



# On the move

## for safer roads in Europe

### Road safety: Commission sets out long-term plan

*The European Commission has unveiled an ambitious plan to halve the number of deaths on Europe's roads by 2020. This takes the form of a set of Road Safety Policy Orientations for the period 2011-2020 which are aimed at raising road safety levels throughout Europe. The main focus is on improving vehicle and infrastructure safety, as well as road users' behaviour.*

The plan aims to build on the EU Road Safety Action Programme 2001-10 which has helped bring about a decrease in traffic fatalities during its lifetime. By the end of 2010, it is expected that this decrease will stand at more than 40%, as compared with a 25% drop in the preceding decade. The Programme has proved to be a strong catalyst for the launch of other EU- and national-level efforts to improve road safety.

In spite of these improvements, 2009 saw 35 000 road deaths in the EU. Moreover, for every death, four people were permanently disabled, 10 sustained serious injuries and 40 suffered minor injuries as a result of traffic accidents; amounting to a total of 1 500 000 injured people.

#### Economic costs

Aside from the human suffering, such incidents generate serious economic costs. It is estimated that the annual loss to society from current levels of traffic accidents stands at around €130 Billion.

The orientations within the plan provide a general framework comprising a series of key objectives. Under this framework, activities will be implemented at European, national, regional or local levels through close coordination between the Commission and Member States.

The Commission's main role will be to support these activities by encouraging information exchange, identifying and promoting best practices, monitoring progress and making proposals where appropriate. At the same time, all actions within the plan will take full account of other EU policy areas, especially those directly impacting on road safety, so as to ensure a coherent, integrated approach.





## Seven safety aims for the next decade

***The 2011-20 Road Safety Policy Orientations include seven principal objectives: better education and training for road users; better enforcement of road rules; safer road infrastructure; safer vehicles; increased use of smart technology; improved emergency and post-injury services; and protecting vulnerable road users.***

The success of safety measures depends on road users' behaviour. Education and training are thus vital and will be developed further, mainly through strengthening licensing and training systems. This could come through setting criteria for driving instructors or integrating accompanied driving into the license award process. Introduction of probation periods following driving tests and incorporation of environmental aspects into tests in order to promote greener driving may also be considered.

Better enforcement of safety requirements will create the conditions for reducing deaths and injuries. Preventative measures will be stepped up for drink driving and steps will be taken to improve cross-border information exchange to facilitate identification and sanctioning of offenders. These will be backed by awareness raising and national plans to increase controls and pinpoint priorities.

### Infrastructure upgrades

Road infrastructure will be made safer by requiring that EU funds go only towards development of infrastructure which complies with EU road and tunnel safety legislation. The possibility of extending infrastructure safety management requirements to rural roads will also be examined.

As regards vehicle safety, steps have been taken over the past decade towards widening use of passive safety devices such as airbags and seat belts. During 2011-20, it is planned to introduce or to examine more active measures aimed at preventing accidents rather than simply mitigating their consequences. Certain of these measures have already been adopted and will enter into force in the coming years such as compulsory fitting of electronic stability control, lane departure warning systems and automatic emergency braking systems. Others, including making seat belt reminders mandatory for cars and trucks and speed limiters for vans, have still to be examined.

Further options include extending use of advanced Driver Assistance Systems such as anti-collision warnings. In addition, measures setting safety standards for technical vehicles should be introduced and roadworthiness tests should be strengthened, partly by ensuring mutual recognition of inspections between Member States.

### Working smarter

Use of smart technology will be extended through proposals to enable easy transmission of information amongst vehicles and between vehicles and infrastructure. Use of e-call technology to bring rapid assistance to motorists will be encouraged and the Commission will consider extending it to motorbikes, trucks and buses.

The number of injuries on the roads remains high and to reduce them, the Commission will propose a global action strategy on road injuries and first aid. This will be developed in consultation with Member States and should include common definitions for serious and minor injuries with a view to setting EU-wide targets. Likewise, the strategy should allow Member States to exchange best accident response practices and collect EU-wide injury data. The EU may also consider the possibility of installing incident data recording devices on vehicles.

