



## Halving the number of road accident victims in the EU by 2010: A shared responsibility



### EUROPEAN ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME

#### 1. Time to decide

The Commission's Transport policy White Paper published on 12 September 2001 stressed that, given the growing volume of traffic, safety aspects are particularly important. While transport is regarded as part and parcel of economic growth and prosperity, it is increasingly being perceived as a potential hazard. Dramatic accidents are increasingly affecting the general public. However, the degree of acceptance of unsafe transport is not always consistent. Otherwise, how can one explain the comparative tolerance of road traffic accidents when, day in day out, the total number of people killed on European roads is more or less equivalent to the number of casualties when a medium-haul plane crashes? Every year, the equivalent of the population of an average-sized town such as Biarritz perishes. Road casualties, whether dead or injured, represent a cost to society amounting to tens of billions of euros and an incalculable human cost. The White Paper's subtitle was "Time to decide". The Commission takes the view that the time has now come as far as road safety is concerned.

#### A very sad finding

During the last 30 years the overall volume of road traffic has tripled, while the number of road deaths has fallen by half. However, this slow but regular improvement in safety should not give the illusion that the situation is satisfactory; on the contrary, it is becoming increasingly socially unacceptable and difficult to justify to citizens.

#### The harsh reality of the figures

- 1 300 000 accidents/year
- Over 40 000 deaths/year
- 1 700 000 injured/year
- Direct and indirect cost: €160 billion, or 2% of EU GNP
- Main cause of death of under 45 year-olds



In the past, there has been an enormous gap between the Member States' ambitious declarations of intent and the very modest provisions actually adopted, the principle of subsidiarity too often being invoked as a means of avoiding the adoption of specific measures at EU level. The Commission intends to apply the principle of subsidiarity in a strict manner so that everyone concerned, at all levels, can have a clearly identified framework of action in order to be able to play a full part.

#### We know what needs to be done:

The main causes of accidents have been clearly defined:

- Excessive and inappropriate speed, the cause of about a third of fatal and serious accidents.
- The consumption of alcohol and drugs or fatigue. Drinking and driving is responsible for about 10 000 deaths each year..
- Failure to wear a seat belt or crash helmet is a major aggravating factor in accidents. If the rate of seat-belt use could be increased everywhere to the best international rate, more than 7 000 lives would be saved each year.
- The lack of sufficient protection provided by vehicles in the event of an impact. Analysis of accidents shows that, if all cars were designed to provide protection equivalent to that of the best cars in the same class in the event of an accident, half of fatal and disabling injuries could be avoided.
- High-risk accident sites (black spots).
- Non-compliance with driving and rest times by commercial drivers.
- Poor visibility of other users or an insufficient field of vision for the driver. The lack of visibility in the blind spot towards the rear of vehicles alone causes 500 deaths a year.

## 2. What is the objective and what action should be taken at EU level?

In the White Paper on European transport policy, the Commission proposed that the EU should ?? the ambitious target of **reducing the number of road deaths by a half by 2010**. The Commission is fully aware that this target means giving much greater priority to implementing the most effective measures at Community, national and local level. However, only the European Parliament has so far endorsed this objective, and the Council has not taken a position.

This objective constitutes a serious collective undertaking to reduce the number of deaths rather than a legal requirement. Given that the responsibility for road safety is shared between different levels of government, it is impossible to rely solely on activities implemented at EU level to achieve this target. The main aim is to provide the motivation for launching shared activities and to promote these activities at all levels of action: all levels of public authority, industry and users.



The target will need to be monitored periodically in order to verify the progress made, and should be reviewed when the new Member States join.

A statistical report will be produced at regular intervals for the European institutions and the public based on statistics and performance indicators, which will make it possible to monitor the progress made with implementing this action programme and analyse the trends with regard to safety levels.

The Commission will carry out a mid-term review in 2005. It reserves the right, on the basis of this review, to propose regulatory measures.

*The Member States with the best road safety records, such as Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands, were the first to set qualified targets for reducing the number of victims to derive maximum benefit from the potential improvements in road safety from increased knowledge, accumulated experience and technical progress. It is widely accepted that targeted road safety programmes are more beneficial in terms of effectiveness of action, rational use of public resources and reducing the number of people killed and injured than non-targeted programmes.*

The EU has various means of action available concerning road safety.

