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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
EUROPEAN ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME
MID-TERM REVIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Transport White Paper adopted in 2001¹ proposed the target of halving the number of road fatalities by 2010. This target was subsequently repeated in the European road safety action programme adopted in 2003.²

There was a clear message behind this target: while the debate to find the best level for effective action (the European, national or regional level, or indeed private initiatives) is not new, the 2003 programme introduced the concept of “shared responsibility”.

Improvements in road safety have been achieved through action at different levels. Some action has been at local level (e.g. roads have been made safer) or has concerned individual road users (encouraging more responsible behaviour), while other measures have involved a number of different players: for example the motor vehicle industry has made vehicles safer in response to consumer demand. For its part, the Community has to observe the concept of joint competence provided for in the Treaty: some actions obviously needed as a matter of priority are clearly the responsibility of the Member States themselves (or of other stakeholders), while others, though also clearly a matter of priority, require Community action.

The target to mobilise action, as referred to above, was endorsed by the European Parliament³ and the Council⁴ and has enabled major progress to be made. This communication is the mid-term review announced in the programme adopted in 2003, as referred to above. It is accompanied by a Commission staff working paper⁵ containing accident statistics (Part 1), summaries by Member States (Part 2), an overview of EU legislation on road safety (Part 3), a selection of projects financed by the Commission in this area (Part 4), and some examples of the commitments entered into by citizens in the framework of the European Road Safety Charter (Part 5).⁶

2. 2001-2005: FASTER PROGRESS, BUT STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

2.1. Overall figures for the European Union

In 2001, 50 000 people were killed on the roads in the countries which today make up the European Union. The joint target proposed in 2001 and updated after enlargement in 2004 is that **by 2010 there should be no more than 25 000 fatalities a year**.

The figures for 2005 show that about 41 600 people were killed on the roads⁷, a fall (albeit too small) of 17.5% over 4 years. At the present rate, road deaths in the European Union in 2010 are likely to stand at 32 500, and the target of a maximum of 25 000 will probably not be

¹ European transport policy for 2010: time to decide [COM(2001) 370 final, 12 September 2001].

² European road safety action programme – Halving the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010: a shared responsibility [COM(2003) 311 final, 2 June 2003].

³ Resolution of 12 February 2003, OJ C43E, 19.2.2004, p. 250.

⁴ Conclusions of the Transport Council of 5 June 2003, document 9686/03 (Press 146), p.22.

⁵ SEC(2005)....,

⁶ These documents are published on the Europa road transport website http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/index_en.htm

⁷ Estimate based on the most recent figures available.

achieved. The trend over the last ten years shows a fall in 2001, however, that is worth a closer look:

- Between 1994 and 2000, the number of people killed on the roads fell by an average of only 2% a year, while the number of accidents rose very slightly. The technical improvements made to vehicles would seem to be the main reason behind this trend.
- Between 2001 and 2005, the number of people killed on the roads fell by an average of 5% a year, and the number of accidents fell by an average of 4% a year, and 5% between 2003 and 2004; this parallel trend in the major indicators corresponds to the dates of entry into force of voluntary road safety plans in most of the Member States.

If we consider the statistics by category of users, vehicles and accident types, we see that the trend is not uniform:

- The number of motorcyclists killed as a proportion of total road deaths, a figure which was relatively stable at around 9.5% until 1996, has risen relentlessly in the meantime to 14% in 2003.
- In overall terms, the number of motorcyclists killed rose by 5.6% between 2000 and 2003, while the total number of people killed on the roads fell by 12% over the same period. Some figures are alarming: in Italy, Belgium, Sweden and the United Kingdom the numbers of motorcyclists killed on the roads rose by 40%, 39%, 21% and 15%, respectively. In France there has been a significant reversal of the trend: an increase of 10% between 2000 and 2002 followed by a fall of 8% in 2003 compared with 2002.
- Young people between 18 and 25 are a high-risk group: these people represent 10% of the population as a whole but accounted for 21% of all fatalities in 2003, with four-fifths of those killed being male. This “Saturday Night Fever” (most of the accidents happening the last two nights of the week) is still tragic.
- Pedestrians (5 400 killed) and cyclists (2 000 killed) are still particularly vulnerable.
- Pedestrians over 65 years of age account for about 27% of all pedestrians killed, more than their percentage of the population as a whole (18%).
- Lorries are involved in 6% of all accidents but 16% of fatal accidents, confirmation of the most serious nature of these accidents. However, the number of lorries involved in accidents is falling faster than the overall accident rate.
- Accidents outside built-up areas (but not on motorways) are the most serious: they represent only 28% of all accidents, but account for 60% of all road accident victims.
- Accidents in built-up areas account for 67% of all accidents and 31% of all road accident victims.
- Motorways account for 5% of accidents and 9% of fatalities.

