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

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Ari VATANEN (EPP-ED, FR) in response to the Commission proposal on a European road safety programme ("Halving the number of road accident victims in the EU by 2010: a shared responsibility").

The report said that cross-border enforcement of road traffic law remained very unsatisfactory, and argued that the time was ripe for a Community-wide approach to enable authorities to follow up offences and penalties imposed in another Member State . The committee also felt that enforcing compliance with existing road traffic rules would dramatically improve road safety, as most accidents were the result of a failure to comply with traffic rules.

MEPs made a number of recommendations aimed at improving and strengthening the Commission proposal. They called for road safety education, legislation and control measures to focus on higher-risk groups, such as truck and coach drivers and male car drivers aged under 25. Particular attention should also be paid to the protection and safety of vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The report noted that the risk of death in motorcycle or moped travel was 17 times higher than in car travel and that walking or cycling was up to nine times riskier.

The Commission was strongly urged to propose basic harmonisation of road signs and information "as a first step towards a European system of road signs with uniform colour, shape, typeface and symbols, followed by the equipment of roads with intelligent traffic management and information systems".

MEPs felt that particular attention should be paid to a number of solutions which modern technology could provide, such as seat belt reminders and advanced restraint systems, electronic stability control (ESC), speed limitation systems, and eCall (emergency call).

Lastly, the report regretted that the Third Road Safety Action Programme did not particularly highlight the road safety problems in densely populated areas, where most accidents happen, and that there was no mention of the ways in which public transport can contribute to reducing the number of road accidents.