

## European Road Safety Day

Brussels, 13-10-2010

Vice President Siim Kallas

### Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you today to the third European Road Safety Day. The first road safety day focused on young drivers and the second one on safety in urban transport. Today's event is somewhat different.

First of all, the existing Road Safety Action Plan is soon to end and it is time to assess what we have achieved. Secondly, in July we adopted new policy orientations on road safety for the next ten years.

Thirdly, this conference has no single theme. We decided to focus on the three main priorities of the new programme and we will therefore have three separate sessions dealing with injured persons, vulnerable road users, and infrastructure.

Last but not least, there will be another event tomorrow organised by the Belgian Presidency covering "cross border data exchange to improve road safety".

\*\*\*\*\*

Road safety is a major societal issue in Europe. In 2009, more than 35.000 people died on the roads of the EU, the equivalent of a medium town, and 1.500.000 people were injured. The cost to society is huge. In 2009 it represented approximately 130 billion Euro.

So what has been done in the EU to prevent these deaths, injuries and economic losses? And what is to be done in the future?

By the end of this year, the **3<sup>rd</sup> European road safety action programme 2001-2010** will come to an end. Although the latest figures are not yet available, we know enough to be able to draw the main conclusions.

First, the **target of reducing by half the number of road fatalities** will not be fully met by the end of 2010. There are several reasons for this, one being the considerable differences still existing between Member States in the level of road safety. Another is that progress has been uneven in many areas of road safety: for instance motorcyclists continue to pay the highest toll.

In spite of this, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Action programme has been overall a **success**. Our forecast is that by the end of 2010, we will achieve more than 40% reduction in

the number of fatalities, thus getting rather close to the 50% target. This result is remarkable especially considering that new member states joining the EU in 2004 and 2007 faced an extremely challenging objective.

I am very pleased that the EU target has been taken on board through many national road safety strategies and both the industry and the citizens have reacted very positively and pro-actively. The success of the European Road Safety Charter, with 1800 signatures, testifies Europe's deep impact in the field of road safety.

So why do we need another decade of action at EU level?

Despite impressive improvements since 2001, road trauma continues to impose a massive burden on European society and economy. Without a repeated and strong political commitment, road fatalities and accidents would inevitably start to rise again.

For this reason, in July 2010 the Commission adopted new **policy orientations on road safety for the years 2011-2020**.

It includes the same ambitious target: reducing by half the number of fatalities by 2020. We did not want to go for a lower, more easily attainable target, because an ambitious target motivates and keeps the momentum going.

The new policy orientations are based on two key principles.

The old 'regulate and enforce' approach is not sufficient any more. We need to move from the sole government responsibility towards companies and road users accepting corporate social responsibility. This is the concept of "**shared responsibility**", by which safety should be endorsed as a commitment at all levels: EU, national, local, industry, citizens...

Complementary to this principle is the **integration of road safety into other policies**. A good example is social and employment policy. One third of work-related victims are due to road accidents. There is huge potential there to decrease the number of fatalities and injuries through the promotion of ambitious corporate road safety strategies.

Guided by these principles the Commission has identified seven key strategic objectives for the next decade.

One of the main focuses will be on the **road user**, because whatever the technical measures in place, the effectiveness of road safety policy depends ultimately on **users' behaviour**. Two strategies will be developed: first an "**education and training**" strategy, aiming at long-term change in behaviour, and in complement, an "**enforcement**" strategy aiming at short and efficient results in terms of reduction of accidents. In this context, several measures will be examined by the Commission, such as minimum requirements for driving instructors, fitting of alcolocks on certain vehicles - or in the framework of

rehabilitation programmes, as well as speed limiters for light commercial vehicles.

However, not all road users are equal: car and truck drivers have benefited a lot from recent technological developments, but other categories of users remain particularly **vulnerable**. Motorcyclists represent for instance 16% of all fatalities, and the increasing number of power-two-wheelers on the road, particularly in our cities, is a great cause of concern. Thus, in cooperation with Member States and the stakeholders, the Commission will elaborate a specific strategy for the **safety of motorcyclists**, addressing behaviour, as well as vehicle and infrastructure safety. The elderly, children, people with a disability, pedestrians and cyclists, will also be included through appropriate actions.

**Engineering** is also a major element of the new road safety plan.

**Vehicles** have become increasingly safe during the past decade. Passive and active safety have been the subject of many technical specifications. But there is still a lot to be done and new developments such as electric vehicles will require specific consideration from the safety point of view.

Safety does not stop when a vehicle is put on the market. Through the strengthening of the existing EU legislation on roadworthiness and roadside inspections, it will be necessary to ensure that vehicles remain safe during their whole life-cycle. Mutual recognition of roadworthiness inspections will help to extend the single market to this area.

As far as **infrastructure** is concerned, much benefit is expected from the implementation of EU legislation on the safe management of tunnels and infrastructure. However, the main limitation of this legislation is that it only applies to the major roads of the Trans-European Network. The Commission will therefore propose that its principles are extended to the secondary road network of Member States.

**Intelligent Transport Systems** have a great potential for reducing crashes and their consequences. The Commission has adopted an ITS Action Plan in 2008 and an ITS Directive in 2010 which include road safety in their objectives. Actions are expected on the development of Advanced Driving Assistance Systems (ADAS) as well as on the extension of e-Call, the pan-European emergency call service, to other vehicles like for example motorcycles and commercial vehicles.

Finally, the Commission would like to dedicate a specific strategy to the reduction of the severity and the number of **injuries**, which is today recognized by the UN in its "Decade for Action" as a worldwide challenge. We need first to work on the definition and harmonization of the recording of injuries. Then we will be able to set a specific common target for the reduction of injuries. We need also to define, in cooperation with the Member States and the health and

emergency sector, the means to improve the efficiency of first aid intervention and post-care handling in order to reduce the impact of road accidents.

**To conclude**, I would like to emphasize that it is not because spectacular progress has been achieved during the past ten years in many areas of road safety that we should feel today comfortable, complacent and think that nothing remains to be done.

This European Road Safety Day is a milestone for the strong commitment of all involved towards the ambitious – but achievable -target of halving the number of road deaths by 2020.

Thank you for your attention.