The road safety performance of the new Member States following the most recent enlargement is not as good as the average situation in the EU before 2004. While some of these countries saw dramatic improvements in the early 1990s, their situation since 2001 has basically been the same as that of several of the EU-15 Member States. The problems are not

specific to the enlargement countries. They are the same everywhere, but with different degrees of progress over time.

2.2. The Member States

- *Recent trends*

The overall figures in 2.1 do not reflect the major differences between the Member States:

- the annual number of victims per million inhabitants varies from 50-60 (Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) to more than 200 (Latvia and Lithuania), the average for EU-25 being 95;
- the annual number of victims per million private cars⁸ varies from 130-150 (the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) to 600 (Lithuania) and 800 (Latvia), the average for EU-25 being 220;
- in terms of changes in the number of people killed between 2001 and 2004, nine Member States (, Germany, Estonia, , France, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, , Portugal, and Sweden) have reduced at a faster rate than the average for the 25 (-14%); in eight other Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Finland, and the United Kingdom) there has been limited progress (a fall of at least 5%, but less than the average rate); in six others (Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia), progress has been very slow or there has been a slight backward trend (a maximum rate of progress of 5%, more or less, compared with the figures for 2001); the situation has got worse in Cyprus and Lithuania. These figures must nevertheless be treated with caution, especially in the very small Member States where a small number of serious accidents greatly affect the national result.

- *New road safety plans*

The 2001 White Paper and the 2003 European action programme encouraged several Member States which had not yet done so to adopt national road safety plans, often taking over the common target of halving the number of road accident victims. The European Union has therefore helped to put road safety at the top of the agenda of the Member States' political concerns.

In addition to strengthening controls and penalties (a priority broadly shared), the Member States' plans generally include training and information schemes to help create a road safety culture, to involve all stakeholders and to provide a better regulatory framework for drivers. Mobilising the partners concerned involves the use of charters and voluntary undertakings.

The Member States have also adopted initiatives to combat driving while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medicines: a lower maximum blood alcohol level (generally 0.2 mg/ml) for new drivers and professional drivers in some countries; stricter penalties for drinking and driving; and legislative action to prevent driving while under the influence of drugs. Checks

⁸ The ratio between the number of deaths and the number of vehicles is theoretically more informative than the number of deaths as a proportion of the population. However, the figure must be treated with caution in view of the lack of certainty as to the real number of vehicles on the road in some Member States.

are now carried out more frequently and are targeted, effective, reliable and fast, especially when carried out at the roadside.

3. COMMUNITY ACTION SINCE 2001

This section describes recent activities in greater detail. The full list of legislation adopted since 2001, the list of proposals still at the interinstitutional negotiation stage and a selection of European projects and studies are given in Parts 3 and 4 of the Commission staff working paper referred to above.

3.1. Ensuring compliance with the rules – Ending exemption from penalties

Recommendation 2004/345/EC is concerned with best practice with regard to monitoring the application of the rules on drink-driving, speeding and seat-belt use. It applies to all motorised transport, both private and professional. Its implementation is monitored by a group made up of experts from the Member States and the Commission.