- Article 71 of the EC Treaty allows the EU to **legislate** to adopt measures to improve transport safety within the limits of subsidiarity.
- The EU supports **research and technological development** projects.
- The EU has **financial means** which enable it, through targeted calls for proposals, to support initiatives aimed at raising awareness among policy-makers, professionals and the public at large about the main safety issues and the solutions.
- The EU has so far played an important part in the **establishment and dissemination of best practices**.
- The EU has played an active role in the definition of accident investigation methods and the creation of the CARE database.

#### 4. Specific actions

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##### Encouraging road users to improve their behaviour

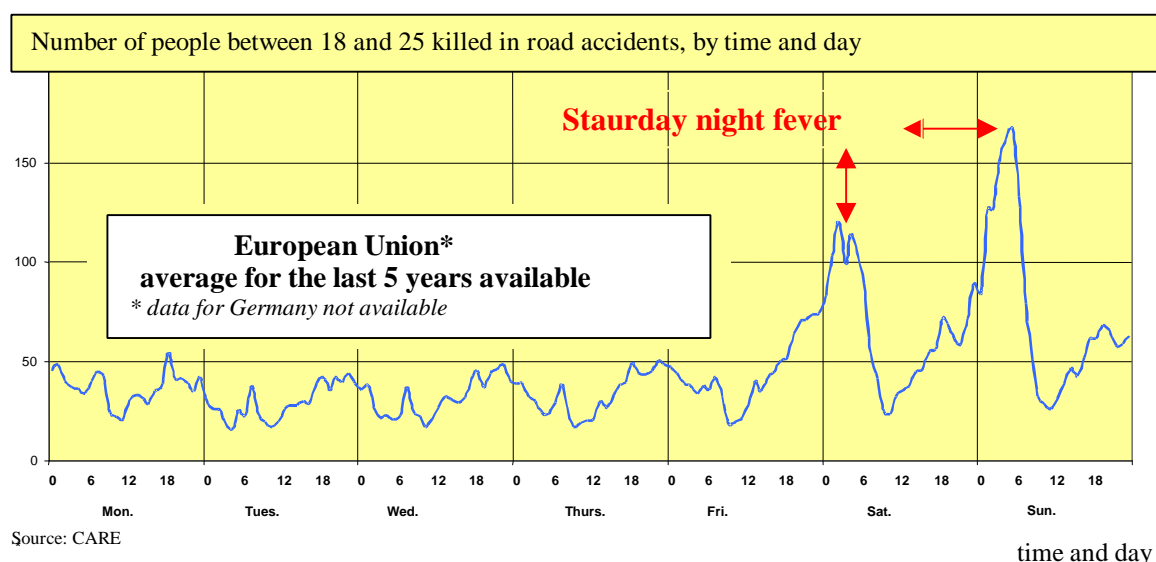
###### 1.1 Complying with basic road safety rules

Dangerous driving is a scourge on a par with crime, and the Commission plans, as part of the Community's justice policy, to take initiatives aimed not just at lorry drivers but at all motorists. The failure of users to comply with basic road safety legislation is the main cause of serious accidents. Action targeted on drinking and driving, wearing seatbelts or crash helmets, and speeding could help to meet more than half the target of halving the number of people killed on the roads.

The best performing Member States in terms of road safety also have the most high-tech **management** systems. The situation in the other Member States is all the more regrettable. The Commission considers that the Member States should speed up the application of the 1998 Vienna Convention on decisions relating to the disqualification of drivers.



The Commission will give priority to pan-European **education and awareness campaigns** which fit in with the objectives set by this programme and concern existing national activities organised by the police or other bodies. These actions will be aimed in particular at vulnerable users, young drivers and the elderly. The situation is particularly worrying where young people are concerned since, as the following graph shows, there is a strong correlation between the number of deaths and lifestyle-related behaviour.



### 1.2 Driving licences and training

The Commission will consider how to improve the system of gradual access to different categories of licences, to avoid the overly flagrant scope for fraud due to the very high number of valid licence models in the EU, and check that driving ability is maintained.

The Commission will also take action to set minimum requirements with regard to physical and mental fitness to drive and harmonise ways to enable the competent authorities to apply tolerances or restrictions to drivers undergoing long-term treatment impairing their driving ability.

### 1.3 Use of crash helmets

The Commission is concerned about the large number of head injuries suffered by two-wheel motor vehicle users. It therefore intends to carry out detailed investigations in this connection, concerning the effectiveness of helmets and compliance with the rules in force.

