

EU LEGISLATION UPDATE

APRIL 2006



OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE

European Commission consults on mandatory fitting of blind-spot mirrors for trucks

The European Commission has initiated a consultation on its intention to propose a Directive requiring the mandatory fitting of blind-spot mirrors for trucks in order to help reduce the 400 annual deaths on the roads caused by trucks not being able to see the other driver when turning. This initiative is a part of the work designed to help reduce road accident fatalities by 50% by 2010 as agreed in the EU Road Safety Programme in 2003.

Under an existing Directive of 2003, all new trucks will from next year have to have blind-spot mirrors. However, due to the slow replacement of the truck fleet, the Commission feels that it is valid to propose the retro-fitting of such devices. If the measures come into force in 2008, the Commission calculates that 1300 lives will be saved by 2020.

FIVA has discussed this issue with the Commission over the past years, and has consistently stressed the concerns that retrofitting of blind-spot mirrors would have on the authenticity of historic trucks. The European Commission had previously made clear that it recognized FIVA's concerns and in fact the Commission's proposal is only calling for trucks made after 1998 to be covered by the Directive.

EP report on the Thematic Strategy on Air pollution calls for stricter measures

The EP Rapporteur on the Commission's Thematic Strategy on Air pollution, Dorette Corbey (a Dutch socialist) wants to introduce even stricter norms than proposed by the Commission (see previous EU issues updates). In her report, she calls for more ambitious reduction targets for VOC, PM2.5 and NOx on the grounds that they would lead to greater health benefits and employment benefits. She also:

- favours the introduction of a PM10 yearly limit value of 30 µg/m³ in 2010;
- supports the Commission's proposal to introduce a concentration cap for PM2.5 with the introduction of a PM2.5 yearly limit value of 20 µg/m³ in 2010
- Supports the Commission's proposal to introduce a target exposure reduction of 20% for PM2.5 in 2020 compared to the average exposure index of 2010; but calls for a reduction of this percentage for Member States that have already achieved low exposure levels;
- Urges the Commission to propose the Euro VI norms for heavy duty vehicles and give an indication of the Euro VII norms;
- calls upon the Commission to immediately formulate ambitious Euro 6 norms for passenger cars;

- invites Member States to take the necessary measures to phase out older polluting vehicles or – where appropriate – provide incentives for retrofitting;
- calls for measures to minimise the use of cars in inner cities; is convinced that environmental zoning that discourages the more polluting cars from entering inner cities provides a strong incentive to modernise the car fleet; stresses that local governments can provide a strong incentive for innovation by purchasing clean cars (EEV, Euro 6 and VI) for the public and semi-public car fleet.

FIVA will discuss the suggestions that older vehicles be phased out and on environmental zoning with the Rapporteur and other members of the Committee to stress the implications of such actions on the historic vehicle movement.

INFORMATION

European Commission consults on road infrastructure safety management

Again, as part of the plan to reduce road accident fatalities the European Commission is consulting on how best to manage the road infrastructure according to best practice of safety engineering. The Commission recognises that present road designs result from many decades of construction and maintenance, much done at a time when safety issues were not always considered to the same extent as they are today; that traffic conditions may have changed since the road was designed and built and that while roads are usually designed according to a range of criteria safety is often implicitly assumed to be achieved by simply adhering to prescribed standards of alignment and layout. The Commission therefore wants to

- To provide road authorities and road managers with the instruments necessary to strengthen safety to maximize the benefit to road users and the public at large, to make safety implications of decisions more transparent and to optimise use of limited funds for more efficient construction and maintenance roads;
- To increase the safety of new roads through continuous adaptation to the latest safety requirements and through a regular risk assessment;
- To bring about a common high level of safety of roads in all EU Member States;
- To create safety awareness in order to achieve informed decisions on planning and design;
- To establish a constant exchange of best practice in terms of infrastructure safety management; to allow the collection and the distribution of the available expertise in order to exploit research results.

The consultation proposes three options

Option 1: No policy change.

Option 2: To provide legislation requiring the adoption of guidelines on infrastructure safety management, leaving the details of their implementation to Member States - on the grounds that

- it would involve lower costs as unsuitable and expensive approaches would be avoided by Member States;
- the knowledge of their already adopted road safety management approaches will enable Member States to adopt the appropriate guidelines to implement the minimum requirements prescribed by the Directive;
- more efficient and effective infrastructure safety management instruments would be adopted all over the European Union in a shorter time and would immediately contribute to saving lives on the European roads;
- comparing the different approaches adopted by the Member States and their effects will allow the Commission and the Member States to identify best practices and to possibly adopt further harmonised guidelines which can be progressively extended to Member States.

Option 3: To provide for stringent Community legislation aimed at introducing defined and harmonised common infrastructure safety management standards in the Member States including harmonisation of Member States legislation on road safety assessment, audits, management and inspections which would provide common instruments to strengthen safety to maximise the benefit to road users and the public at large. However, the Commission notes that this approach might be problematic as most the Member States would have to reorganise their road safety practices and legislation; the large differences between the already existing road safety approaches would create political conflicts among Member States and the Commission; and common harmonised guidelines would not take into account organisational and socio-cultural differences between the Member States.

Czech car recyclers warn of missing vehicles

The Czech Republic national automobile industry association and facility owners has claimed that only a fifth of scrap cars in the Czech Republic are being delivered to authorised recycling facilities. It says that most are sold for spare parts or abandoned in cities that must then pay for recycling – and believes that there are now about 300,000 abandoned cars nationwide.

German particulate car-label scheme gets go-ahead

Germany's Bundesrat has given final approval to a new scheme requiring cars and lorries to be labelled according to their emissions of fine particles in order to help Germany meet EU air quality standards by allowing local authorities to ban dirtier vehicles during periods of high-pollution. Future vehicles conforming to the forthcoming Euro 5 particulates standard will now not be distinguished from those meeting existing Euro 4 standards. The Green Party criticised the Bundesrat's move, arguing it would discourage the development of cleaner vehicles.

- 00 -

The FIVA Legislation Commission members are: Horst Bruning (Chairman); Tiddo Bresters, Andrew Burt, David Davis, Adalberto Gueli, Winfried Kallinger; Patrick Rollet, Svend Aage Tholstrup; and Carla Fiocchi (Secretariat). Andrew Turner of EPPA works with the Committee.