

Third Road Safety Action Programme - Mid-Term Review

When the European Commission adopted its 3rd Road Safety Action Programme¹ in 2003 (2003-2010) to halve the number of road accident victims in the European Union by 2010, it also committed to carry out a Mid-term Review in 2005 and to propose legislation if there was no substantial drop in the number of deaths. This Review has been delayed and, as it stands, is not going to include any legislative proposal to the disappointment of road safety stakeholders.

The Mid-term Review of the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme (3RSAP), which will monitor national targets and measures implemented, can only deliver its results if the analysis is also followed by action, including legislative if necessary. But there will be no legislation proposal accompanying the Mid-term Review. Moreover, the 3rd RSAP has so far failed to introduce a timescale for actions and a clear indication of which actions will deliver what kind of results. The Commission has now only five years to translate good intentions on paper into successful interventions on the road.

Facts and figures of road safety in Europe

Road transport remains the main cause of death among all EU citizens under the age of 45. It kills around 130 persons every day, the equivalent of a medium-sized plane accident with no survivors.

Despite some singular national achievements, the EU road safety policy is far from being a success story and the gap between the best- and the worst-performing Member States is widening. In 2004, approximately 43,500 people were killed on European roads, which means a reduction of only 13% over three years. Hence, if no further measures are introduced, it is likely that only 40% of the death reduction target set will be reached by 2010.

Increased inequalities within the EU and among Road users

The risk of death on EU roads is substantially higher for vulnerable road users (8-9 times higher for pedestrians and cyclists). The statistics for motorcyclists are also particularly worrying. If the actual trend continues, in 2010 one out of three road fatalities might be a motorcyclist instead of one out of six today.

The average fatality risk in the Southern, Central and Eastern European countries (the "SEC Belt countries") is about three times higher than the EU average. Deaths continue to rise in certain Member States already at the bottom end of the table, such as Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Cyprus and Greece².

The costs of road accidents are estimated to be euros 180 billion.

ETSC positions

- ETSC endorses the European Commission approach and measures proposed in the White Paper and in the 3rd RSAP. However, it calls for a more urgent and robust approach by the EU and Member States. The EU can no longer delay and fail to implement known and affordable safety measures if it is to reach the EU target set.
- ETSC calls for the adoption of a Directive on road infrastructure safety. Such Directive would allow a substantial improvement of the road network, introducing an EU harmonised system for the treatment of high risk sites, road safety audits and safety impact assessment on the Trans-European Road Networks and on all EU-funded infrastructure.
- ETSC would support the proposal of a Directive that would improve cross-border enforcement of traffic law in order to avoid that non-resident drivers flout

traffic laws when travelling abroad as they do not fear punishment.

- More than sharing responsibility, Member States, the European Commission and the automotive industry should “take” their responsibilities. The development of guidelines on implementing best practice by Member States should not replace the need for an EU Directive on any given matter, but should instead represent a step toward concise legislation at EU level.
- In addition, those speaking for the automotive industry as a whole should look towards what they

can responsibly contribute to safety rather than repeatedly claiming improving car technology is too costly. Technologies exist, such as Intelligent Speed Adaptation, speed limiters and data recorders that are cost-effective, publicly accepted and could make a major contribution to saving lives.

- ETSC strongly supports the European Commission monitoring of national targets and implementation of measures. The targets already set by Member States are challenging and achievable. But Member States have to pursue their effort as they could do much more.

Recommendations to the Commission and Member States:

In order to achieve the 2010 target, the European Commission must do the following:

1. Introduce performance indicators in national road safety programmes.
2. Establish a European methodology for independent road accident investigation and improve accident data collection, analysis and dissemination.
3. Reduce the differences in risk between Member States by developing best practice guidelines in enforcement and infrastructure.
4. Table without delay a Directive on infrastructure safety.
5. Mobilise the political will to take out of the drawer the blocked Directive on the driving licence, especially as there is an increasing will to establish a harmonised cross-border enforcement system.
6. Introduce a Directive on cross-border enforcement, while Member States continue to account their progress made in implementing the European Commission’s Recommendation on enforcement.
7. Table without delay the promised Directive on retrofitting of blind spot mirrors for trucks.
8. Table without delay the promised Directive on daytime running lights.
9. Introduce technologies such as seat-belt reminders, alcohol interlocks and intelligent speed adaptation devices.

Note to editors:

(1) EC (2003) *Saving 20 000 lives on our roads. A shared responsibility*, COM (2003) 311 final, Brussels: European Commission DG-TREN

(2) CARE database: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/care/statistics/series/fatal1991_actual/index_en.htm

More information on ETSC position:

Memorandum to the Austrian Presidency: http://www.etsc.be/documents/Memorandum_Austria.pdf

The European Transport Safety Council’s response to the 3rd Road Safety Action Programme: http://www.etsc.be/documents/pre_30sept03.pdf

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