# Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2008/96/EC on road infrastructure safety management'

*(COM(2018) 274 final — 2018/0129 (COD))*

(2019/C 62/40)

Rapporteur: **Brian CURTIS**

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| Referral | European Parliament, 31.5.2018 |
| | Council of the European Union, 8.6.2018 |
| Legal basis | Article 91(1)(c) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union |
| Section responsible | Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society |
| Adopted in section | 4.10.2018 |
| Adopted at plenary | 17.10.2018 |
| Plenary session No | 538 |
| Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions) | 204/2/6 |

## 1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the proposal to amend Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (RISM). In particular, the Committee believes that the measures put forward by the Commission should overcome the shortcomings of the current directive (harmonisation, information sharing and limited scope) and should play a key role for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety.

1.2. The Committee endorses the initiative 'Vision Zero', which aims to record no fatalities and serious accidents on the roads by 2050, to be achieved adopting the 'Safe System' approach, promoted by the World Health Organisation. The implementation of this strategy will require the involvement of all sectors and of all road users to achieve strengthened governance. It is important that the indicators are clear and can be monitored. Civil society organisations should be actively involved in all stages of shaping, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the strategy.

1.3. The Committee believes that a systematic and proactive risk mapping procedure across the TEN-T network and on all motorways, as well as all primary roads, is a crucial step in planning new infrastructure measures. Nevertheless, due to the different states of implementation of the current RISM directive, it is important to establish realistic targets and deadlines for all Member States and to provide financial support for the most backward regions, included Six Western Balkans Countries. Furthermore, the Committee argues that the scope of the RISM should be extended to all main rural and urban streets, in order to achieve an effective drastic reduction in fatal and serious accidents by 2030.

1.4. The EESC considers the achievement of high road safety performances to be strategic, but an increased budget is needed in the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, in order to ensure continuity in the long term, so that the ambitious targets the EU has set itself can be met. In particular, the Committee points out that the EU strategy is mainly focused on financing the building of new infrastructure, but adequate funds should also be allocated to the maintenance and upgrading of existing roads. Moreover, the EESC believes that a stronger budget for transport will have an additional positive impact for Europe's growth and jobs.

1.5. The Committee supports the proposal on new performance requirements for road markings and signs, to develop cooperative, connected and automated mobility systems (C-ITS). The EESC recommends extending such an approach to all available transport (intermodality), in order to maximise the impact of such a strategy. Also, the EESC considers that any strategy on road safety should start from proper education and training for private and professional drivers, because human error is still the main cause of accidents.

1.6. The EESC supports the proposal to take vulnerable road users into account systematically in all road safety management procedures. In particular, the Committee recommends parallel development with other specific safety provisions for vehicles to close the loop.

## 2. **Introduction**

2.1. Road safety in the EU has greatly improved over the past few decades. Between 2001 and 2010, the number of road deaths in the EU fell by 43 %, and by another 19 % between 2010 and 2016. Nevertheless, the number of road fatalities remains high (25 620 people lost their lives on EU roads in 2016 ([1])) and the statistics show a progressive stagnation in the EU process towards safe mobility.

2.2. For this reason, the Valletta Declaration encouraged the European Commission to launch a new initiative to adapt **Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (RISM)** to the changes in mobility resulting from societal trends and technological developments. This initiative, focused on road safety, has a crucial role in the **Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety** ([2]), published in May 2018, in the framework of the **3rd Mobility Package** ([3]).

## 3. **Gist of the proposal**

3.1. Despite progress in recent years, the number of serious or fatal accidents on roads is still too high. Since 90 % of accidents are caused by human error, the Commission thinks that automation, connectivity, new design standards for roads and vehicles could reduce the number of the accidents and their consequences on drivers, passengers and vulnerable road users (e.g. cyclists).

3.2. In particular, the Commission has established the goal '**Vision Zero'**, which aims to record no fatalities and serious accidents on the roads by 2050. The proposal also introduces *an interim* target of a 50 % reduction in fatalities and serious injuries by 2030.

