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The University of Leeds presents the new ecoDriver project

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The [University of Leeds](#) is leading a £13m (€14.5m) European project which aims to turn even the most committed of petrol heads into a green driver, which could save pounds at the pump and protect the planet. Over a four-year period researchers will develop innovative new technologies for both in-vehicle and remote devices, such as downloadable smart-phone apps, that will help motorists to significantly reduce their fuel consumption by driving in a more energy-efficient way.



The researchers' aim is to reduce fuel consumption by up to 20%, which could translate into savings of around £500 a year for the average motorist spending £50 a week on petrol. Leeds researchers led by Professor Oliver Carsten will work with transport research centres across Europe, as well as several leading vehicle manufacturers, to design and test the devices, which could be on the market within 5 years. Professor Carsten, from the University of Leeds' Institute for Transport Studies, said: "The way we drive can make a huge difference to the amount of fuel we use and in turn how much CO2 is released into the atmosphere.

"As a general rule, the most important influence on fuel consumption is the driver's use of the accelerator. However, fuel consumption is also affected by lots of other factors like how much air you have in your tyres, how many passengers you're carrying, engine performance and even the weather conditions."

Some vehicles are already fitted with devices that give drivers feedback on their fuel efficiency. They work by using information about the engine size, gears and speed to calculate a rough estimate of consumption, often displayed as miles per gallon (MPG) or litres per 100 km.

But according to Professor Carsten, they lack the sophistication to have a real impact on driver behaviour, especially in the longer term. "Real-world evaluations indicate that existing devices do not really have much of an effect on people's driving" he said. "At the most they are probably saving around 5% and the novelty tends to wear off with drivers after a while. With ecoDriver we are hoping to create intuitive devices that are not only more accurate, but that can respond intelligently to what kind of driver you are. So different drivers might have different kinds of feedback, but in any case we want to ensure that it is easy for drivers to understand what they need to do in order to save fuel. That way, we are more likely to gain acceptance among motorists, which is the biggest obstacle to changing driver behaviour."

The team hope to come up with new ways of feeding back information to the driver, for example by making the accelerator pedal stiffer to encourage drivers to ease off or change to a higher gear.

The four-year project will make use of the University's state-of-the-art driving simulator, which will allow the researchers to test the effectiveness of their prototype devices on fuel efficiency and driver response. The best designs will then be subjected to real-world tests with a variety of drivers. At the end of the project the best designs will be incorporated into vehicles for a project showcase. It is hoped that the concepts will then be taken up by vehicle manufacturers and brought to market.

The results of the project will also be used to make predictions for policy-makers on how much energy could be saved if the technologies were used across the UK vehicle fleet.



The research is a collaboration between the [University of Leeds](#); [ERTICO - ITS Europe](#) in Belgium; [TNO](#) and [NAVTEQ](#) in the Netherlands; [VTI](#) in Sweden; [CTAG](#) in Spain; [BMW](#), [Daimler AG](#) and [Institut für Kraftfahrzeuge \(ika\)](#) of [RWTH Aachen University](#) in Germany; [IFSTTAR](#) in France; and [Fiat Research Centre](#) in Italy. It has been funded under the Information and Communication Technologies stream of the European Community's [Seventh Framework Programme for](#)



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