Road safety: compulsory use of belts for children under 12 years of age (amend. Directive 91/671 /EEC)

2000/0315(COD) - 08/04/2003 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: To improve road safety, in particular for children. COMMUNITY MEASURE: Directive 2003/20/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 91/671/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to compulsory use of safety belts in vehicles of less than 3.5 tonnes. CONTENT: The directive defines the EU's regulatory framework relating to the use and conditions for use of safety belts and child restraints and relating to the relevant technical rules. Specifically, the draft directive extends the scope of Directive 91/671/EEC and requires all vehicle occupants to use the safety belts provided (M1, M2, M3, N1, N2 and N3 vehicles, defined in Annex II to Directive 70/156/EEC) and requires children travelling in private cars or vans (M1 and N1 vehicles) to use an appropriate restraint. Under this legislation, the Member States will be able, in order to be able to address very specific situations, to authorise national exemptions which go further than the exemptions laid down at Community level. They will be either permanent or temporary, depending on the case. In particular, there is a temporary exemption of no more than five years for school buses and temporary exemption of no more than six years for situations where the number of people seated in the rear seats in private vehicles is greater than the number of available safety belts or restraint systems (the 'large families' exemption). Member States will also be required to take the necessary steps in order to avoid abuses of the national exemptions. With regard to car safety for children under three years of age, it will be for the Member States to choose the arrangements that apply pending the introduction of appropriate Community arrangements. ENTRY INTO FORCE: 09/05/2003. IMPLEMENTATION: 09/05/2006.