

# *Fit to Drive*

4th International Traffic Expert Congress  
Tallinn from June 4th - 5th 2009



Welcome



## Driver Selection and Improvement in South Tyrol – Italy

**Dr. Max Dorfer**

Dept. of Forensic Medicine – Traffic Psychology Unit  
South Tyrol – Italy  
Psychologenkammer der Prov. Bozen (Italy)

## Contents:

1. The legal background, against which expert opinions are formed, and therapy and interventions are carried out.
2. The present situation with regard to the diagnostic activities in Italy and South-Tyrol.
3. Current interventions for traffic offenders in South-Tyrol.
4. Expected developments in the future.



## The legal framework for traffic psychological assessment

Article 119 of the Italian Highway Code says that:

- “The evaluation of medical requirements for getting a driver's license should be carried out by health officers or a Medical Commission”.
- " Health officers ... or ... the medical commission **may** request that the evaluation of mental and physical requirements are completed by a traffic psychological assessment carried out by psychologists.”
- In Italy, such extended evaluations are rather the exception than the rule.

## The present situation with regard to the diagnostic activities in South Tyrol - Italy.

In South Tyrol the situation is very different. Since 1997 exists a Traffic Psychological Unit.

Since 2004 this unit is a component of the Department of Forensic Medicine, where also the Medical Commission for Drivers' Licenses is located. This combination is, at moment, unique in Italy.

Both, the department of Forensic Medicine and the Unit of Traffic Psychology are public institutions.



## Typical requests for traffic psychological assessments

- Drivers detected while driving under the influence of alcohol (BAC over 0,05 %) or drug.
  - Clients with a alcohol, drug or a medication addiction.
  - Drivers with other types of physical or mental illnesses, that could impair their driving performance (for example, psychiatric or neurological disorders, senior citizens aged over 75 with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, etc.).
  - Professional driver aged over 60.
  - Drivers that caused severe or frequent traffic accidents
- In total this Unit evaluates over 1.500 drivers each year.

## The Italian Driving License regulation in case of DUI (license withdrawal)

**BAC: > 0.05 % and ≤ 0.08 %** ⇒ withdrawal 3 – 6 months

**BAC: > 0.08 % and < 0.15 %** ⇒ withdrawal 6 – 12 months

**BAC > 0.15 %** ⇒ withdrawal 12 – 24 months

(license withdrawal up to the year 2006)

**BAC: > 0.05** ⇒ **withdrawal 15 day – 3 months !!**

## Number of executed breath alcohol tests (in Italy)

Total number of valid licenses (2008): 36.000.000.

Total number of executed breath alcohol tests in 2004: **170.000**

... ..

Total number of executed breath alcohol tests in 2007: **790.318**

Of witch positive: **47.206**

Total number of executed breath alcohol tests in 2008: **1.393.467** (+ 76.3 %)

Of witch positive: **47.465** (+ 0.5 %)



## The psychological assessment in the case of DWI

Methods for the diagnostic examinations used in case of driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI).

1. There are no „tests“, in the sense of standardized inventories or personality questionnaires.
2. the standard cognitive and psychomotor capacities of a driver are always evaluated: reaction time, concentration, orientation, attention, stress tolerance etc.).



3. Lacking any standardised diagnostic instruments, the diagnostic interview with an alcohol offender became the most important element. This interview focuses on the following topics:

- Is the testee still drinking alcohol excessively?
- Has he regained any control when drinking alcohol?
- Is he still an acute or a sober alcohol addict?
- Has he changed his habits regarding drinking and driving?

- Has he regained any control of problem situations and is he now able to avoid excessive drinking?
- Is there sufficient acceptance of social norms?
- Are the psycho-motor abilities sufficient for driving?
- Are specific rehabilitative interventions able to correct the problems in a sufficient way?

## Rehabilitative programs for traffic offenders in South Tyrol

For alcohol offenders rehabilitation programs are offered since 1997. They are conducted by specially trained psychologists and consist of individual interviews followed by several group sessions. This course was primarily designed for drivers without any addictions (alcohol and/or drugs).

They help participants to learn separating drinking and driving, either by completely stopping drinking or at least by reducing alcohol consumption.



*Fit to Drive*

4<sup>th</sup> International Traffic Expert Congress

Tallinn from June 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> 2009

## Long term perspectives in Italy.

We expect an increase in the demand for psychological examinations of persons with a history of problematic driving behaviours, especially when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

At the same time, at least in Italy, continued professionalisation of traffic psychological involvement and standardization of the diagnostic procedures will need to take place.

## Conclusions

- We adopt very similar diagnostic procedures as Germany and Austria do.
- However, we start our interventions already with 0.05 % BAC and start our rehabilitative efforts as early as possible, if possible even before any official evaluation by the traffic psychologist and the medical commission.
- This early intervention avoids unnecessary waste of time beetwen withdrawel of license and medico-legal examination.

## Conclusions

We concentrate our rehabilitative efforts specially on young (up to 25 years) first time offenders, detected even with a relative “low” BAC-Level of 0.06 or 0.07 %, because they are at high recidivism and accident risk.

# *Fit to Drive*

4th International Traffic Expert Congress  
Tallinn from June 4th - 5th 2009



*Welcome*



**THANK YOU!**