## 2 Making use of technical progress

### 2.1 Vehicle design

Significant improvements in the protection available to vehicle occupants in every Member State continue to be achieved thanks to technological progress. The EU now has exclusive competence for whole vehicle type-approval for cars and two-wheel motor vehicles. Moreover, there is a revolution taking place in automotive technology which can provide considerable benefits with regard to active safety and accident prevention. Vehicles are increasingly being fitted with ultramodern electronic devices which can control their safety functions. Without awaiting future technologies, it will suffice to implement now, through



harmonised action, the technologies already available with regard to vehicle safety and protective equipment to deliver a substantial proportion of the target reduction, in particular for commercial vehicles.

## 2.2 Consumer information: the European new car assessment programme (EuroNCAP)

Going beyond the EU's vehicle type-approval scheme, EuroNCAP tests the safety of new cars in accordance with harmonised testing protocols under conditions representative of different types of crash which cause serious injuries to occupants and possibly to pedestrians. The Commission will continue to provide support for EuroNCAP with a view to enabling further progress to be made, to raise awareness among and inform consumers and to strengthen the representation of the Member States.

### 2.3 Passive safety

Although much has already been done to increase seat belt use, there is still a potential of 4000 lives that could be saved each year.

*Sweden has the highest rate of seat belt use in Europe: 95%.*

*However, half the people killed in accidents there were not wearing their seat belts.*

*This shows the high potential of any measure which will further increase seat belt use, in particular seat belt reminder systems for all occupants, in both the **front and back** seats.*

### 2.4 Active safety

The new on-board information and communication technologies (*intelligent transport systems*, or ITS) offer considerable potential for reducing the number of road accident victims. The EU, the Member States and the industry need to establish an integrated approach to improve the effectiveness of these new safety technologies. The EU will adopt a plan concerning intelligent traffic-management systems drawn up by the government authorities in the interest of road safety, so as to derive maximum benefits for society as a whole.

*The impact of the new technologies on safety may be both positive and negative. The widespread emergence of mobile phones, the use of which by drivers increases the risk of a fatal accident five-fold, constitutes a new risk to which a suitable response needs to be found.*

*That is why it is necessary to come up with an appropriate framework to encourage the use of effective technologies while avoiding new risks.*



### Passive safety measures

- Develop a harmonised specification for the installation of audible or visual seat belt reminder systems and promote their widespread use by voluntary agreement.
- Promote the widespread use of universal anchorage systems for child restraint devices.
- Improve cars to reduce the severity of accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists.
- Study the causes and ways of preventing whiplash injuries.
- Support the development of intelligent restraint systems.
- Adapt to technical progress the front, side and rear-end impact directives for lorries to limit vehicle underrun, and introduce energy absorption criteria.
- Enhance vehicle compatibility.

### Active safety measures

- Examine the widescale use of daytime running lights on all vehicles.
- Improve the visibility of heavy duty vehicles.
- Eliminate blindspots towards the rear for drivers of heavy duty vehicles.
- Assess measures to reduce tyre-related accidents.
- Examine driver impairment detection devices, e.g. alcolocks and driver fatigue detectors.
- Examine national trials of intelligent speed adaptation devices and assess their acceptability to the public.
- Improve motor cycle safety through legislation or voluntary agreements.
- Examine the benefits of harmonising the approval of adaptations to vehicles for persons with reduced mobility.
- Adopt a plan concerning information and communication systems and establish the necessary regulatory framework for implementing such systems.
- Identify priority areas for the development and implementation of performance standards to optimise the man-machine interface and the road safety potential of telematics applications.

## 2.5 Periodic roadworthiness testing

Tests have to be carried out in accordance with Community legislation, but it is necessary to examine, together with the Member States, the need to include new on-board electronic systems in roadworthiness testing, and to determine and encourage best practices so as to improve the efficiency of periodic compulsory inspections at the lowest cost.

Road infrastructure improvements save lives, and the Community has an important role to play in encouraging them. To this end, it has two main means: drawing up technical guidelines at EU level for voluntary use by safety professionals, and harmonising safety engineering procedures, standards and equipment for the trans-European road network.



