European road safety 2011-2020

2010/2235(INI) - 21/06/2011

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Dieter-Lebrecht KOCH (EPP, ED) in response to the Commission Communication entitled ‘Towards a European road safety area: policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020’.

Firstly, the report highlights that in 2009 more than 35 000 people were killed and more than 1 500 000 injured in road accidents in the European Union. The social cost of road accidents is estimated at EUR 130 billion per year. The committee wholeheartedly endorses the objective of **halving by 2020 the total number of road deaths in the EU** by comparison with 2010, and calls for further clear and measurable targets to be set for the same period. In particular: (i) a 60 % reduction in the number of children under the age of 14 killed in road accidents; (ii) a 50 % reduction in the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed in road collisions; and (iii) a 40 % reduction in the number of people suffering critical injuries, on the basis of a **uniform EU definition to be developed quickly**.

Overall, the committee welcomes the abovementioned Commission communication, but calls on the Commission, by the end of 2011, to develop its proposals into a fully fledged action programme incorporating a detailed set of measures with clear timetables for their implementation, monitoring instruments, so that the effectiveness of the measures can be regularly checked, and provision for a mid-term review.

Members endorse the Commission’s view that if road safety is to be improved, a coherent, holistic and integrated approach is required. They call for road safety issues to be addressed in all relevant policy areas, such as education, health, environmental and social policy and police and judicial cooperation. In this respect, the Commission is called upon to improve the framework conditions for safer and more environmentally benign transport, such as walking, cycling, bus or rail, so as to encourage their use.

Members also propose, as a matter of priority, that an **EU Road Safety Coordinator** should be appointed, as part of the European Commission, by 2014, who should, *inter alia*:

- promote road safety projects;
- coordinate road safety measures within the Commission and between the Member States;
- facilitate at a high political level the preparation, implementation and enforcement of effective and coherent road safety policies in line with the EU objectives.

A **cooperation forum** should be set up where prosecutors, law enforcement authorities, victims’ associations and road safety monitoring centres can exchange information on best practices and cooperate more closely on improving implementation of road safety legislation, at both national and transnational levels.

The committee regrets that the **EU budget for road safety measures has been cut significantly** in recent years and calls on the Commission to reverse this trend.

The report considers that the public authorities and the EU have a moral and political obligation to adopt measures and actions to tackle this social problem. A complementary, long-term strategy is needed which goes beyond the period covered by the communication under consideration here and has the objective of preventing all road deaths (‘**Vision Zero**’). Being aware that this is not feasible without the **extensive use of technology in road vehicles** and the development of proper networks for ITS, Members call on the Commission to develop the central features of such a strategy and to present them within the next three

years. They call for the third Sunday in November to be recognised as the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

Improving indicators and data: the report regards high-quality, comparable data covering all road users including cyclists and pedestrians as a prerequisite for a successful road safety policy. The Commission is called upon to develop a genuine **EU road safety monitoring centre** whose task it would be to prepare a summary of existing initiatives on data collection, to make a proposal aimed at improving exchanges of data, as well as to collate data from existing databases and the knowledge gained through the implementation of EU projects such as SafetyNet, VERONICA or DaCoTa and to make it available to everyone in a readily comprehensible, annually updated form.

Areas for action:

Improving road users' training and behaviour: Members emphasise that care, consideration for others and mutual respect and observance of rules, which is directly related to the need for **systematic improvement in the quality of training by driving schools** and the quality of the procedure for issuing driving licences, are fundamental to road safety. Greater importance should be attached to the concept of lifelong learning in the area of road transport. The committee therefore supports the activity of **safe driving centres** as an effective form of systemic training of drivers in all occupational and leisure time contexts. Traffic education and road user training programmes should already start from an early age in the family and at school and should include cycling, walking and using public transport.

Members call for measures to improve the training of new drivers, such as accompanied driving from the age of 17, or the introduction of a Graduated Driver Licensing system for driver training which involves **practical instruction even after a driver has passed his or her test**. Urgent attention should be paid to the main causes of road deaths and serious injuries, such as speeding, driving while drunk or under the influence of drugs or certain medications that affect driving ability, etc.

