured and their families.

I want to end with Marcel Haegi's words at the end of *his* speech in 2002:

“Our Federation and its national Associations defend the **right to life** without compromise. We are representatives of road traffic victims and victim families and we are already an unavoidable pressure group, influencing international road safety policy. Even if we have limited financial resources, we have a strong moral support among large sectors of public opinion, as well as among European and World International organizations.”