Many road traffic offences by non-residents of a Member State are currently not followed by legal action due to the lack of systematic cooperation between the administrative and police authorities in the Member States. In some countries which have a large volume of transit traffic, certain offences committed by non-residents may account for as much as 35% of the total number of infringements. Even the best results could therefore be better still with more transnational cooperation in the field of controls and penalties. This is obviously a European issue and one we that need to tackle.

3.2. Avoiding mistakes and minimising their consequences

All road users are liable to make mistakes. Given the potential seriousness of these mistakes, we must limit their consequences (passive safety) or prevent them from occurring in the first place (active safety).

- ***Passive safety of vehicles***

Vehicles provide much better protection for their occupants than was the case a few years ago and improvements are being made faster than ever before. Safety is now a key commercial factor. This positive development can be attributed to the efforts made by industry and, broadly, to the information provided to consumers, e.g. via *EuroNCAP* (a programme for assessing the protection of occupants in new car models) and to EU research aid. There are many projects in this area.

It is now compulsory to wear a seat belt in all vehicles fitted with one as well as to use child restraints for the safety of children travelling in vehicles.

Two proposals, one to fit safety belts to all vehicles and one to make the certification of heavy goods vehicles and coaches mandatory, this hitherto having been optional, are at the interinstitutional negotiation stage.

There is still more potential for improving the protection of vulnerable users in the event of a collision with a motor vehicle.

- ***“eSafety”, active safety of vehicles***

Development of the “eSafety” concept began in 2003⁹ as part of the “Intelligent vehicle” initiative. Intelligent technologies offer excellent prospects for improving active safety and build on the improvements already made thanks to passive safety. The joint efforts made (by the Commission, the Member States and industry) should make *eSafety* a reality shortly,¹⁰ especially as regards the implementation of “*eCall*”. Other technologies concerning the man-machine interface and interaction between vehicles and infrastructure are still at an experimental stage.

Several studies recently published on the Europa website have shown the potential for short-term improvements in the form of measures with a good cost-benefit ratio: electronic stability control; the use of dipped headlights by all vehicles; contour marking of lorries with retro-reflective tape.

- **“CARS-21”, for the competitiveness of the motor vehicle industry**

The *CARS-21*¹¹ high-level group, the aim of which is to strengthen the competitiveness of industry, has examined issues relating to regulation, trade, the environment and road safety. A roadmap for the next ten years was adopted on 12 December 2005.¹² With regard to road safety, the compulsory use of onboard systems in vehicles (seat belt warning light, dipped headlights, emergency braking assistance systems and electronic stability control) are considered to be a priority.

- **Safety of infrastructure**

Legislation is currently limited to Directive 2004/54/EC, which was introduced following the serious fires in the Mont Blanc, Tauern and Gothard tunnels in 1999 and 2001. It is aimed at reducing accident risk by means of preventative measures and, if an accident does occur, to minimise the loss of life.

With regard to the improvement of road infrastructure, more than 600 deaths and some 7000 accidents could be avoided each year on the roads of the trans-European network, in other words 12-16% of fatalities and 7-12% of accidents, through better infrastructure safety management. Initiatives such as Euro RAP (*European road assessment programme*) and EuroTAP (*European tunnels assessment programme*), both of which are supported by Community funding, are aimed at making road infrastructure safer by means of an information and transparency strategy.

3.3. Driving licences and standards of fitness for driving

- **Driving licences**

A proposal to recast and extend existing legislation on driving licences, in particular in order to toughen up the rules on gradual access to motorcycles and very heavy goods vehicles and to introduce a driving licence for mopeds, is at the interinstitutional negotiation stage.

⁹ Commission communication on information and communications technologies for safer and intelligent vehicles [COM(2003) 542 final, 15.9.2003].

¹⁰ COM(2005) 431 final, 14.9.2005.

¹¹ This groups was set up in January 2005 and consists of representatives of the Commission, the Member States, the European Parliament, industry, trades unions, non-governmental organisations and users.

¹² <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/automotive/pagesbackground/competitiveness/cars21.htm>

The test requirements to obtain a driving licence were raised by Directive 2000/56¹³ to make driving schools prepare candidates more thoroughly, and projects for the training of young drivers seem promising.

