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Subject:	Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 04/2024 concerning the EU's efforts towards achieving its road safety objectives – Outcome of proceedings

At its meeting on 18 June 2024, the Council approved conclusions on the ECA's special report on road safety as set out in the annex.

**Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 04/2024,
'Reaching EU road safety objectives – Time to move up a gear'.**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. WELCOMES the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 04/2024 published on 14 March 2024, 'Reaching EU road safety objectives – Time to move up a gear', which provides an in-depth examination of the current state of and trends in road safety in the EU, especially as we are now halfway through the 2021-2030 policy period.
2. AGREES with the Court of Auditors that the time is right for an evaluation to enable the continuous improvement of road safety which requires actions on multiple fronts following a risk-based or an integrated approach (such as the Safe System Approach), involving public authorities at all levels, all road users, industry and civil society actors; this in order to reach the ambitious targets of halving road fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 (compared to 2019) and getting as close as possible to zero road victims by 2050 via 'Vision Zero' or similar efficient strategies.
3. WELCOMES progress in some Member States towards meeting their targets of halving road deaths and serious injuries by 2030, however ACKNOWLEDGES that the current overall progress is insufficient to meet that target.
4. RECALLS the analysis and commitments of the Council conclusions on road safety of 8 June 2017, endorsing the Valletta Declaration¹ that emphasised the unacceptable human and societal toll of traffic fatalities and serious accidents.

¹ See 9994/17.

5. While TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the different starting points of Member States, POINTS OUT that in the shared competence policy area of road safety, differences in methods, practices and national characteristics between Member States are a valuable source for mutual learning and exchange of best practices in which Member States participate.
6. EXPRESSES SERIOUS CONCERNS about the high number of active and vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists, users of powered two-wheelers, e-scooters) among road accident fatalities in the EU, both in urban and rural areas, who are also increasingly being confronted with larger and heavier vehicles, and about the high risk of young and elderly road users being killed or seriously injured in traffic, calling for more insight in exposure data and urging for appropriate action.
7. REFERS to the commitments to ensure the safe coexistence of different means of transport as expressed in the recently signed interinstitutional European declaration on cycling² and REFERS to the ongoing revision of the driving licences directive³, in which EU-wide regulatory schemes for novice drivers and for accompanied driving, as well as issues related to fitness to drive, are being discussed.
8. TAKES NOTE OF the agreement reached at political level on the revision of the European regulatory framework facilitating the cross-border enforcement of traffic offences⁴, and that most road fatalities in the EU are the direct consequence of traffic offences.
9. IS CONCERNED that high-risk behaviour on the road continues to be a major cause of road crashes, especially speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, being distracted or tired while driving and driving without seatbelt, not or not correctly using child restraint systems and protective equipment.

² 4 April 2024, 6215/24.

³ See the Council's general approach on a proposal on a new driving licence directive, adopted on 4 December 2023, 16345/23.

⁴ Provisional political agreement reached on 12 March 2024 on the proposal amending Directive (EU) 2015/413 facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences.

10. RECOGNISES the growing importance of active modes of transport in tomorrow's mobility, taking into account, among other things, energy saving, the need to combat climate change, and that public policy must encourage this transition for the benefit of all, in particular with regard to improving road safety and accessibility.
11. REFERS to the Stockholm Declaration of 19-20 February 2020⁵, in particular resolution nr. 11 encouraging public authorities to mandate a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h in areas where active and vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe. INDICATES that public space is by definition limited, and that speeds therefore must be adjusted, where appropriate, so that safe use of the shared space is ensured. WELCOMES actions that have been taken in this regard across the EU.
12. THANKS the Commission for supporting the Baseline and Trendline projects, which contribute to follow the evolution towards zero fatalities and serious injuries across Europe and to measure the effectiveness of road safety investments. NOTES WITH SATISFACTION that all the Member States are involved in the follow-up Trendline project.
13. ACKNOWLEDGES the benefits of comparability of road safety data across Member States, including data on road crashes. CONSIDERS it possible to carry out well-targeted actions at EU-level even if methodologies of Member States are not fully harmonised, given that asking for full harmonisation might lead to fewer Member States willing to engage in EU projects, makes historical comparability more difficult and could create a disproportionate administrative burden.
14. PLACES GREAT IMPORTANCE on independent investigation to identify the causes of road crashes that lead to serious injuries and fatalities in order to prevent them in the future.

⁵ See the Stockholm Declaration signed during the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety “Achieving Global Goals 2030” on 19-20 February 2020.

