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NEW EU COMMISSION ROAD SAFETY ACTION PROGRAMME

The European Commission adopted a new road safety action programme for the period 2011-2020.

I. ANALYSIS

The European Commission (EC) adopted, on 20 July, the so-called EU Road Safety Action Programme 2011-2020 (COM(2010)389) which aims to cut road fatalities in Europe by half in the next decade. The programme sets out a mix of initiatives focusing on improving vehicle safety, the safety of infrastructure and road users' behaviour. It can be downloaded from:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/events-archive/2010_07_20_road_safety_2011_2020_en.htm

The IRU welcomes the EU Commitment to road safety which is in line with the road safety commitment of the road transport industry. In fact, for true professionals every accident is one accident too many and the road transport sector continuously strives to avoid human suffering caused by accidents and, therefore, considers accident prevention as a key priority.

The EU Road Safety Action Programme (2011-2020) is examined in this document putting a specific focus on commercial vehicles. For every item of the EU Action Programme specific IRU observations have been included which could be used to prepare a draft IRU position on the implementation of this action programme:

1. Improved Safety Measures for Vehicles

Following various legislative initiatives regarding "passive" safety devices for vehicles such as seatbelts and airbags, the focus of the EU Road Safety Action Programme will now be put on new active safety equipment including:

- Mandatory electronic stability control;
- Mandatory lane departure warning systems;
- Mandatory automatic emergency braking systems;
- Mandatory seat belt reminders;
- Mandatory speed limiters for light commercial vehicles/vans;
- Optional implementation of advanced Driver Assistance Systems, such as anti-collision warnings;

- Strengthening of EU legislation on roadworthiness testing with a view to establishing mutual recognition of roadworthiness inspections.

The IRU supports the proposed active vehicle safety measures as a main tool to improve road safety through innovative active and passive vehicle safety systems, and suggests the encouragement of the introduction, on a voluntary basis and before they become mandatory, of proven effective active and passive safety systems, such as lane departure warning systems, advanced emergency braking systems and electronic stability programmes.

2. Building safer road infrastructure

The EC will also launch a number of initiatives aimed at improving the safety of road infrastructures:

- European funds will only be granted to infrastructure compliant with road safety and tunnel safety Directives. This is already applied for TEN-T funding but should be extended to any road infrastructure-related funding;
- Examine extending the principles of existing EU legislation on infrastructure safety management to rural roads of Member States. This legislation requires that safety requirements be taken into account in the planning process, pre-design and design stage when infrastructure is being developed. It also requires safety audits for infrastructure, identification of black spots and inspections.

The IRU considers that adequate financing of infrastructure development is a prerequisite to achieve road safety.

Benchmarked to national/local accident statistics, a percentage of this adequate financing should be dedicated to effective road safety measures such as the training of all road users which was recommended by the European Truck Accident Causation Study (ETAC).

3. Boost Smart Technology

The EC will count on the further development of ITS in road transport as a contribution to increased road safety.

- New technical specifications will be proposed under the ITS Directive (Intelligent Transport Systems Directive) so that data and information can be easily exchanged between vehicles and between vehicles and infrastructure;
- The Commission will accelerate the deployment of eCall.

The road transport industry is in favour of ITS applications for the road transport sector such as eCall. However, they should provide significant measurable safety benefits and the applications must be standardised, harmonised, interoperable and, to the largest possible extent, on a voluntary basis.

4. Strengthening education and training for road users

The EC will develop a common education and training road safety strategy. At EU level this will include strengthening the quality of the licensing and training system, notably by widening the EU Driving Licence Directive, to establish:

- Minimum criteria for driving instructors
- Examining the possibility to introduce probation periods after the driving test
- Examine the possibility of introducing eco-driving into theoretical and practical tests for safer, clean driving.

The findings of scientific studies such as the ETAC Study highlight that the main cause of an accident involving trucks is “human error” (85%). However, out of those 85%, 75% of accidents are caused by road users other than the truck driver.

The recommendations of the ETAC Study stress that knowledge transfer and training, e.g. as provided by the IRU Academy, are key to effectively target the main cause of all accidents involving trucks and can significantly decrease the number of road accidents.

In addition, the awareness of other road users on how to interact with heavy commercial vehicles (buses coaches and trucks) on the road should be improved. In this respect driving school curricula should be revised accordingly.

5. Better enforcement

Effectiveness of road safety policies largely depends on the intensity of controls and compliance with safety requirements. Potential measures will include:

- The development by Member States of national implementation plans (e.g. priority issues and the intensity of controls at national level);
- EU-wide awareness campaigns;
- Drink driving penalties should be accompanied by preventative measures. For example, the EC will consider legislative measures to require mandatory use of alco-locks after drink driving offences;
- The EC will prioritise the adoption of legally binding measures on the cross-border exchange of information in the field of road safety to allow for the identification and sanctioning of foreign offenders.

The IRU is in favour of more effective and transparent enforcement, including at cross border level. However, in this respect the following issues need to be addressed first:

- *The substantial administrative burden which remains attached to enforcement, especially relating to infringements committed outside the country of registration;*
- *Lack of harmonisation in roadworthiness testing methods, the absence of mutual recognition of road worthiness certificates and road-side checks;*
- *The lack of good and available information about the rules in force in the different Member States;*
- *The lack of transparent information and harmonisation of sanctions and penalties, and lack of proportionality between the amount of fines and the type of infringement;*
- *The arbitrary use of enforcement as a tool of protectionism;*
- *The slow penetration of reliable technological tools which would simplify enforcement and reduce time-loss on the road.*

6. Establishing a Road Injuries Target

Reducing the number of injuries will be a key priority action for Europe for the next decade. The EC will:

- Establish common definitions of serious and minor injuries;
- Promote exchange of best practices between Member States on emergency service response to accidents, as well as establishing EU-wide data collection and analysis on injuries;
- Examine the added value of developing and installing event data recorders ('black boxes') to improve technical investigations and analysis of accidents.

The IRU is in favour of establishing harmonised definitions of road safety injuries but strongly recommends that this should be done at global level within the framework of the United Nations and calls on the EC to launch an initiative in this respect.

The targets set to reduce the number of injuries should be realistic and reachable. The way to reach these targets should be through the implementation of the recommendations of the ETAC Study and by promoting and increasing the use of collective transport by buses, coaches and taxis which would in itself significantly reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries, since collective passenger transport by buses and coaches, as well as taxis, has a significantly better safety record than private cars. As a matter of fact, doubling the use of buses and coaches in the EU alone can lead to a reduction of fatalities on European roads by 3000 per year.

The IRU pleads, therefore, for setting the target of doubling the use of collective passenger transport in the EU as a long-term political target, to be enshrined in the future EU White Paper on the EU Transport Policy in the period 2010-2020.

The IRU also calls for the deployment of solutions which have proven that they provide the expected road safety benefits when it comes to the installation of event data recorders. These instruments must ensure that the appropriate level of confidentiality of commercial data exists when used in multimodal transport chains.

II. ACTION FOR MEMBERS

Members should carefully examine this document together with the new European Commission road safety action programme for the period 2011-2020 and should send comments and suggestions in writing to the IRU Secretariat (marc.billiet@iru.org) no later than 10 September 2010.

The IRU Secretariat will use the received input together with the IRU Observations in this document to prepare a draft IRU Position on the implementation of the road safety action programme which will be adopted during the next CLTM Meeting in Brussels on 29 September 2010.

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