

**ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC**  
**COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND**  
**COMMUNICATIONS**

**EUROPEAN INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

**A EUROPEAN POLICY FOR ROAD SAFETY**

**HARMONISATION OF CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES**

First of all, I would like to extend my compliments to the Members of the Board and also express my sheer satisfaction with which I greet all members of European Parliaments, from the different countries represented at this III INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE, a greeting which is, of course, extensive to all our guests, who represent a range of organisations which in some way have dedicated their activities to the promotion of road safety and the reduction of road accidents.

After Oslo and Paris, the Portuguese Parliament now has the honour of hosting, here in Lisbon, the III Conference, to continue to analyse and discuss the causes and consequences of road accidents in the EU, and particularly strengthen the rallying round of the different Member States, regarding the importance of the joint construction of a path, seeking to achieve the harmonisation of concepts, principles and procedures, to improve the security of those who use the road network throughout Europe.

We are all aware that it is only recently that there has started to be awareness building among political decision makers, about the serious problem, the consequences of road accidents.

At the beginning of this decade (2001), more than 50 000 people were killed every year on European roads, and, even so, most countries did not have any National Plan in place to tackle this catastrophe.

In the light of the seriousness of this problem, the feeling of responsibility of the European group was awakened to this issue, and acts such as the preparation of the White Paper on Transport in 2001, the Road Safety Action Plan (2003) and the commitment expressed in the European Road Safety Charter caused a significant change in the attitudes of the Parliaments and also the Governments of the Member States, in a concern towards the establishment of specific policies for the reduction of road accidents and victims.

The different countries, like Portugal did in 2003, are in the process of drawing up and implementing their National Road Safety Plans, centred on the common target of reducing the number of deaths on the roads by 50 % up to 2010.

The European Parliament, the Transport Council and Commission have increased community legislation initiatives in this area through the approval of regulatory Directives for different areas specific to the highway environment. They have promoted the joint responsibility of Member States in the promotion of campaigns for awareness-building among European citizens, for a change in attitudes on the roads, and have also encouraged transnational co-operation in the traffic control, inspection, and application of sanctions for those committing traffic offences.

However, we are all aware that we can do even more. In spite of all that has been done and also the significant improvements observed in the statistics on road accidents, injured people and fatal casualties, between 2001 and 2007 we have only managed to bring the number of deaths down by 20 %, when we should have achieved a 37 % reduction in order to meet our 2010 target. The stark truth is that in 2007 the roads are still claiming the loss of 43 000 lives, a fact which is extremely serious for the economies and social well-being of the Member States.

It is therefore essential for all of us to make a lot more effort and to make the citizens of our countries aware of the sheer size of this dramatic common problem we face.

On our part, in the role of Congresspeople, we must continue along the path of construction of a European Road Safety Policy, working hard towards the harmonisation of concepts, regulations and codes, of inspections and sanctions against traffic offenders, naturally respecting the policies of subsidiarity and proportionality which have become established in the Union Treaty. This is a matter that we must address with one common voice, acting with common objectives and the same strategies.

Mr Commissionaire, Dear Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen, this III Conference in Lisbon should basically serve to encourage us to take on, with even more determination, this harrowing battle in which we seek to continue to bring down the rate of road accidents and their terrible consequences.

- In education and awareness building for the younger population;
- In initial and continuous training and certification of drivers;
- In requirements for a certain level of safety equipment in the construction of new vehicles;

- In project quality, construction techniques and materials used in new roads;
- In criteria and parameters to be used in the Security Audits carried out on the road infrastructure;
- In greater strictness for granting authorisation to drive two-wheeled vehicles;
- In tackling the act of driving under the effects of alcohol and/or psychotropic drugs;
- In curbing speeding.

Apart from other considerations, we feel that it is with regard to these problem areas that we must reach understanding concerning the concepts, make regulations in the same form, and inspect and punish with solidarity and co-operation.

The target for 2010 regarding road accidents in Europe has to remain as our group target, and is a major challenge which should raise our feeling of co-responsibility and also strengthen European unity also with regard to reduction in road accidents.

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