15. UNDERLINES the ongoing work in the CARE Expert Group to collect and report data on serious road injuries promoting the use of a common definition based on the MAIS3+ trauma scale, as well as share as much as possible the available knowledge and good practices. RECOGNISES the administrative workload and POINTS OUT the importance of data protection, but STRESSES in this regard the importance of tackling the under-reporting of road traffic victims, including vulnerable road users, and of having comparable data of serious injuries in the EU.
16. EMPHASISES initiatives on road safety management supported by the Commission and encouraged by the European Parliament, such as the Road Safety Monitoring Tool from the European Road Safety Observatory (ERSO), and the EU Road Safety Exchange Project (EURSE), allowing by means of study visits and national workshops concrete exchanges of knowledge and best practices between authorities in EU Member States and stakeholders on different road safety topics. RECOGNISES the importance of financial support in this regard, without prejudice to the financing arrangements to be agreed for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. HIGHLIGHTS the High Level Group Road Safety, where Member States learn continuously from each other's safety measures, legislation and good practices.
17. WELCOMES the progress being made in implementing minimum safety standards for new vehicles under the General Safety Regulation⁶ and the efforts being made by Member States to ensure the roadworthiness of an ageing fleet in the context of vehicle inspection, both periodic technical inspections as well as roadside inspections. In this regard, REFERS to the upcoming proposal of the revised Roadworthiness package. As the fleet gradually regenerates and more and more vehicles on EU roads are equipped with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), we can expect a positive impact on reducing fatalities and serious injuries.
18. BEARS IN MIND that the safety of vehicles is also linked to their basic technical characteristics and the behaviour of the driver, and that active and passive safety systems are only countermeasures for limiting the related risks.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2019/2144, OJ L 325, 16.12.2019, p. 1.

19. RECOGNISES the investments in high-quality, resilient and sustainable road infrastructure.
20. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of interconnectivity and interoperability of data related to traffic, transport and vehicles, complying with data privacy regulations, to improve traffic and road safety management.
21. ACKNOWLEDGES the potential of innovative technologies boosting road safety. NOTES that to maximize this potential, those technologies must be easy to use and safe by design, and drivers should know how to make correct and safe use of them. However, RECOGNISES also the associated risk of distraction while driving, in which driver awareness through driver training, campaigns and enforcement, and through improved technology are essential.
22. REFERS to the recent Regulations impacting automated vehicles⁷ and INVITES the Commission to continue the work while also including technical regulations on fully automated vehicles produced in unlimited series, in which attention is paid to introducing these vehicles onto EU roads in a safe and integrated manner. Also INVITES the Commission to closely work together with Member States and relevant stakeholders on making automated mobility a safe reality within the whole transport system, and on related challenges regarding artificial intelligence, paying particular attention to the co-existence of automated vehicles with vulnerable road users, powered two wheelers and other human-controlled vehicles.
23. EMBRACES a modal shift by convincing road users to increasingly use active and collective transport modes, to enhance quality of life, health, climate, inclusivity, and above all road safety, while focussing on strong safety policies for these modes.

⁷ Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1426 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2019/2144 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards uniform procedures and technical specifications for the type-approval of the automated driving system (ADS) of fully automated vehicles and the Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/2236 as regards the technical requirements for vehicles produced in unlimited series, vehicles produced in small series, fully automated vehicles produced in small series and special purpose vehicles, and as regards software update.

24. APPRECIATES the Commission's effort to provide technical requirements for electrically powered personal mobility devices (micromobility devices), that are used by a growing group of road users, which leads to further fatalities and injuries. ACKNOWLEDGES that there is a lot of difference in approach and regulation among Member States regarding those devices, aiming at better protection of active and vulnerable road users. REFERS in that regard to the Commission's Topic Guide⁸, which includes best practice and key recommendations on the integration of micromobility in urban mobility planning, and SUPPORTS the Commission in continuing its work on providing guidance for the safe use of personal mobility devices, without prejudice to competences of Member States.
25. NOTES the important progress being made in safety procedures for the design of major road infrastructure, following the revision of the Directive on road safety infrastructure management in 2019, POINTS OUT that some Member States are applying these safety procedures even more broadly than the scope of this Directive requires, in particular outside of the main roads and/or not financed by European funds. UNDERLINES that the adoption of Sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs) will become mandatory for each urban node under the revised TEN-T Regulation⁹, reflecting road safety considerations laid down in Union guidelines, and POINTS OUT that road safety is a thematic enabling condition for the mapping of projects under the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the Cohesion Fund¹⁰.
26. APPRECIATES the fact that the Commission accepts the European Court of Auditors' recommendations either in full or in part and INVITES Member States to continue their efforts and cooperation with the Commission on pursuing the courses of action relevant for those recommendations. PLACES great importance on a continuous and strong cooperation among Member States and between Member States and the Commission, both individually and in broad-based projects, including an exchange of best practices.

⁸ SUMP Topic Guide on Safe Use of Micromobility Devices in Urban Areas, published in December 2021 as part of a compendium of EU guidance documents.

⁹ PE-CONS 56/24 + ADD 1 to 29.

¹⁰ Annex IV point 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.