Saving lives: boosting car safety in the EU

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PURPOSE: to propose ways to enhance vehicle safety in the EU.

BACKGROUND: vehicle safety rules in force in the European Union consist of a comprehensive package with proven effectiveness and track record. The interim evaluation of this policy confirmed the important and very substantial progress in reducing road deaths.

The number of road fatalities in the EU has come down considerably during the last 13 years, namely with an approximate 53% reduction from 54 300 in 2001 to 25 900 in 2014.

This increased safety can to a large extent be attributed to EU legislative requirements on safety of vehicles that have been introduced over these years as part of the EU policy on road safety. However, **the problem of road safety remains an urgent one**. In order to reach the EU strategic target of halving the number of road deaths from approximately 31 000 in 2010 to 15 000 in 2020, additional efforts are needed.

CONTENT: this report addressed to the European Parliament and the Council concerns the **reporting on the monitoring and assessment of advanced vehicle safety features**, their cost effectiveness and feasibility for the review of the regulation on general vehicle safety and the regulation on the protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

The report provides a comprehensive overview and proposes **a way forward as regards improved vehicle safety** for the benefit of all road users.

Key areas: four main areas of action have been identified consisting of 19 specific measures to increase vehicle safety. At this stage, the selected measures indeed appear to be feasible and cost-effective but should be subject to further studies.

The **targeted measures** may be summarised as follows:

(1) Active safety measures: this main area covers measures that have the ability to avoid accidents altogether rather than to mitigate their outcome. It is generally considered the most important area of future vehicle safety legislative advancement. The safety features covered are:

- automatic emergency braking,
- intelligent speed adaptation,
- lane keep assistance,
- driver drowsiness and distraction monitoring.

(2) Passive safety measures: this area covers accident mitigation measures consisting of introduction of new requirements or enhancing of existing measures in the field of:

- emergency braking display (flashing stop lamps),
- seat belt reminder,
- frontal crash testing,
- side crash testing,
- rear crash testing,
- alcohol interlock device interface standardisation,

- crash event data recorder,
- tyre pressure monitoring.

(3) Trucks and buses: the measures under consideration to improve:

- the introduction or improvement of front-end design and direct vision,
- truck and trailer rear underrun protection (rear bumper),
- lateral protection (side guards),
- fire safety for buses.

(4) Pedestrians and cyclists: pedestrians and cyclists account for 30% of transport fatalities overall, but for almost 43% in urban areas.

This area foresees: (i) the introduction of pedestrian and cyclist detection (linked to automatic emergency braking systems), (ii) head impact protection on A-pillars and front windscreen, (iii) as well as reversing (backing up) detection of persons behind vehicles.

Future steps: the Commission has reviewed measures with potential to provide incremental but significant improvements to address a range of vehicle safety related issues. It will consider which of these might be brought forward in legislation following appropriate **impact assessments** of the costs and benefits including consideration to the cumulative impact on the competitiveness of the EU industry and a reasonable time-line allowing industrial adaptation.

Any new requirements on safety of vehicles for European roads should:

- **spur further innovation and investment** to create quality jobs in the EU and bolster the competitiveness of EU industries;
- **digitalise the internal market** via the promotion of safety features that are considered the key enabling technologies to boost and support the wide-scale automation of vehicles as well as the Energy Union objectives of reduction of CO2 in transport.