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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: **Any other business**

Road safety trends and reinforced efforts to achieve road safety targets
– Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note prepared by the Commission on the above-mentioned subject for consideration under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) on 5 December 2022.

Road safety trends and reinforced efforts to achieve road safety targets

AOB – Information from the Commission

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy confirmed the principles of the European Union (EU) road safety policy framework for 2021-2030, which sets out ambitious road safety targets: a reduction of 50% of road fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 and the long-term goal of eliminating road fatalities and serious injuries in the EU by 2050 ('Vision Zero'). The Commission and the Member States committed to achieving these road safety targets. However, despite significant efforts at EU and Member State-level, the trend towards achieving these targets is far from encouraging.

In 2021, an estimated 19 900 people were killed on EU roads, a 6% increase in relation to 2020. This followed an unprecedented annual fall of 17% between 2019 and 2020. The results over the last two years have been strongly influenced by the traffic levels, which were considerably lower during the Covid pandemic.

Still, there were 19 900 deaths on EU roads last year, representing 45 road deaths per million inhabitants on average. The fatality rate ranges from 20 per million inhabitants in Sweden and 22 per million inhabitants in Denmark to 81 per million inhabitants in Bulgaria and 92 per million inhabitants in Romania.

The latest preliminary data for 2022 present a mixed picture. For the first 6-10 months, the number of road deaths has again increased compared to 2021. Comparing statistics with 2019, there is an estimated 7% fall in the number of deaths. While these are good news, **if we are to meet the 50% target by 2030, we need to see the number fall by more than 5% every year. Therefore, progress is still too slow.**

The EU average masks significant differences between Member States. The Commission is working closely with the Member States authorities to better understand the dynamics beyond the figures and how best to tackle them at all policy making levels.

In view of the above trends, it is clear that we need to reinforce our efforts to keep on the path of 'Vision Zero'. We need to apply every element of the safe system approach – safe infrastructure, safe vehicles, safer road use and better post-crash care to improve road safety in the EU.

At the national level, Member States have been revising their own national road safety strategies for a period post-2020, and many of those national strategies have been adopted recently. National authorities are learning from their counterparts across Europe and are applying best practices in areas like road infrastructure, enforcement of traffic rules, protection of vulnerable road users and education of specific target groups. The Commission confirms its intention to continue working closely with national authorities to support efforts at national level. At the EU level, a lot is being done to make progress, in legislative and non-legislative terms. For instance, the General Vehicle Safety Regulation came into force in July this year and will make people much safer, whether inside or outside the vehicle. We are working to implement our new Urban Mobility Framework to make our cities safer, healthier and more climate friendly. The Commission also plans to revise the existing rules on driving licenses, including the requirements on driver education and training; on cooperation between Member States on road safety penalties; and on testing vehicles for roadworthiness.

On these three last points specifically, the upcoming revision of the Cross Border Enforcement Directive aims to improve the cross-border investigation of road-safety-related traffic offences and the protection of fundamental rights of non-resident offenders. This proposal will aim to improve compliance of non-resident drivers with additional road-safety-related traffic rules, and it will also streamline mutual assistance procedures in investigation of the offences between Member States. Finally, it will aim to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights of non-resident offenders in the cross-border proceedings, including by aligning with new EU rules on personal data protection.

The revision of the driving license Directive will have a dual objective: to improve road safety and to facilitate the free movement of people. Possible measures range from increased digitalization, including the introduction of digital driving licences, and reflecting technological progress in areas such as automated driving systems and sustainability. Training requirements will also be updated to include the use of digital means, as well as the methods to verify and guarantee fitness to drive. The introduction of a training scheme based on accompanied driving is being considered, so that novice drivers would drive a higher number of kilometres while accompanied before getting their driving licence. This would not affect the minimum age to drive unaccompanied, but it would reflect a best practice that is already implemented in several Member States. The proposal should also take advantage of the experience gained in many Member States as regards probation periods for novice drivers, which will be subject to stricter rules. The proposal will also look at ways to further empower Member States to reduce the number of dangerous drivers on EU roads, while improving accessibility to driving licences by all EU citizens and third country nationals residents in the EU.

The EU rules on roadworthiness, including three Directives on periodic technical inspection of vehicles, roadside inspection of commercial vehicles and rules on vehicle registration documents, were last updated in 2014. To keep pace with technological and regulatory developments (notably linked to electrification, automation, and stricter emission standards), it is crucial to regularly update the rules on how vehicles should be inspected. The age and technical fitness of vehicles have an impact on the frequency of accidents as well as on emissions. Through the revision of the three roadworthiness Directives, the Commission is considering a series of possible measures to address the challenges related to testing new vehicle technologies, electric vehicles, digitalisation, tampering with emission control or the odometer, and the scope of the rules on periodic and roadside checks.

The Commission plans to present these initiatives in 2023, in time for them to contribute to the efforts to meet the EU road safety targets by 2030 (and 2050).