- ***Standards of fitness for driving***

Medical technology is evolving and knowledge about the effects of certain medical conditions on driving is increasing. The minimum medical standards laid down in Annex III to the driving licences directive are about twenty-five years old and must therefore be updated. To this end, the medical standards for vision, epilepsy and diabetes are being reviewed, in particular as regards the physical fitness of professional drivers.

3.4. Driving safely on behalf of others

- ***Social and technical legislation***

In December 2005, agreement was reached between Parliament and the Council on a legislative proposal to improve and strengthen the current rules on the monitoring of, and compliance with, driving and rest times and on a legislative proposal to improve the application of the social rules (driving, rest and working time). The number of controls to check compliance with driving and rest times for drivers is planned to increase significantly (currently, checks should cover 1% of working days).

As of 2006, a digital tachograph must be fitted to all new vehicles; speed governors are now compulsory on all commercial vehicles of 3.5 tonnes and above or with eight or more passenger seats. With regard to the carriage of hazardous goods, adaptation to technical progress (control requirements and procedures) is continuing.

- ***Driver training***

In the road transport sector, initial and periodic training for drivers is now harmonised at a high level, Directive 2003/59 on the initial qualification and period training of professional drivers must be transposed into the national legislation of the Member States by September 2006. It establishes the principle of a gradual progression from the lightest to the heaviest vehicles based on the age of the driver and the type of training received on entering the profession, training which must be regularly repeated throughout the driver's life.

3.5. The European Road Safety Charter

To encourage road safety stakeholders other than the national administrations to shoulder their responsibilities, the European Road Safety Charter implements the concept of shared responsibility since the signatories of the Charter firmly commit themselves to taking specific, measurable action in their areas of responsibility to contribute to the common goal.

Since 6 April 2004, companies, automobile clubs, associations, schools, the media and local authorities - to name but a few of the potential signatories of the Charter – are invited to enter into specific commitments. To date, more than three hundred signatories have subscribed to the Charter's commitments, more than one quarter of them regional and local authorities. The

¹³ Commission Directive 2000/56/EC of 14 September 2000 amending Council Directive 91/439/EEC on driving licences, OJ L 237, 21.09.2000, p.45.

aim is to have 2 500 signatories by 2008. The list of signatories and the commitments given are published on the Charters' Website.¹⁴ Part 5 of the working document describes some of the commitments in the framework of the Charter.

3.6. Protecting and educating users at risk and vulnerable users

- ***Children and adolescents***

Directive 2003/20, which must be transposed by the Member States by 9 May 2006, provides for a series of measures to improve the safety of children carried in cars, lorries and coaches. For example, where cars and lorries are fitted with safety devices, children less than 150 cm tall must be restrained in the proper restraint system for their weight.

Furthermore, since road safety education must be given to children from the earliest possible age, a number of European projects, campaigns and guides to good practice have been developed with the Commission's assistance.

- ***Young adults***

Young adults, who make up the overwhelming majority of new drivers, are rightly one of the main targets of awareness and prevention activities.

The "EuroBob" and "European No Accident Night" campaigns target one of the worst aspects of road safety, the often serious accidents which happen during the night at weekends. These campaigns seek to appeal to young drivers, through appropriately worded texts, to make them aware of their responsibility as citizens and to encourage them not to drink and drive.

- ***Senior citizens***

The key issue as regards the elderly is ensuring both mobility and safety.

In the age group 70 and over, 40% of fatalities are pedestrians and 12% drivers. However, the figures for driver fatalities do rise very sharply at the age of 70 and over. This is an issue which must be addressed.

- ***Pedestrians and cyclists***

Directive 2003/102/EC on the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users in the event of a collision with a motor vehicle provides, as of 1 October 2005, for front surfaces that are less hazardous for pedestrians for new types of vehicle. A public debate on improving the provisions of the directive took place in the autumn 2005.

Furthermore, Directive 2005/66/EC on increasing the protection for road users in the event of collision with a vehicle fitted with "bull bars" will enter into force in 2006.