3.3. In order to achieve these goals, the EU intends to adopt new technological and regulatory tools based on the World Health Organisation's '**Safe System'** ([4]). The principle behind this approach is that, while accidents cannot be entirely eliminated, action can nevertheless be taken to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries.

3.4. The current RISM Directive was adopted in 2008 to ensure that road safety considerations are at the forefront of all phases of the planning, design and operation of road infrastructure. Nevertheless, there are many differences in the state of implementation of this Directive at national level. These differences often correspond to a higher level of fatal and serious accidents ([5]). For this reason, it is crucial to harmonise safety regulations and to improve the safety performance of road infrastructure. Member States should receive specific financial support through the Connecting Europe Facility (EUR 200 million) for the period 2018-2020.

3.5. The revised Directive aims to achieve the above-mentioned objectives by introducing the following measures:

— mandating transparency and follow-up of infrastructure safety management procedures;

— a network-wide road assessment and a systematic and proactive risk mapping procedure to assess the 'in-built', or inherent, safety on roads across the EU;

— extending the scope of the Directive beyond the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) to cover motorways and primary roads outside the network, as well as all roads outside urban areas that are built using EU funds in whole or in part (The TEN-T network is characterised by significant traffic volumes but, thanks to the high safety standards, fatal accidents are not particularly frequent (8 %). The primary EU road network represents 39 % of all road fatalities in the EU. Coordinated EU action on the primary road network (including the non-TEN-T part) should help to achieve the 'Vision Zero' targets.);

([1]) EU road accident database, 2016.
([2]) COM(2018) 293 annex 1.
([3]) COM(2018) 293 final.
([4]) World Health Organization 'Save LIVES — A road safety technical package', 2017.
([5]) Care — EU Road accident database.

— setting general performance requirements for road markings and road signs to make it easier to roll out cooperative, connected and automated mobility systems;

— making it mandatory to take vulnerable road users into account systematically in all road safety management procedures.

4. **General comments**

4.1. The EESC welcomes the Commission proposal aimed at amending Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety Management. In particular, the Committee endorses the Valletta Declaration and believes that an enhanced European approach is needed to achieve better road safety performances.

4.2. The 3rd Mobility Package consists of a set of interrelated legislative initiatives. The Committee decided to deal with each legislative proposal in a separate opinion. For this reason, this opinion should be read and understood in connection with the EESC's previous opinions, but also with those opinions drafted in alignment with it and which scrutinise specific aspects of the 3rd Mobility Package ([6]).

4.3. The Committee endorses the 'Vision Zero' goal to be achieved using the 'Safe System' approach. This will require the involvement of all sectors and of all road users to achieve strengthened governance. It is important that the indicators set for meeting these goals are clear and can be monitored. Civil society organisations should be actively involved in all stages of the shaping, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

4.4. The EESC welcomes the decision to allocate EUR 200 million (period 2018-2020) to road safety. However, the Committee considers it necessary to increase the financial envelope available in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, in order to ensure continuity in the long term, so that the ambitious targets the EU has set itself can be met ([7]). (The European Commission has estimated that the investments needed to deliver the core TEN-T network will amount to around EUR 500 billion for the period 2021 to 2030, while the finalisation of the comprehensive network will cost around EUR 1 500 billion.)

4.5. The EESC believes that a stronger budget for transport will have an additional positive impact for Europe's growth and jobs. The funds invested will have a leverage effect, helping to create 13 million jobs a year up to 2030 and to generate additional revenue of up to EUR 4 500 billion (1,8 % of the EU GDP). This means that every billion euro invested in the TEN-T network should create up to 20 000 jobs ([8]).

4.6. The Committee believes that the initiative for a systematic and proactive risk mapping procedure across the European TEN-T network and on all motorways (outside of the TEN-T network), as well as all primary roads, is a crucial step in planning the scale and type of infrastructure measures to be taken on the European road network. Nevertheless, due to the different states of implementation of the current RISM Directive, it is important to establish realistic targets and deadlines for all Member States, and to provide adequate financial measures to support the most backward regions and countries ([9]).

4.7. The Committee points out that the EU strategy is mainly focused on financing the building of new infrastructure. Nevertheless, the maintenance and upgrading of existing roads should also receive adequate funds, because these factors are equally crucial for keeping a high standard of road safety.

