# European road safety action programme, 2003. Mid-term review

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PURPOSE: to present a mid-term review of the European Road Safety Action Programme.

CONTENT: both the 2001 Transport White Paper and the European Road Action programme, adopted in 2003, have set a target of halving the number of road fatalities in the EU by 2010. Key to achieving this target is the concept of "shared responsibility". In accordance with this principle, action has been taken at a local level (roads have been made safer); at an individual level (encouraging more responsible behaviour) at an industry level (safer vehicles in response to consumer demand) and at a Community level. This Communication acts as the mid-term review of the European Road Action Programme. In summary, the mid-term review makes the following findings:

**Overall figures:**

In 2001, 50 000 people were killed on the roads. The joint target proposed in 2001, and updated after enlargement in 2004, states 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 – in other words a fall of 17.5% over a four year period. Based on current trends, road deaths in the EU by 2010 are estimated to stand at 32 500. The maximum target of 25 000 will probably not be met. Further statistics, however, are worth examining:

- Between 1994 and 2000 the number of people killed on the roads fell by an average of only 2% per year, while the number of accidents rose very slightly. The technical improvements made to vehicles would seem to 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. Interestingly, 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.

Statistics for motor-cycle accidents look more worrying and in many countries show a sharp increase. In overall terms, the number of motorcyclists killed rose by 5.6% between 2000 and 2003 compared to the total number of people killed on the roads, which fell by 12% over the same period. A further figure highlights the continuing vulnerability of the 18-25 age group as being at high risk from fatal road accidents. Although they represent 10% of society as a whole they nevertheless accounted, in 2003, for 21% of all road 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 prior to 2004. While some have seen dramatic improvements in the early 1990's, their situation, since 2001, has basically been the same as that of several of the EU-15 Member States.

The mid-term review also assesses recent trends in road safety measures. In 2001, the White Paper on Transport and the 2003 action plan encouraged several Member States to adopt national road safety plans, which many (who had not already done so) enacted. Other Member State initiatives include strengthening controls and penalties; information schemes to help create a road safety culture and the adoption of initiatives to combat driving while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medicines.

**Community Action since 2001:**

Under this heading the Commission sets out what action has been taken since 2001, presents a list of all legislation adopted since 2001 concerning road safety, presents a list of proposals being negotiated and sets out a selection of European projects and studies currently under way in the field of road safety. The kind of actions under taken refer to the promotion of passive safety (making it compulsory to wear a seat belt); eSafety (such as implementation of the eCall initiative); CARS-21 (the compulsory use of onboard systems in vehicles) and the development of safe infrastructure (European road assessment programme and the European tunnels assessment programme.) In other initiatives proposals are afoot to recast and extend existing legislation on driving licenses by toughening up the rules on gradual access to motorcycles and very heavy goods vehicles as well as introducing a driving licence for mopeds.

The Commission is also considering an amendment to Annex III of the driving licences Directive so that it meets modern standards for vision, epilepsy and diabetes and the physical fitness of professional drivers. Further, the action programme seeks to protect, as well as to educate, users at risk and vulnerable users such as children and adolescents, young adults, senior citizens, pedestrians and cyclists, moped and motorcycle drivers and disabled users.

To conclude, in overall terms, road safety is improving in the European Union. Faster progress is being made than in the past – but this is patchy and a lot remains to be done if the EU is to meet is stated target of reducing all road deaths by 2010. The Commission, therefore, calls on the Member States and all other interested parties to do more and do it better 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.