The report calls for an **obligatory refresher courses on first aid every 10 years** for all driving licence holders. It encourages the Member States to introduce **special penalty pointssystems** for the most dangerous offences, as the most efficient supplement to financial fines.

Members call for an **eye test** for all drivers in categories A and B every 10 years and for drivers older then 65 years every 5 years. An obligatory medical check for drivers at a certain age should be introduced.

Harmonising and enforcing road traffic rules: the report calls for determined efforts to harmonise road signs and road traffic rules by 2013. It regards the enforcement of existing rules as a central pillar of the EU's road safety policy. Members call on the Commission to review legislation on driving and rest times in order to allow long-distance lorry drivers to spend their weekly rest periods at home, always providing that this can be achieved without compromising the European Union's road safety objectives. They call on the Commission to support, as a first step, the development of techniques for apprehending drivers under the influence of drugs and certain medicines which influence their fitness to drive and to propose as a second step **EU legislation to prohibit driving whilst under the influence of drugs** or medicines, with effective enforcement.

They call for an **EU-wide harmonised blood alcohol limit**. They recommend a 0 ‰, scientifically based range of tolerance for measurement for newly qualified drivers in the first 2 years and for professional drivers at all time.

The report calls for a **Europe-wide ban on the manufacture, import and distribution of systems that warn drivers of traffic checks** (e.g. radar warning and laser jamming devices, or navigation systems that automatically signal traffic checks). In addition, it calls for the introduction of an **EU-wide ban on the practice of texting, emailing or web browsing** while driving a motorised vehicle.

The Commission should draw up, within two years, a legislative proposal for a harmonised approach on **winter tyres** for passenger cars, buses and lorries in EU regions, taking into account the weather conditions in each Member State.

Members look to the Commission, by 2015, to review the implementation of the third driving licence directive and bring it into line with changing circumstances, and calls, inter alia, for due account to be taken of the fact that the private use of M1 vehicles with a weight in excess of 3.5 tonnes – in particular mobile homes – is de facto no longer possible.

Making road transport infrastructure safer: Members wholeheartedly support the Commission's proposal to make EU funding available as a matter of principle to infrastructure projects which comply with EU directives on road safety and tunnel safety, including the construction of lower-class roads. They call on the Member States to preserve and develop their road infrastructure through regular maintenance and innovative methods such as intelligent road markings that display safety distances and the direction of travel.

The report calls on the Commission and the Member States to pay greater attention to road design, to support the implementation of cost-effective measures already available and to encourage research that will enable policy-makers to understand better how road infrastructure should develop in order to improve road safety and to accommodate the specific needs of an ageing population and vulnerable road users.

Member States are called upon to draw up, and regularly update, a **map of the most dangerous 'black spots'** in their road networks, which should be made available to the public and be accessible via car navigation systems.

The report also calls for a **ban on overtaking by lorries** on dangerous sections of motorways.

Putting safer vehicles on the road: Members recommend that fitting of alcolocks – with a small, scientifically-based range of tolerance for measurement – to all new types of commercial passenger and goods transport vehicles be made compulsory. The Commission should, by 2013, prepare a **proposal for a Directive for the fitting of alcolocks**. Moreover, the report calls on the Commission to submit by 2013 a proposal designed to ensure that every new vehicle is fitted as standard equipment with an improved seat-belt reminder system for the front and rear seats which gives both auditory and visual warnings. The Commission is also called upon to draw up a proposal to fit vehicles with **'intelligent speed assistance systems'** which incorporate a timetable, details of an approval procedure and a description of the requisite road infrastructure.

Protecting vulnerable road users: Members call for greater account to be taken of the protection of vulnerable road users such as motorcyclists, pedestrians, road maintenance workers, cyclists, children, elderly people and people with disabilities as an integral aspect of road safety. The Commission, the Member States and local authorities are invited to promote 'safe routes to school' schemes in order to increase the safety of children. Cycling should be supported as mode of transport in its own right and an integral part of all transport systems. In this respect, a proposal should be submitted by the Commission laying down minimum requirements in respect of lights and reflective devices which must be met by bicycle manufacturers.