

Interview with Lex Krzyzanowski, “LightSightSafety” chairman

Lex Krzyzanowski: Xenon has one of the highest cost benefits



Lex Krzyzanowski is active for more than 25 years in M&S for different B2B activities outside and within Philips. During the last seven years he works as OEM project marketing manager for the BG automotive lighting and has implemented a Global KAM organisation.

Together with several customers he established the LSS LightSightSafety initiative under the CLEPA umbrella in 2006, with the aim to promote better quality in car lighting to carmakers, end users and governmental organizations.

Driving Vision News: Could you give more information on the LSS challenge? What are the first results?

Lex Krzyzanowski: The initiative LSS was set up in 2006 under the Clepa umbrella. The objective of the initiative LSS is to create more awareness and understanding to the safety, comfort and environmental aspects of good quality car lighting at end users, carmakers as well as at relevant decision-making authorities.

The Initiative LSS is a coalition of several lighting companies, AL, Hella, Valeo, Visteon, Osram and Philips, that represents lighting in automotive in Europe. The Initiative commits itself to bring new lighting advancements to the market in order to increase the performance, safety, comfort and environmental benefits of cars and trucks, enabling to support the continuous efforts of the society to reduce fatalities and to lower power consumption as well as traffic pollution.

The initiative has in the meantime organised several events in Brussels, is present on important congresses (ISAL, Vision) and initiated several studies about lighting and safety as well as awareness research of good lighting at dealer and buyer's level.

Besides to this there are regular contacts with ACEA, EU commission and consumer organisations about lighting related to safety and CO2 reduction.

I think the biggest result we achieved till now is that we supported and underpinned the current perception “that good quality of car lighting is important”, with facts and figures!

DVN: At the last ISAL congress, there was a very interesting survey presented by the TUV in favor of Xenon, considering the safety. Where are you 18 months later? Did you use enough these results?

L.K.: This study was an eye opener for many experts. “Up to **18% less fatalities** on German roads as a result of the increased (100%) use of Xenon car lighting and up to **1200 fatalities** every year in Germany could be avoided if all cars had Xenon light” Of course there were some discussions about the methodology and the cost benefits for the society of Xenon based on the outcomes from this study. But the trend is there! LSS initiated now a cost benefit analysis at the UNI of Cologne under the leadership of Pr Baum. The results, available two week ago, are really promising. From this study it comes out that Xenon has one of the highest cost benefits for society of recently introduced safety devices in cars!

To strengthen the TUV study, LSS is now planning a new initiative for a second accident study based on another sources and methodology! So we were, and still are, very focussed in building up a convincing case, always in close contacts with our stakeholders! I see an increased attention to car lighting not only within our industry but also in the press since the last two years. I am convinced that this is also initiated by our LSS work.

DVN: What about the survey among car buyers and car dealers in Germany, Poland and France by the German market research institute “Pulse”?

L.K.: The aim of the study was to get an impression about the awareness of Xenon as well as “How Xenon is perceived by dealers and end users?” One of the outcomes: “safety” is an important car sales and buyer argument. However, especially the buyer isn’t associating Xenon strongly with safety!

Another outcome: 95 % of the buyers with a car equipped with Xenon will rebuy this light system on their next car!

From test drives we learned that drivers, experiencing Xenon for the first time, were so impressed that they are intended to place Xenon on their short “feature list” when buying a next car!

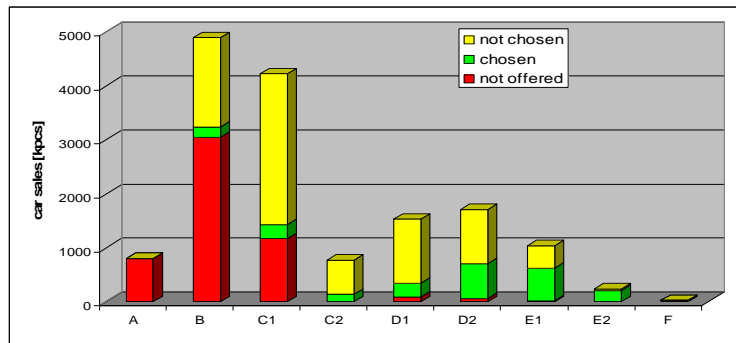
Price however seems to be an important showstopper to be able to really have a breakthrough in take rates especially in the C/D segments! So a lot has to be done to inform the buyer that Xenon isn’t only “better light” but is also contributing to its safety! Besides the carmaker can make Xenon more attractive by offering Xenon in more attractive styling.

DVN: Did you obtain some results, on communication, involvement of drivers and on Xenon rate?

L.K.: Yes, we have some experiences that with a Xenon communication campaign or putting Xenon in a package stimulate the take rate. However those actions were too short term oriented or too much brand oriented to enable a broader change in the perception and the mind set of the “bigger buyer public”. You have to spread the message continuously to be effective! LSS needs there strong support from the other stakeholders!

DVN: The overall market share of Xenon light is nevertheless not satisfying. We have expected a much higher take rate when starting in 1991, especially in middle class vehicles. LSS initiative is able to solve this weak rate?

L.K.: It is clear that the take rake is very low (see chart below) and LightSightSafety cannot solve this issue alone.



We only can try to convince (based on facts and figures) the carmakers, the authorities and the press about the contribution that lighting can bring, to create more safety and more CO2 reduction! Together we have to act and to look after opportunities to get this implemented in the cars, enabling to grasp the full cost benefits for our society. Perhaps we have to change some paradigms (e.g. low wattage Xenon without “wash system and even without automatic leveling”)! So what? It is worthwhile to think about this and take actions! All parties will benefit!

DVN: Xenon is still a growing technology. Some experts consider there is still room for progress. What is your opinion?

L.K.: In principal there is still a lot of room for progress. Especially when you look to the low current take rates of some high volume platforms in the “C” (around 2% in Europe) and the “D” segment around 12% in Europe)! However, I am not so optimistic that we can realize a breakthrough in take rates for those segments within short term as we proceed like today. Buying behaviour can be influenced, but only based on a good understanding of the product (from the Pulse research it comes out that almost 50% has no clue about Xenon) combined with an attractive offer (from the Pulse research a price around 350 Euro was mentioned as attractive). Today that understanding needs improvement and the offer seems not attractive enough to the most of the buyers within those car segments. As already said: let us try to change some paradigms! The low wattage Xenon can be the solution!

DVN: The arrival of LED technology in lighting is it a risk or an opportunity for the future of Xenon technology?

L.K.: If the stakeholders proceed as today, we can be sure that the life time of this technology will be shortened. If the stakeholders can come with more attractive offers, than not only the stakeholders and the current buyers (mostly of premium brand cars) but a lot of new buyers (high volume platforms in the C/D segments) and, not the least, the whole society will also benefit from this technology (less co2, less power consumption) and even for a longer time, that is the big opportunity!

