Road safety: priorities, progress report and ranking of actions

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The Council held a general discussion on the Commission's communication and then approved a resolution in which it stressed that improving road safety should be one of the main priorities of transport policy, given the unacceptable number of deaths and injuries as a result of road accidents in Europe. It, therefore, considers that progress at Community level on the following measures is essential: 1. Legislative measures: - Amendment of Directive 91/671/EEC (3) with the aim of extending compulsory use of seat belts to all vehicles already fitted with this device as standard, and making it compulsory to use type-approved child restraint systems. - Extension of the scope of Directive 92/6/EEC (4) on speed limitation devices to goods or passenger vehicles weighing over 3,5 tonnes taking into account the next evaluation report by the Commission on the experience gained in implementing that Directive. - Directive on the type-approval of vehicles with a forgiving front design, in the event of a collision, for the most vulnerable road users, in particular children, pedestrians and cyclists. - Directive on the requirement that users of motor-cycles and mopeds wear helmets. - Amendment of Directive 91/439/EEC (5) on driving licences with the aim of harmonising the subcategories in accordance with the various types of vehicles as well as targeting better the application of the medical criteria for driving licences. - Amendment of Directive 71/127/EEC (6) so as to increase the field of lateral and rear visibility, thus reducing "blind spots". - Measures relating to the problem of drunken driving: recommendation for driving under the influence of alcohol, encouraging Member States to consider, inter alia, the adoption of a maximum blood-alcohol level of 0,5 mg/ml for drivers, without prejudice to the establishment of lower general limits or lower limits for specific categories of drivers. 2. Investigative measures: - Pursuing and intensifying work under the European New Car Assessment Programme (EURO-NCAP) with a view to possibly including additional criteria concerning, in particular, active safety and the safety of pedestrians; assessing the results of the EURO-NCAP programme in terms of road safety. - Continuing to investigate road safety problems caused by the behaviour of drivers under the influence of drugs and certain medicinal products, by studying in particular the best control practices in the Member States and developing methods of detection by screening which will permit more effective control. - Continuing investigative work aimed at establishing rules for the application of telematic systems in vehicles, given the current importance of the development of such systems and the need to increase knowledge of their effects in terms of road safety. - Continuing to investigate the use of advanced assisted driving technology, relating both to vehicles and infrastructure, which has considerable potential for improving road safety. - Continuing to evaluate technology relating to speed limitation devices and to identify any technical, organisational,administrative and legal difficulties in introducing them; defining a coherent strategy to eliminate those obstacles and promote the marketing of such technology. - Continuing and developing work on the protection of car occupants in the event of rear impact (whiplash). - Investigating the scope for using devices which prevent the engine from starting if the maximum blood-alcohol level authorised at national level has been exceeded. - Continuing work on the installation in vehicles of devices reminding users to wear belts with a view to developing specifications. - Examining whether a requirement that cyclists wear helmets might not have negative repercussions for cycling and assessing the problems of applying such a measure in practice. - Continuing to look into the advantages and the consequences of permanent use of dipped headlights or special lights by vehicles for day-time driving. - Examining the possible secondary effects of air bags' being activated particularly in the event of a multiple impact. - Studying the affects and means of possible compulsory installation in light vehicles of adjustable devices warning of speed-limit infringements, which drivers could operate. 3. Information measures: - Promoting the dissemination of the results of the test campaigns conducted in the framework of the EURO-NCAP programme. - Facilitating and reinforcing the exchange of information on road safety, particularly by exploiting the Community CARE (7) database on road accidents, since the availability of qualitative and quantitative information makes it possible to establish priorities and the measures to be taken to define road safety policies. -

Promoting campaigns to raise awareness of the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and speeding. - Promoting campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of the use of seat belts by vehicle users and of helmets in the case of those using two-wheeled vehicles. - Setting up and administering an integrated information system collecting, comparing, interpreting and disseminating statistics on all aspects of road safety in the European Union. - Encouraging the exchange of information at European level on first aid for accident victims, since improving the effectiveness of that aid is one of the factors which has helped to reduce the number of road deaths. - Establishing guidelines for the dissemination of information on best practice for designing "forgiving" infrastructure and defining policies for eliminating black spots, as well as for informing drivers of their existence. - Promoting exchange of information on the best strategies for awareness campaigns. In conclusion, the Council: - supports the Commission Recommendation which aims at encouraging Member States' national, regional and local authorities to calculate expenditure on road safety measures and to monitor their effects, in order to compare expenditure with savings calculated on the basis of the total cost of accidents avoided; - invites the abovementioned authorities to increase their investment in road safety projects and create new incentives, inparticular financial incentives, designed to speed up investment at all levels; - encourages the Member States to implement the Convention on Driving Disqualifications, signed on 17 June 1998; - invites the Member States to complete the work already initiated under the Schengen Convention aimed at drawing up a cooperation agreement on proceedings for road traffic offences and the enforcement of financial penalties imposed in respect thereof. In addition, the Council invites the Commission to: - submit as quickly as possible the legislative proposals referred to above; - continue work on investigative and information measures; - continue, in cooperation with the Member States, work aimed at improving the quality of the CARE database and harmonising the concepts used; - take into account when drafting its next action programme any measures which could reduce the harmful consequences of inappropriate speed for road safety; the wisdom of setting a target figure for a reduction in the total number of victims on the roads of the Community.