*Motorist associations have launched a road assessment programme known as EuroRAP (European Road Assessment Programme). The idea is to give motorists across Europe information based on objective criteria about the level of safety on the main roads they use. The Commission is supporting this new project.*

The Commission will facilitate the gathering and dissemination of information on best road-impact-assessment and audit practices so as to draw up technical guidelines with regard to infrastructure safety. In consultation with the road and rail operators, the Commission intends to work out good conduct guidelines to identify effective solutions to substantially reduce the number of people the Commission will launch several important initiatives. The first will be to harmonise signs at particularly hazardous places. The second will be to standardise the rules on checks concerning the road traffic offences which cause the most deaths and concerning compliance with social regulations. The third will concern the recasting of the Directive on driving licences.

It will be necessary to continue to improve the safety of the trans-European road network given the considerable growth in international transport. Particular attention will continue to be paid to safety in road tunnels, in particular by supporting user information projects.

In addition, the development of the innovative "intelligent road" concept will help bring about a significant improvement in road safety. In particular, the coming into service of the GALILEO European satellite positioning system will play an important role as from 2008 as a result of the accuracy that will be provided by the system and the greater reliability of the information that will be transmitted. More accurate and more efficient systems will be made available to motorists and the authorities in the following areas.

Research and demonstration projects on the topic of "intelligent roads" will be carried out as part of the European Research Programme.

## 4

**Safe commercial goods and passenger transport**

Over the last decade the number of heavy duty vehicles travelling on European roads has increased substantially. Reversing the trend in the number of accidents involving heavy duty vehicles is a challenge both for society and more directly for the road haulage sector. Truck driving is one of the most dangerous professions, and commercial drivers also have a right to a safe working environment in line with the most recent standards concerning working conditions.

- Adoption and incorporation in national legislation of a Directive on the training of commercial drivers.
- Tighter legislation (and enforcement) of driving and rest periods for commercial road haulage
- Installation of digital tachographs in commercial vehicle
- Adapting to technical progress the Community legislation concerning the carriage of hazardous goods.

- Best practice guidelines concerning company policies to reduce accident and injury risks and encouragement for the inclusion of safety as a key provision in road transport contracts.
- Making the wearing of seatbelts mandatory in coaches and heavy goods vehicles.
- Introducing protection rules for vehicles regularly used for the carriage of children.
- Examining the impact on road safety of the growing use of small commercial vehicles and company vehicles.



## 5 Emergency services and care for road accident victims

Several thousands of lives could be saved in the EU by improving the response times of the emergency services and post-impact care in the event of road traffic accidents. Conversely, poor post-impact care could lead to avoidable injury and disability. A study conducted in the UK has estimated that 12% of accident victims sustaining serious skeletal trauma go on to have significant preventable disabilities.

Detailed information on injury severity is needed for a better understanding of the potential for reducing damages through post-accident care.

Specifications will be drawn up for satellite-positioning accident-warning systems and carry out demonstration projects involving the whole chain of emergency service provision.

## 6 Accident data collection, analysis and dissemination

While accidents are random events, they are not "Acts of God", and it is necessary to understand their causes, circumstances and consequences, so that they can be managed, prevented or at least mitigated.

A special problem arises concerning post-accident investigations. At present, the investigations carried out by the judicial authorities or insurance companies are primarily intended to ensure reparation for damage caused by accidents and determine who is responsible under the provisions adopted by the legislator. However, these investigations are no substitute for the growing perceived need in Europe and the USA to have independent technical investigations the findings of which are targeted on the causes of accidents and how to improve the legislation.

These independent investigations should be carried out at national level but in accordance with a European methodology. The results should be communicated to a committee of independent experts meeting within the Commission which will be responsible for improving the legislation in force and adapting the methodology to technical developments.

### CARE, at the heart of the matter

The CARE database, based on police reports in which the data have been harmonised to make them comparable, gives a detailed picture of the circumstances of all road traffic accidents involving injury or death since 1991. To date, over 10 million accidents are recorded according to 17 basic parameters : date (year, month, day and time), place (country), infrastructure (motorway / other road, built-up area / open countryside), vehicles (categories), injured and killed (drivers / passengers / pedestrians, sex, age) and weather conditions.

CARE is available to the public via graphs and tables published on EUROPA. Specialist Institutes can also produce their own statistics on the basis of the data.

Future developments concern analysis of the causes of accidents, the determination of hazard exposure variables (age pyramid of the population, network length, volume of traffic, vehicle fleet, etc), data concerning the acceding countries and incorporation of other parameters (age of vehicle, date of issue of driving licence, type of collision, psychophysical condition of the driver, signs, etc.).

