Transport policy: proposals and action programme for 2010. White Paper

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The Transport White Paper adopted in 2001 proposed the target of halving the number of road fatalities by 2010. This target was subsequently repeated in the European road safety action programme adopted in 2003. This communication is the midterm review announced in the programme adopted in 2003.

Overall figures for the EU: In 2001, 50 000 people were killed on the roads in the countries which today make up the EU. The joint target proposed in 2001 and updated after enlargement in 2004 is that by 2010 there should be no more than 25 000 fatalities a year. The figures for 2005 show that about 41 600 people were killed on the roads, a fall (albeit too small) of 17.5% over 4 years. At the present rate, road deaths in the EU in 2010 are likely to stand at 32 500, and the target of a maximum of 25 000 will probably not be achieved. The trend over the last ten years shows a fall in 2001, however, that is worth a closer look:

- Between 1994 and 2000, the number of people killed on the roads fell by an average of only 2% a year, while the number of accidents rose very slightly. The technical improvements made to vehicles would seem to be the main reason behind this trend.

- Between 2001 and 2005, the number of people killed on the roads fell by an average of 5% a year, and the number of accidents fell by an average of 4% a year, and 5% between 2003 and 2004; this parallel trend in the major indicators corresponds to the dates of entry into force of voluntary road safety plans in most of the Member States.

In considering the statistics by category of users, vehicles and accident types, it is seen that the trend is not uniform:

- The number of motorcyclists killed as a proportion of total road deaths, a figure which was relatively stable at around 9.5% until 1996, has risen relentlessly in the meantime to 14% in 2003.

- In overall terms, the number of motorcyclists killed rose by 5.6% between 2000 and 2003, while the total number of people killed on the roads fell by 12% over the same period. Some figures are alarming: in Italy, Belgium, Sweden and the United Kingdom the numbers of motorcyclists killed on the roads rose by 40%, 39%, 21% and 15%, respectively. In France there has been a significant reversal of the trend: an increase of 10% between 2000 and 2002 followed by a fall of 8% in 2003 compared with 2002.

-Young people between 18 and 25 are a high-risk group: these people represent 10% of the population as a whole but accounted for 21% of all fatalities in 2003, with four-fifths of those killed being male.

- Pedestrians over 65 years of age account for about 27% of all pedestrians killed, more than their percentage of the population as a whole (18%).

- Lorries are involved in 6% of all accidents but 16% of fatal accidents, confirmation of the most serious nature of these accidents. However, the number of lorries involved in accidents is falling faster than the overall accident rate.

- Accidents outside built-up areas (but not on motorways) are the most serious: they represent only 28% of all accidents, but account for 60% of all road accident victims.

- Accidents in built-up areas account for 67% of all accidents and 31% of all road accident victims.

- Motorways account for 5% of accidents and 9% of fatalities.

The road safety performance of the new Member States following the most recent enlargement is not as good as the average situation in the EU before 2004. While some of these countries saw dramatic improvements in the early 1990s, their situation since 2001 has basically been the same as that of several of the EU-15 Member States. The problems are not specific to the enlargement countries. They are the same everywhere, but with different degrees of progress over time.

Analysis of recent trends shows that in terms of changes in the number of people killed between 2001 and 2004, nine Member States (Germany, Estonia, , France, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden) have reduced at a faster rate than the average for the 25 (-14%); in eight other Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Finland, and the United Kingdom) there has been limited progress (a fall of at least 5%, but less than the average rate); in six others (Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia), progress has been very slow or there has been a slight backward trend (a maximum rate of progress of 5%, more or less, compared with the figures for 2001); the situation has got worse in Cyprus and Lithuania. These figures must nevertheless be treated with caution, especially in the very small Member States where a small number of serious accidents greatly affect the national result.

The paper goes on to discuss the new road safety plans and community action since 2001.The full list of legislation adopted since 2001, the list of proposals still at the interinstitutional negotiation stage and a selection of European projects and studies are given in a Commission staff working paper which contains accident statistics (Part 1), summaries by Member States (Part 2), an overview of EU legislation on road safety (Part 3), a selection of projects financed by the Commission in this area (Part 4), and some examples of the commitments entered into by citizens in the framework of the European Road Safety Charter (Part 5).

The Commission considers that in overall terms, road safety is improving in the EU. Faster progress is being made than in the past, but it is patchy and there is still a lot of room for further improvement.

Constructive action is being taken in all the relevant areas: infrastructure, behaviour, vehicles. The European Union and the Member States as well as all the other parties vested with “shared responsibility” must do more in order to achieve the ambitious common objective. In light of this, the Commission will give consideration to additional measures within the framework of the mid term review of the Transport White Paper.