VOICE

Vulnerable road user Organisations In Cooperation across Europe

A Europe-wide campaign to protect vulnerable road users

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Road Safety: we must do more

The press release the Commission published outlining the mid term review of the Third Road Safety Action Programme was titled "Road safety: we must do more". The VOICE network agrees with the European Commission that they must indeed do more to provide the leadership and political will needed to reduce the excessive levels of death and injury on our roads.

As the Commission now reviews the implementation of the objectives agreed for the Common Transport policy (including the third Road Safety Action Programme) the VOICE network urges them to take the action they have correctly identified as necessary.

When reviewing the Common Transport Policy Objectives the Commission should ensure much more is undertaken in the sphere of "placing users at the heart of transport policy". European leadership is necessary so as to ensure that Member States implement actions that:

- Deliver a transport system designed and accessible for all users
- Effectively manage speed with lower limits and stronger speed limit enforcement
- Strongly enforce traffic laws in general and improves access to justice for victims and their families
- Deliver improved technologies for the protection of vulnerable road users, not just car occupants
- Promote a shift to safer transport via higher quality affordable public transport and improved conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

The Third road Safety Action Programme has aimed to deliver the road safety goal outlined in the Common Transport Policy White Paper. The approach of the programme is to ensure all stakeholders accept their responsibility for increasing road safety. The mid term review of this programme has highlighted that more needs to be done. The Commission should now accept its own share of responsibility by adopting proposals for action in all the areas of concern to VOICE and ensure that users, especially the most vulnerable, begin to be placed at the heart of transport policy.

This short position paper will outline the concrete actions the Commission now needs to take to deliver the target of halving road deaths by 2010 and begin to adequately protect the most vulnerable on our roads.

The Members of the VOICE Network are:
AGE – The European Older People's Forum. ANEC – The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation. BEUC – The European Consumers' Organisation. EEN - The EPHA Environment Network. ECSA - The European Child Safety Alliance. EDF - The European Disability Forum. T&E - The European Federation for Transport and Environment. ETSC - The European Transport Safety Council. Voetgangersbeweging (Pedestrian Movement) / International Federation of Pedestrians.

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1. Deliver a transport system designed and accessible for all users

The focus of attention for policy makers tends to be motorised transport and efforts to curb congestion, ease traffic flows and protect car occupants. These are worthy goals, but the needs of other transport users tend to be neglected or added on as an afterthought. A more systemic approach needs to be taken to that the needs of all users are considered from the outset. A worrying result of considering the needs of pedestrians as an afterthought in the design of transport policy is the excessive number of pedestrian deaths (a fifth of all road deaths) and the number of those who are older people: nearly half of all pedestrian deaths (48%) are people over the age of 65 (2004 in EU15)[1]. With an ageing population it is vitally important that much more attention is paid to the needs of all transport users, including older pedestrians, in the design of the transport system, and the mix of policies implemented to deliver this design.

Recommendation:
The Commission should develop best practice guidelines for the elaboration of transport plans and policies that include "design for all criteria". These should then form the basis of a recommendation.

2. Effectively manage speed with lower limits and stronger speed limit enforcement.

The protection of vulnerable road users is most strongly served by the effective management of speed. Whether it be on residential urban roads or inter-urban rural roads lowering speeds is the key to reducing vulnerable road user deaths. Presently the speed limits in place in some Member States continue to be set too high on these road types to protect vulnerable road users (e.g. Slovakia still has an urban speed limit norm of 60Kph). The Commission should issue a framework Directive on speed limits that specifies what speed limits are appropriate for defined road categories (a recommendation of the consultants they contracted to review the Common Transport Policy). This Directive need not be without exemptions for Member States, indeed it could conceivably include a definition of road types (arterial routes into cities for example with limited pedestrian access) that would be exempt from blanket speed limits. What it would usefully accomplish, however, would be the establishment of minimal standards for speed management that protect the most vulnerable.

Member States also need to ensure that once speed limits protecting vulnerable road users are put in place, they are effectively enforced. Increasing the subjective risk of detection for speeding motorists with fixed and mobile speed cameras, allied to information campaigns on enforcement, does pay dividends (the ESCAPE project estimated that such enforcement activities would reduce overall deaths by 14 000 in the EU15 if applied to speed, drink driving and seat belt use). But for greater levels of enforcement in the future in vehicle technologies are available that aid both the driver and the authorities to manage speed and thus protect our most vulnerable citizens. Intelligent speed adaptation devices also have the benefit of being able to effectively manage speed at the most dangerous locations (outside schools, residential homes etc.) without expensive infrastructure investments from authorities. The end of the speed hump will be equally welcomed by motorists as well as vulnerable road users – particularly cyclists.

