

PRESS NOTICE FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

TUESDAY 5th DECEMBER 2000

MEPs warn “One more backtrack from the Commission and we’ll have no road safety policy !”

As the European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism today agreed on priorities for EU road safety action, MEPs warned that one more backtrack by the European Commission would leave a road safety policy without teeth.

MEPs’ first priority for immediate legislative road safety action is to see a proposal for a Directive on safer car fronts for pedestrian and cyclists. They warned Vice President Loyola de Palacio today that if the Commission choose, later this month, a voluntary agreement over legislation on safer car fronts, then this would be the second major backtrack on road safety this year (the first being on blood alcohol limits). MEPs also urged the Commission to set a numerical target to the year 2010 to cut road deaths.

Ewa Hedkvist Petersen MEP (PSE), the Swedish rapporteur for road safety said today: “It is clear that we do not have to accept the loss of so many lives every year when cost-effective and publicly acceptable solutions exist. For example, our two priority EU actions - safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists and a common blood alcohol limit could save 3,000 lives and many more thousands of injuries. In choosing a recommendation rather than legislation on blood alcohol limits, the Commission has backtracked on one major element of road safety policy. Every month of delay in introducing the safer car fronts’ legislation means the loss of over 170 lives“.

Mark Watts MEP (PSE) UK: “Of all legislative actions on transport safety, pedestrian and cyclist friendly car fronts is the most important on the current EU agenda. If the Commission choose a voluntary agreement over their long promised legislative proposal, then it would be the second backtrack in 12 months and the EU road safety policy will be in tatters. The voluntary agreement proposed by the European car industry reduces the number and quality of crash tests and would lead to a 50 per cent reduction in protection which is unacceptable. The UK Government in its road safety strategy states that as many as 20 per cent of pedestrian deaths could be saved by a good legislative proposal.

Continued/overleaf

Dr Dieter Koch MEP (EPP) D: “While the highest risks faced by EU citizens in road traffic are in southern Europe, it is Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the UK which account for 75 per cent of EU road deaths and which have the most to gain from legislation on safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists. A Directive on safer car fronts is important and could save one life almost every day in Germany. In June, the Council of Ministers urged the Commission to finally come forward with a Directive – not a voluntary agreement. Commissioner Liikanen promised us a Directive last Spring - we are still waiting!”

Marieke Sanders-Ten Holte MEP (ELDR) NL: “We in the Netherlands take the saving of lives in traffic very seriously and we fully support the idea of an EU target set to reduce road deaths to sharpen up activity. Every country is reliant upon effective EU action in certain areas especially where the Commission has the exclusive legislative responsibility. The potential to save 2,000 lives and over 18,000 severe injuries a year across the EU from legislation on safer car fronts is too important and the Commission cannot let industry lobbying override the safety of citizens.”

Theodorus Bouwman MEP (Greens) said: “There’s clearly imbalance, especially in urban areas, between the safety of vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians and the mobility of vehicle users. The EU has an opportunity, in one single measure – legislation on safer car fronts - to offer substantial protection to those outside the vehicle as well as those inside – car occupants - who are around eight times safer.”

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