On the basis of an evaluation in progress, it will be necessary to develop the CARE database and widen access to it, in the interests of achieving greater transparency and encouraging its use.

it will also be necessary to assess and improve systems for linking hospital data and national road accident statistics and develop specifications for on-board accident recording devices, and examine the consequences of various alternatives for certain categories of vehicles.

The Commission intends to set up a European Road Safety Observatory within the Commission as a pilot project funded from the EU budget. This Observatory will coordinate all Community activities in the fields of road accident and injury data collection and analysis. Accommodating the CARE information system, it will be the focus in the EU for the exchange of information on best practice and, ultimately, organise and manage Community best practice guidelines. It could also take on the task of improving the dissemination of the findings of road safety research projects funded by the EU and those carried out under other programmes, and ensure the dissemination of information.

## 5. A European Road Safety Charter

The Commission hopes that everyone concerned will sign up to and cooperate in the Road Safety Action Programme. To this end, it proposes that everyone in authority, with decision-making powers, or acting in an economic, social or representative function should give a solemn undertakings and subscribe to a European Road Safety Charter. Apart from complying with universal principles, each signatory would undertake to implement specific actions. The commitments given will be publicised and compliance with them monitored.

MEMO is prepared by the Information and Communication Unit of DG Energy and Transport. Don't hesitate to contact us for further information (tel +32 2 2968 042)

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## European Road Safety Charter

I, the undersigned [name, address], represented by [name and position of person signing]  
 Having authority, decision-making, economic or social powers or a mandate to represent,  
 And, in this capacity having a share of the responsibility for road safety in the European Union,

Whereas the number of road accident victims in Europe at present is unacceptable, and the most effective possible measures need to be taken to reduce this number in the shortest possible time,

Whereas coordinated action between the many parties having responsibility, in one capacity or another, is more likely to achieve the intended results,

Believing that there are effective measures available to encourage road users to apply safety rules and even to take further measures, for example in order to reduce the exposure of users to the risks of accidents; and believing that the scope of such measures will be all the greater if a critical number of stakeholders commit themselves to them,

Subscribing to the objective of reducing the number of deaths on the roads by at least 50% by 2010,

Confident in the sense of responsibility of the individuals and organisations concerned,

Aware that actions to promote road safety entail extremely low costs compared with the human, social and economic cost of unsafe roads,

(Objective)

undertake to implement, proactively, the measures within the sphere of my responsibility and activities so as to speed up progress on road safety.

undertake in particular, within the bounds of my responsibility and specificities, and where necessary, in accordance with the annex to this charter, to implement the following principles and measures:

1. To take the measures within my sphere of responsibility to contribute to the abovementioned objective of reducing the number of road deaths.
2. To include road safety actions and safety performance measurement among my major objectives and principal decision-making criteria, in particular in the context of research activities, organisation and investment and in the more general framework of the organisation of professional activities, so as to draw up a veritable road safety plan.
3. To share with the competent bodies responsible for road safety technical and statistical information making for a better understanding of the causes of accidents, the injuries caused by accidents and the effectiveness of preventive and palliative measures.
4. To contribute to preventing road traffic accidents by pursuing high-quality actions in one or more of the following areas:  
 initial and continuous driving training and information,  
 motor-vehicle equipment and ergonomics,  
 infrastructure designed to minimise the risks of accidents and their gravity and to encourage safe driving.
5. To develop and implement technologies for reducing the consequences of road traffic accidents.
6. To contribute towards the development of means of uniform, continuous and appropriate monitoring of compliance with traffic rules by persons acting in my name or under my authority and penalising any offenders in a uniform, rapid and proportionate way.
7. To create a framework encouraging the introduction of continuous education actions and the rehabilitation of high-risk drivers.
8. To endeavour to contribute, wherever possible, to a better understanding of the causes, circumstances and consequences of accidents in order to draw lessons from them in order to avoid their repetition.
9. To contribute towards ensuring that effective and high-quality, medical, psychological and legal assistance is available for road accident victims.
10. To accept post-evaluations by peers, in accordance with appropriate confidentiality rules, of the measures taken to improve road safety and, where necessary, to draw lessons from them to review the measures.

AND LASTLY

11. To deliberately take the initiative of implementing measures going beyond the regulatory requirements in force, namely ..... [to be completed by the signatory].