Road safety: halving the number of road accident victims by 2010

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Following an exchange of views, the Council adopted the following conclusions on road safety in which it agrees on the need to focus road safety policies on the following four important areas of road

safety:

1) Enforcement and best practices : the enforcement of rules and a widespread use of best practices are two basic factors for being successful in road safety policy on European level as well as on national, regional and local level. The following considerations and actions are of importance : Traffic rules have to be effective for road safety, credible for the road users and enforceable; Enforcement of traffic safety is part of an integrated road safety policy. Enforcement therefore should be a common and unrelenting effort, recognising each player's role and responsibility but also the need for cooperation. In this respect, recently started efforts at EU level as part of the work programme of the European Commission are welcomed; Technological means play an increasing role in support of enforcement. In the future, some of these might replace conventional enforcement in specific cases. It is certainly of interest to follow closely these developments and to exchange experiences with regard to automatic speed control systems, speed warning or speed limiting devices, the alcohol lock and seat belt reminders, to stimulate further developments of such devices and to promote the introduction of such devices; Enforcement directly linked to public information campaigns is a successful combination and should be further promoted. In this respect, European-wide campaigns followed by comparisons of the results in the participating countries should be supported; The improvement of cross-border enforcement enhances the credibility and effectiveness of enforcement in general. An implementation of a European system of cooperation for the settlement of penalties for foreign offenders and for the verification of driver license

validity should be considered at Community level within the suitable framework; With regard to road safety enforcement, priority should be given to roads with high accident risks, and to driver behaviour that causes high accident risks or could have severe consequences, like speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, non-use of seat belts. This makes data collection and distribution essential for effective enforcement; Incentives and programmes to promote a widespread use of surveillance techniques, traffic management systems, automatic information systems, systems dedicated to automatic maintenance systems, should be further developed; Promote and organise tools for an information exchange between national and regional governments as well as local administrations regarding best practices, including effects of applied penalties and penalty systems for road safety offences.

2) Vehicle safety : in the last decades the automobile industry has made a major effort to increase vehicle safety. But much can be done to further improve the safety of road vehicles. Without this, the ambitious goals for road safety will not be attainable. The following considerations are of importance: Many lives can be saved by new intelligent safety features integrating both active and passive safety systems. The industry is urged to implement them as quickly and widely as economically possible and sustainable for the users; knowledge about the cause of accidents and the possible benefits of new technology is insufficient. Member States and the European Commission (for accidentology) and industry (for the assessment of technology) have a shared responsibility to improve the situation; Exchanging views between industry and governments about the future of vehicle safety is essential to make progress. Specifically, road operators have an important role in the realisation of an intelligent road infrastructure and databases required to optimise the benefits to be derived from intelligent vehicles. Member States, the European Commission and industry should make a joint effort to create opportunities for a more

intensified collaboration; Like environmental friendliness, vehicle safety is not always easy to sell to the customer. The mandatory label on fuel economy, test results of Euro-NCAP or demonstrations are examples of ways governments can increase customer awareness and support the sale of well-performing vehicles. An exchange of views and experiences in this field would be welcomed; In the commercial transport sector an improved safety performance will reduce costs. This can be a good incentive for the inclusion of vehicle safety standards in the corporate safety strategy ("safety culture"); Authorities have a role to play in promoting the installation and use of advanced safety features, by including them in their procurement criteria for their vehicles. The Council also urges the Community's continued engagement in the wider international development of vehicle safety standards through UNECE regulations, developed by the World Forum for Harmonisation of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29).

3) Improving safety on European roads : in order to develop a widespread improvement of the safety of the European road network, the following measures appear to be promising : Identify roads with the highest number of victims of road accidents and analyse the relevant conditions and risk factors on the basis of common and shared principles, so as to guarantee risk assessment criteria shared throughout the European Union; Define medium and long-term plans at the appropriate level aimed at gradually increasing safety levels on roads by analysing the causes of accidents and by giving top priority to the

roads where the highest number of accident victims or the highest intensity of collisions relative to traffic intensity occurs; Foster road network maintenance programmes using GIS and other innovative techniques for monitoring road conditions, traffic flows and road accidents' victims, with the aim of

increasing the road safety level; Develop programmes for improving the protection of vulnerable users, especially by reserving lanes of the existing road surface for pedestrians and cyclists only. Speed management is also an essential tool in the protection of vulnerable road users; Include road safety audit and impact assessment as well as road safety criteria in investment or incentive programmes concerning the construction or maintenance of infrastructure; Develop national and regional training programmes for public and private technicians to promote a broader training in all road safety relevant skills and to improve the identification of risk factors and establish the most effective measures and actions to remove or limit them; Set up structures and tools to promote and organise an appropriate information exchange between public administrations in charge of road safety, information on the best ways to identify major risk factors, on the most effective measures to remove them, on the results of such actions and on the ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions carried out; Set up information campaigns aimed at giving citizens adequate, understandable and accurate information on the situations with highest risks and raise the awareness of the various risk factors; Encourage industry, operators, organisations and local and regional authorities to commit themselves to concrete road safety actions by signing the European Road Safety Charter.

4) Funding road safety : Defining a process to access financial resources for road safety investment and to use existing resources in the most efficient way is extremely important for the achievement of the objective of halving the number of road accident victims by 2010. The following measures appear to be

promising : Affirm the importance that road safety is an integral component of the design, construction, improvement, maintenance and upkeep of all roads, and is fully provided for in road funding regimes; Develop programmes and measures at the appropriate level, aimed at fostering an increase in investments in road safety, as well as more efficient use of existing resources, keeping as top priority the most dangerous roads, and strengthening the technical structures for checking road safety; Promote extended cooperation projects between cities and regions to demonstrate, validate and disseminate innovative and cost effective road safety solutions; Encourage collaboration with private companies, evaluating also the possibility of promoting public-private cooperation and the investment of private financial resources for road safety; Consider the possibility of allocating a percentage of vehicle taxes, motorway fees, insurance premiums, et cetera, to road safety improvements and for example, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, to a road safety fund; Encourage insurance companies to find ways to reward safe driving

and stimulate the use of safe vehicles; Consider the possibility of allocating a part of fines for traffic offences to road safety improvements.