The final aim is to increase protection of vulnerable road users such as power two wheeler (PTW) riders. This could be done through improving awareness of PTWs amongst other road users, encouraging research aimed at increasing PTW safety, greater focus on enforcing traffic rules and extending roadworthiness testing to PTWs. Attention will also be paid to improving infrastructure so as to increase the safety of groups such as cyclists and pedestrians and elderly and disabled road users.

# Commission gets public feedback on road safety issues

*As part of its efforts to halve the number of deaths on EU roads, the European Commission requested a Flash Eurobarometer survey on road safety, the results of which are now available. This survey was aimed at gaining more insight into which road safety problems EU citizens see as most serious, improving understanding of aspects where they would like governments to do more and identifying areas that citizens want to see prioritised.*

It was found that 69% of respondents drive a car, thus emphasising the relevance of the issues to citizens. The results showed that drink driving was considered to a serious problem by the largest number of respondents (94%). This was followed by speeding (78%) and not wearing seat belts (74%).

A further problem flagged up by those surveyed was driving while using a mobile phone. However, the perceived seriousness of this varied depending on whether a hand-held or hands-free model was used with 76% considering the former a serious issue but only 26% viewing the latter in the same way.

## Significant link

A link was noted between the level of perception of a given problem and the amounts of respondents who felt that governments need to do more to combat it. For instance, as well as being seen as a pressing safety issue by a large number of people, drink driving was also viewed most often as the area requiring extra governmental attention. On the other hand, the use of hands-free mobile phones while driving was not generally thought to be a subject requiring urgent consideration.



Improvements to road safety infrastructure were considered the main priority by just under a third of respondents and just over half saw this as either the first or second priority. The next two most popular areas for government prioritisation were proper enforcement of traffic laws and dealing with resident and foreign traffic offenders equally forcefully. These were considered as one of the two main priorities by 42 and 36% respectively.

Additionally, 30% of respondents felt that their government should launch more road safety campaigns and 26% thought that periodic re-training should be introduced for all drivers.





## Positive outcomes from European fora

*Two important road safety events took place in Brussels in late-June and early-July. The European Motorcyclists Forum was launched on 28 June and the third edition of the European Youth Forum for road safety was held on 1-2 July.*

**The Motorcyclists Forum** was established by the Commission in light of high levels of power two wheeler (PTW) involvement in fatal accidents. It aims to increase safety of PTWs by awareness raising and appropriate actions.

The Forum focused on PTWs' role in the transport system, user needs, raising motorist awareness of PTWs and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). Safety measures were set out and the Forum provided a basis for development of national PTW safety plans.

Actions for the coming months were agreed on. These include creating a working group to draft a proposal for a PTW accident reporting form and integrating PTW needs into the Commission ITS strategy.

The Forum will support Member States in applying Commission Directives on secondary and rural road infrastructure related to PTW needs. It will also back campaigns aimed at generating mutual understanding between riders and drivers.

The next edition of the Forum will focus on specific PTW safety issues so as to identify the best responses. Participants hope that Forum meetings will be held annually and foster national-level discussion to respond to local needs.

**The European Youth Forum** gives young people an annual platform on which to discuss road safety issues. This year's event focused mainly on consolidation of the Forum network and identifying actions and tools to be translated into national road safety campaigns.

All EU Member States and seven non-EU countries were represented. The discussions resulted in definition of themes for a common campaign entitled 'European Youth Rally for Road Safety': namely speed, tiredness, alcohol, drugs, safety belts and helmets. Supporting tools including a website ([www.eyfrs.eu](http://www.eyfrs.eu)) are to be developed.

Network members will strengthen their contacts in order to keep the initiative moving. This will be of considerable importance as regards network members from non-EU countries who will have the chance to learn from the EU experience and contribute to strengthening road safety measures at home.



## Event diary

- **European Road Safety Day, Brussels, Belgium**  
13-14 October 2010
- **European Conference on Vehicle Inspection and Mileage Fraud, Brussels, Belgium**  
17-18 November 2010  
[www.cars2010.eu](http://www.cars2010.eu)
- **European Road Safety Charter Excellence in Road Safety Awards**  
December 2010  
[www.erscharter.eu](http://www.erscharter.eu)



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