Directive 2003/97/EC provides that, as from January 2007, all lorries registered in the European Union must be fitted with rear-view mirrors or additional devices for indirect vision to eliminate blind spots. Fitting similar devices to existing vehicles could save 1 300 lives a

¹⁴ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/roadsafety/charter.htm>

year, mostly those of cyclists but also of other at-risk users, with the benefits outweighing the costs by a factor of four.

- ***Motorcycle and moped riders***

The figures for fatalities among motorcycle riders are among the most worrying, this being the only category of road user for which the fatality rate is rising in contrast to the overall downward trend. In some Member States the rate of increase is alarming. By 2010, the number of road deaths may have been halved, but one fatality in three, as compared with one in six today, will be a motorcycle rider.

This is why the action programme has set the target of increasing safety for motorcycle riders by means of legislation or voluntary agreements with industry:

- The proposal for a third directive on driving licences (recast) introduces gradual access to the most powerful motorcycles;
- European manufacturers of powered two-wheel vehicles have committed themselves, under a voluntary agreement in the framework of the European Road Safety Charter, to offer safer braking systems, such as ABS, for half of their new models by 2010. The industry is expected to adopt other initiatives with regard to technological development and marketing.

The basic issues which remain are those of perception: how powered two-wheel vehicles, and everything associated with them, are seen by drivers of other road vehicles and how drivers of such vehicles see their own safety compared with that of other road vehicles.

As for crash helmets, these must now be worn by motorcycle drivers in all Member States. Compliance with this rule is still a cause of concern and campaigns on this issue are therefore still needed.

- ***Disabled users***

Making it easier for the physically disabled to drive a private vehicle is an absolute priority since it gives them real independence. Their mobility needs to be guaranteed, while ensuring their safety and that of other road users.

Some activities were carried out well before 2003; recently, the *QUAVADIS (Quality and use aspects of vehicle adaptations for disabled)* study came out in support of disseminating and sharing information about vehicle adaptation throughout the European Union.

- ***Repeat offenders***

Increasing the number of roadside checks improves road safety but also leads to a rise in the number of driving licences that are withdrawn. This penalty, which takes the most dangerous offenders off the road, is certainly necessary but, in order to remain credible, it must be accompanied by measures to modify driver behaviour. Driver rehabilitation will enable “sustainable” road safety to be achieved.

3.7. Collection of road accident data

The Commission already has several means of monitoring and others are being developed.

Analysis of the national policies of the Member States has produced several studies, as described in the working paper. The statistical monitoring covers the rapid indicators, the CARE base (macroscopic data), the risk exposure variables, the performance indicators and detailed databases.

With regard to CARE (*Community database on accidents on the roads in Europe*), the information available to the public on the Europa website has been increased, and the database has started to be expanded to include the new Member States as well as Norway and Switzerland in the context of the integrated *SAFETY NET* (6th framework programme) project. However, there have been difficulties with some of the Member States: for example, Italy has provided no information since 1999, and the information from Germany includes confidential data which prevents it from being used.

In addition, several much more detailed databases covering typical accident scenarios have been, or are being, set up in the context of Community research projects or Commission-funded projects.

It is essential to pool all data and information available. The present routine monitoring will continue and monitoring which is currently at the experimental stage should be made permanent in the medium term thanks to a specific mechanism.

As far as evaluating the measures under the European programme is concerned, it is difficult to quantify the effects of many of them because they are indirect (recommendations, research projects, support for national campaigns) or have been delayed (legislation), or both.

4. CONCLUSION

In overall terms, road safety is improving in the European Union. Faster progress is being made than in the past, but it is patchy and there is still a lot of room for further improvement. Constructive action is being taken in all the relevant areas: infrastructure, behaviour, vehicles.

The European Union and the Member States as well as all the other parties vested with “shared responsibility” must do more and do it better in order to achieve the ambitious common objective. In light of this, the Commission will give consideration to additional measures within the framework of the mid term review of the Transport White Paper.