1. Figures from the CARE database as published in the mid term review of the third road safety action programme.

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Recommendations:

- *The European Commission should adopt a framework Directive on speed management that implements the recommendations of their consultants that reviewed the Common Transport policy.*
- *Mandatory fitment of "Intelligent Speed Adaptation" equipment on all new cars.*

3. Stronger enforcement of traffic laws in general and improved access to justice for victims and their families.

It is not just the improved enforcement of speed limits that would aid the protection of vulnerable road users, it is a more general improvement in traffic law enforcement. Whether this be better enforcement of drink drive laws, or more mundane laws relating to parking on pedestrian crossings, improved enforcement producing better and safer behaviour from drivers will aid the protection of pedestrians and cyclists.

Additionally there are concerns that the victims of traffic crime are too frequently given less attention than victims of other crimes, and that there is very little access to justice for those that are injured or bereaved as a result of a traffic crime. The Commission should elaborate best practice guidelines in this area and promote their application via a Recommendation. The area of Justice and Home Affairs is one where the Community has a very limited competence. However, this should not be used as an excuse for inaction and the development and promotion of best practice guidelines via a Commission Recommendation would have European added value.

Recommendations:

- *Adopt a proposal for a Directive on traffic law enforcement best practice.*
- *Adopt a recommendation outlining best practice for facilitating access to justice for the victims of traffic crime and their families.*

4. Deliver improved technologies for the protection of vulnerable road users, not just car occupants

The Commission is due to adopt a proposal for a Regulation replacing the current Directive on safer car fronts safer for vulnerable road users (Directive 2003/102/EC). In the public consultation of a draft of this proposal in the summer of 2005 VOICE members urged the Commission to ensure that the proposal adequately protected vulnerable road uses and be strengthened in three key areas:

I. retention of a standard for the upper leg to bonnet leading edge test
II. amendment to promote additional safety benefits of active safety equipment rather than allowing these benefits to substitute passive safety improvements
III. a faster time frame for implementation

In addition more needs to be undertaken by the Commission to facilitate the marketing of technologies that benefit our most vulnerable road users. In addition to the extensive financial resources the Commission has already contributed to the research and development costs of technologies in this area, the Commission should explore what actions it could undertake to facilitate the marketing and use of existing devices (improved braking systems, alcohol interlocks, blind spot detection of vulnerable road users etc.). Facilitating

the adoption of standards for these technologies that could be used by Member States, both as the basis for fiscal incentives or the definition of public procurement requirements, would be a contribution the Commission could usefully fulfil.

Recommendations:

- *Adopt a strong proposal for a regulation on safer car fronts*
- *Promote Active safety technologies that currently exist with the elaboration of standards Member States would be able to use in setting fiscal incentives and public procurement requirements.*

5. Promote a shift to safer transport via higher quality affordable public transport and improved conditions for cyclists and pedestrians

The White Paper on the Common Transport Policy made much of the need to achieve a rebalancing of modes so as to tackle congestion and reduce traffic pollution. Less emphasis was given to the safety benefits a modal shift from cars to public transport would achieve. As a result much of the focus of the White Paper on "rebalancing the modes" focused on the freight sector rather than the passenger sector. Ensuring that the offer of public transport is of high quality, and is accessible to all – particularly in terms of cost – is key to facilitating such modal shift. The Commission should elaborate best practice guidelines that establish quality and accessibility criteria for public transport and promote their implementation by the Member States. The widespread use of Community funds in the transport sector is one area where the Commission should examine how such guidelines can be facilitated by Community action.

The modal rebalancing of the passenger sector also needs to promote walking and cycling as healthy modes of transport. However, for this to be effectively a health positive action needs to be taken to reduce the risks motorised traffic pose to these healthy modes. The provision of improved infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as initiatives promoting safer walking and cycling (e.g. more reflective clothing for children and increasing cycle helmet use) need to be facilitated. The Commission does have a limited role here, but it could do much more to facilitate the dissemination of best practice and ensure that Member States are squaring the circle between promotion of healthy transport modes and reducing road risk.

Recommendations:

- *Adopt public transport performance standards with design for all criteria that include affordability which Member States can use in their call for tenders for public passenger transport services.*
- *Establish a new programme that facilitates the exchange of best practice on the promotion of healthy modes whilst reducing road risk.*

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