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

2004/2162(INI) - 29/09/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the own-initiative report drafted by **VATANEN** (EPP-ED, FR) on the European Road Safety Action Programme. (Please see the summary of 15/06/2005.) Parliament noted that every year, more than 40 000 deaths are caused by road traffic accidents in the EU. In addition to the unacceptable human suffering, there are the related direct and indirect costs, estimated at EUR 180 billion or 2% of EU GNP, concerned by the low levels of road safety especially in many of the 10 new Member States. If all the Member States were to achieve the same results as the United Kingdom and Sweden, the number of fatalities would fall by 17 000 a year in the Union of 25 Member States, representing a reduction of 39% and thus a great step forward, but falling short of the 50% target.

Parliament felt that exchange of best practice and coordination of common policies call for enhanced policy coordination, the dissemination of irrefutable data so as to place poor performers under pressure and a more structured approach than has been the case so far. The vital tasks for which a common approach is needed include, for instance, the following: analysing and publishing data as well as safety-performance indicators, and harmonising accident statistics (and their subsequent inclusion in a EU database).

Parliament was convinced that only an integrated approach involving all aspects of road safety, namely all road users and all users and purchasers of transport services and especially the driver , the vehicle and the infrastructure– together with incentives to make greater use of public transport – and effective legislation in the Member States, can lead to significant and lasting results.

High-quality training for drivers, instructors and law enforcement officers is of great importance. Parliament called on the Commission to promote training, as early as in primary schools, as well as life-long driver education with due regard to the needs of specific groups such as the elderly, disabled people or immigrants. It also called for the rapid introduction of the European driving licence not least with a view to enabling the physical and mental faculties of drivers and their driving skills to be checked over time.

Parliament went on to note that 91% of motorists want greater harmonisation of road signs across Europe in order to improve road safety. The Commission is asked to respond by taking effective measures to improve traffic signing systems and driver behaviour. Parliament urged the Commission to investigate identified problems such as the over-abundance of road signs and the deficient understanding of signs. There must be user-friendly and up-to-date information about the traffic signing systems used in the Member States, thus facilitating cross-border traffic.

Finally, Parliament referred to the huge selection of technologies, and specified the solutions that should receive particular attention. These include seat belt reminders and advanced restraint systems and Electronic Stability Control as well as Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA), which could reduce crashes by around 35% as a compulsory and intervening system.