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(<sup>1</sup>) COM(97) 131 final.

(98/C 174/82)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-3340/97**  
**by Bernie Malone (PSE) to the Commission**  
(22 October 1997)

*Subject:* Road accidents in Ireland

1. Can the Commission indicate how many people were injured and killed in road accidents in Ireland in the latest year for which statistics are available, and how these statistics translate into fatalities per million cars registered (a) in Ireland and (b) by comparison with the rest of the EU?
2. What is the estimated economic cost of road deaths in Ireland?
3. What changes are recommended by the Commission in order to reduce the number of deaths and injuries in road accidents?

**Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission**

(17 December 1997)

In 1994, 404 people were killed in traffic accidents in Ireland and 10 231 were injured. Based on the number killed by million inhabitants over the period 1991-1994, the position of Ireland is worse than the European average, and proportionately worse than that of five other Member States. Clearly, it is difficult to make precise comparisons between Member States as there are a number of factors, such as the quality of infrastructure, which are not comparable. The figures given above are, however, a clear indication of the relative rate of deaths and injuries.

The Commission has calculated that the direct cost of road accidents (including the cost of police and emergency services, vehicle repairs, and lost economic output), is 45 000 MECU per year for the Community as a whole. When divided by the total of 45 000 road fatalities per year, this gives a simple average of 1 MECU per death and associated injuries. In Ireland, the '1 MECU test' would produce a cost for road deaths of about 400 MECU per year.

The Commission has adopted a communication 'Promoting road safety in the EU — The programme for 1997-2001' (<sup>1</sup>) which sets out in detail the Commission's plans to build on the successes of the first action programme which ran from 1993-1996. The Commission's actions will focus on three areas: information gathering and dissemination in order to identify and to monitor the situation and thereby promote focused improvements; initiating and supporting measures to avoid accidents, with an emphasis on the human factor and its interface with environmental features like road and junction design, and traffic signals; and initiating and supporting measures to reduce the consequences of accidents when they occur — by means of achieving further improvements in vehicle design and crash resilience, for example. In addition, the Commission actively advocates cost-free changes in behaviour which would save a large number of lives and reduce the seriousness of injuries. If in Ireland, for instance, front and rear seat belt wearing was at the level of the countries in which it is most usual, reliable estimates put the number of lives that would be saved at 61 every year.

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(<sup>1</sup>) COM(97) 131 final.