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([6]) TEN/666, Sustainable Mobility for Europe, Barbucci, 2018 (see page 254 of this Official Journal); TEN/668, European Maritime Single Window environment + Electronic freight transport information, Back, 2018 (see page 265 of this Official Journal); TEN/669, Implementation of the TEN-T projects, Dumitru Fornea, 2018 (see page 269 of this Official Journal); TEN/675, Weights and dimensions of road vehicles, Back, 2018 (see page 286 of this Official Journal); TEN/672, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Plosceanu and Watson, 2018 (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 191); TEN/673, Connected and automated mobility, Samm, 2018 (see page 274 of this Official Journal); TEN/674, Tyre labelling, 2018 (see page 280 of this Official Journal); TEN/667 (see page 261 of this Official Journal); INT/863, Security of vehicles/protecting vulnerable road users, Hencks, 2018 (OJ C 440, 6.12.2018, p. 90).

([7]) COM(2018) 277.

([8]) TEN/672, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Plosceanu and Watson, 2018.

([9]) TEN/669, Implementation of the TEN-T projects, Dumitru Fornea, 2018.

4.8. New performance requirements for road markings and signs are crucial to developing cooperative, connected and automated mobility systems (C-ITS). The Committee considers it essential to enable vehicles and road infrastructure to exchange information constantly in order to face the 'mixed traffic system', characterised by vehicles using different technologies: human, assisted and automated driving ([10]). To complete the strategy on safe mobility it is important to extend such an approach to all available transport (intermodality), with a direct impact on the reduction and safety of traffic volumes ([11]).

4.9. The EESC is convinced that new technologies can make a sensible contribution to upgrading road safety standards, taking into account their limitations and the precautions that needed when using them. Also, the EESC considers that any strategy on road safety should start from proper education and training for private and professional drivers, because human error remains one of the main causes of accidents.

4.10. The EESC supports the proposal to take vulnerable road users into account systematically in all road safety management procedures. This approach is in line with new trends and habits of EU citizens (e.g. more cyclists). The Committee recommends parallel development with other specific safety provisions for vehicles to close the loop (e.g. advanced emergency braking systems, lane departure warning and a different design for heavy-duty vehicle cabins to facilitate visibility of cyclists and pedestrians, as well as sensors to detect them) ([12]).

5. **Specific comments**

5.1. The EESC considers it important that physical and digital infrastructure be developed in parallel. It is also important to complete 5G coverage on all of Europe's motorway and primary road networks as soon as possible to enable effective connectivity between roads and vehicles and between vehicles and vehicles ([13]). Here too, the EESC recommends adequate and long-term financial support in the next MFF 2021-2027.

5.2. The Committee, in line with the recommendation of the European Transport Safety Council ([14]), argues that the scope of the RISM should be extended to all main rural and urban streets. This wider approach is necessary to achieve an effective drastic reduction in fatal and serious accidents by 2030. This proposal is based on the fact that the Commission proposal has an impact on half of the accidents that occur on EU roads, and that the great majority of the serious injuries occur on urban roads.

5.3. In 2015, the EU began a new venture to extend TEN-T strategy to the Western Balkans ([15]). This initiative, supported through the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), should have a crucial impact on the EU enlargement process. The EESC recommends including the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety in the framework of this ambitious infrastructural project. This measure should be in line with the Commission proposal to extend the scope of RISM to road infrastructure outside urban areas completed using EU funding. In particular, it should enable six Western Balkans Countries to join the EU without experiencing a safety and infrastructural gap.

Brussels, 17 October 2018.

*The President*
*of the European Economic and Social Committee*
Luca JAHIER

([10]) TEN/673, Connected and automated mobility, Samm, 2018.
([11]) TEN/666, Sustainable Mobility for Europe, Barbucci, 2018.
([12]) INT/863, Security of vehicles/protecting vulnerable road users, Hencks, 2018.
([13]) TEN/673, Connected and automated mobility, Samm, 2018.
([14]) COM(2018) 274, p. 7.
([15]) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-4826_de.htm