

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Priorities in EU Road Safety — Progress Report and Ranking of Actions'

(2001/C 22/07)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Priorities in EU Road Safety — Progress Report and ranking of actions (COM(2000) 125 final);

having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Promoting Road Safety in the EU: The Programme for 1997-2001 (COM(97) 131 final);

having regard to the decision taken by the Commission on 20 March 2000, under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult it on the matter;

having regard to the decision taken by its Bureau on 2 June 1999 to direct Commission 3 for Trans-European Networks, Transport and Information Society to draw up the relevant opinion;

having regard to the Committee of the Regions opinion on a Proposal for a Council Decision on the Proposal for a Council Decision on the Promotion of Sustainable and Safe Mobility (CdR 64/97 fin)⁽¹⁾;

having regard to the Committee of the Regions opinion on the Common Transport Policy: Sustainable Mobility: Perspectives for the Future (CdR 189/99 fin)⁽²⁾;

having regard to the draft opinion adopted by Commission 3 on 26 June 2000 (CdR 166/2000 rev. 1) (rapporteur: Mr Cummins IRL/PPE);

whereas road safety is an issue which touches on the life of every citizen in the European Union;

whereas the Treaty on European Union makes an explicit requirement that the Common Transport Policy should include measures to promote transport safety;

whereas the achievement of objectives under the Common Transport Policy and the Programme for Promoting Road Safety are shared competences with an important role for local and regional authorities,

adopted the following opinion at its 35th plenary session on 20 and 21 September 2000 (meeting of 21 September).

1. The Committee of the Regions' views and recommendations

1.1. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the progress report and the ongoing Action Programme for the promotion of road safety in the EU.

1.2. The Committee of the Regions endorses the ranking of actions and the recommendation to decision-makers, subject to the inclusion of additional actions and the consideration of other identified matters as set out below.

1.3. The Communication does not state whether or not there is a more widespread use of the cost-benefit approach to road safety at all levels of policy-making. This was a specific recommendation of the Communication from the Commission: Promoting Road Safety in the EU — The Programme

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 244, 11.8.1997, p. 33.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 374, 23.12.1999, p. 76.

for 1997-2001. The Committee of the Regions queries whether the Programme has been a success in attempting to implement this approach.

1.4. The Committee of the Regions believes that personal freedom 'rights' should not be allowed to supersede the safety of other road users. Dangerous and anti-social behaviour curtail the personal freedom of others, not to mention endangering personal safety. Safety should always be a priority.

1.5. It is noted that the first three of the ranked actions (EuroNCAP, seat belts and alcohol) are all related to the public's awareness of road safety issues. The Committee, therefore, advocates that all decision-makers should ensure that increasing public awareness is treated as a priority.

Europe-wide and national campaigns which target specific offences, for example speeding and drink driving, should be encouraged. Increasing compliance with the rules of the road requires changes in attitude and driver behaviour. Laws alone will not change the way cars are used. Public campaigns are a method which will assist in changing attitudes, including the use of role-models, where appropriate.

1.6. The Committee encourages a partnership approach to raising public awareness amongst decision-makers, enforcers and road users. It is suggested that the private sector could assist in public awareness campaigns. For example drink companies could be further encouraged to help finance drink driving campaigns, or insurance finance more targeted campaigns at young drivers and those at greatest risk.

1.7. The Committee of the Regions believes that greater emphasis should be placed on training, which would be a very cost-effective action in the prevention of accidents. As much as 99 % of all accidents probably could be avoided if the right action is taken at the right moment. Training which would improve road safety and heighten awareness of dangers to help avoid accidents is encouraged. Training of young drivers could begin in schools with road safety awareness courses.

1.8. The Committee of the Regions advocates the importance of implementation and enforcement of legislation, and notes that there appears to be a considerable variation of implementation and enforcement between Member States. It is suggested, therefore, that Europe-wide analysis is carried out

into levels of implementation and enforcement in all Member States, especially speed control methods. The CARE database could be further developed and used to collate and disseminate such information. This information may allow the assessment of a correlation between poor levels of implementation and enforcement and high numbers of accidents and fatalities.

1.9. The Committee of the Regions asks the Commission to develop recommendations to evaluate road-building measures with regard to the safety of road users. At least with regard to new constructions, which are funded by the European Union, in this way a "road safety audit" could be required.

1.10. The Committee of the Regions supports experimentation into the development of alternative incentives, such as tax discounts, which may advance investment in road safety. For example, insurance schemes could be devised which would encourage greater road safety and awareness, particularly for young drivers. Such incentives may assist in emphasising the benefits of investment in safety, compared with the costs of not investing.

1.11. Whilst the Communication gives an indication as to how multi-criteria analysis and cost effectiveness assessment can illustrate the benefits of road safety measures, more research is required into how these and other mechanisms can be developed. The Committee of the Regions, therefore, suggests the establishment of demonstration projects in order to depict how cost-effectiveness assessment and other mechanisms can be applied to road safety issues. The demonstration projects could be specific to the challenges in individual Member States, and would comply with the EU's role of supplementing local and national action, particularly in the field of coordination.

1.12. The Committee of the Regions questions the apparent dominance afforded to the car in the Action Programme on road safety. The safety of all road users is equally important, be they pedestrians, cyclists, users of multiple occupancy vehicles etc. People should be encouraged to switch to the safest mode of transport. The road, however, should be safe for all modes of transport. The car, or any other mode of transport, should not be allowed to dominate, to the detriment of the safety of other modes. In this regard, cars should be designed so that they have the least effect possible on passengers and pedestrians, in the event of an accident.

1.13. The Committee of the Regions suggests that there should be a greater emphasis on medical checks for drivers, such as elderly drivers and others, to ensure their ability to use their vehicles safely.

1.14. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to mobilise all means to achieve — within a reasonable timeframe — the harmonisation of technical devices to be fitted on vehicles by automobile manufacturers.

Brussels, 21 September 2000.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Jos CHABERT

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the promotion of electricity from renewable energy sources in the internal electricity market'

(2001/C 22/08)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the promotion of electricity from renewable energy sources in the internal electricity market (COM(2000) 279 final — 2000/0116 (COD));

having regard to the decision taken by the Council on 26 June 2000, under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult the Committee on the matter;

having regard to the decision taken by the Committee of the Regions Bureau on 13 June 2000 to instruct Commission 4 for Spatial Planning, Urban Issues, Energy and Environment to draw up the relevant opinion;

having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 June 1999 (8013/99);

having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 26 May 1998 on electricity from renewable energy sources (A4-0199/98);

having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 30 March 2000 on electricity from renewable energy sources and the internal electricity market (A5-0078/2000);

having regard to the Commission communication entitled Energy for the Future: renewable sources of energy — White Paper for a Community strategy and action plan (COM(97) 599 final) and the Committee of the Regions opinion on this communication (COR 57/98 fin)⁽¹⁾;

having regard to the draft opinion adopted by Commission 4 on 7 July 2000 (COR 191/2000 rev. 1 — rapporteur: Mr Maier, D/PSE),

adopted the following opinion at its 35th plenary session of 20 and 21 September 2000 (meeting of 21 September).

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 315, 13.10.1998, p. 5.