

Elżbieta Bieńkowska
Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

February 2017

Dear Commissioner,

To help Member States halve the number of road deaths by 2020 ambitious new vehicle safety standards are needed.

In 2015, 26,000 Europeans died in traffic accidents and 135,000 were severely injured. Fatality numbers have been consistently high since 2013-2014 and serious injury numbers have similarly remained unchanged since 2010. Reversing this trend is a top priority for our governments and we are implementing ambitious measures including improvements at local, regional and national level.

A comprehensive approach to improving road safety also requires safer vehicles. There remains a lot of potential to improve car, van and truck safety by applying innovative technologies or by simply designing them in a safer manner. Improved direct vision, advanced active safety devices and from a longer term perspective connected and automated vehicles, open new promising solutions toward a “zero accidents scenario”. Several innovative technologies are already on the market and have significant potential to save lives. Mandatory fitment at EU-level as well as policies to accelerate fleet renewal would increase market penetration. Consequently, higher sales volumes would also greatly reduce their cost and make safer vehicles more accessible for all motorists and fleets.

With reference to the European Commission's current review of the General Safety (EC/661/2009) and Pedestrian Safety (EC/78/2009) Regulations, we ask the Commission to speed up the review process and come forward with a proposal well before the end of 2017.

It should be noted that ambitious safety improvements also benefit the automotive industry by helping European vehicle and technology producers maintain their global lead in safety technology. This strengthens their competitive position in the European market but also increases global export opportunities.

One area of particular concern is the safety of vulnerable road users especially in our cities. Pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists account for over half of road fatalities in urban areas. We are making huge efforts to increase levels of walking and cycling in urban areas. We therefore urge you to prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users when making a proposal for new safety standards.

Truck design has huge potential for safety improvement. According to a recent TRL study for the Commission, better direct vision and crash performance could save up to 900 lives per year. Camera and monitor systems that provide drivers with a 360° view around the vehicle can also contribute to better truck safety.

We believe road safety should be a top priority for the European Commission. We look forward to the Commission finalising this review and to receive a proposal for new and ambitious safety rules in 2017.

Moreover, we would like to take this opportunity to recall the need to create a binding legal framework for mutual recognition of driving disqualifications within the European Union. Drivers disqualified from driving in a Member State other than that in which they are principally resident must not escape the effects of disqualification when they leave the Member State in which the offence was committed. This would represent a significant step towards the improvement of road safety at European level.



Jörg LEICHTFRIED

Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and
Technology, Austria



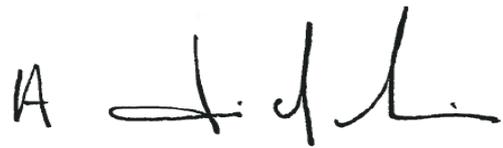
Francois BAUSCH

Minister for Sustainable Development
and Infrastructure, Luxembourg



Bruno LE ROUX

Minister of the Interior, France



Alain VIDALIES

Minister of State for Transport,
Marine Affairs and Fisheries, France



Alexander DOBRINDT

Federal Minister of Transport and Digital
Infrastructure, Germany



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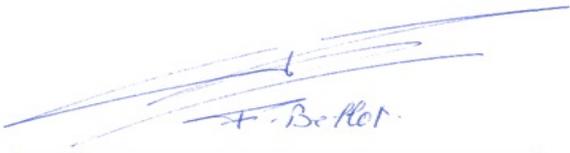
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François BELLOT
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