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

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Ewa HEDKVIST PETERSEN (PES, SE) in response to the Commission's mid-term review of the EU Road Safety Action Programme. The report expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in reaching the target of halving the number of road fatalities in the EU by 2010, and called for "a higher level of political commitment" to road safety in all Member States and EU institutions. Member States were urged to enforce the present legislation, which MEPs said would ensure a great improvement in road safety if it were fully observed by road users.

The committee made a number of other recommendations:

- an EU-wide zero alcohol limit should be introduced for new drivers as well as for bus drivers and professional commercial drivers involved in the transport of hazardous goods;

- as unclear or inconsistent road signs cause unnecessary risks, the Commission should come up with a study on harmonising road signs in Europe;

- the Commission should consider the creation of a common minimum standard for driving instructors with test and certification;

- given the large number of accidents and deaths at road work zones, the Commission should develop common guidelines for such zones;

- Member States should make the use of hands-free mobile telephone systems compulsory for car, bus and commercial drivers;

- Member States should step up their efforts to ensure that the use of seat belts is increased in all vehicles, especially buses;

- the Commission should launch a European-wide information campaign advocating breaks in driving every two hours to combat tiredness in drivers;

- the Commission should impose a general ban on overtaking for vehicles weighing more than 12 tonnes on one- and two-lane roads;

- out of the "huge selection" of technologies, particular attention should be given to the following: seat belt reminders and advanced restraint systems; Electronic Stability Control (ESC); speed limitation systems; alcohol interlocks; predictive safety systems (such as emergency brake assistant, adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning system, etc.); and eCall;

- the Commission and the Member States should propose measures "based on an evaluation of the awareness of the single European emergency call number 112" in order to improve the situation in the EU.