

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4619/06
by Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Seat belts in buses and coaches

The requirement for occupants of buses and coaches likewise to wear seat belts can be waived at national level in certain cases, for instance for pregnant women and people who are stoutly built (in France there are 8 million falling into the categories concerned).

Given that an estimated 40 000 people died on Europe's roads in 2005, the overall death toll in the enlarged Union has fallen by only 20% in four years. Nearly a quarter of those killed are young people under 25.

Although the Union has been making better progress in recent years, the rate of improvement is still not enough to meet the Commission's target for 2010, that is to say, a death toll below 25 000.

Most mass or public transport vehicles are still not suited to people of the particular shape referred to above, or to children, even though seat belts of appropriate design are obtainable, as are centrally controlled devices to release all the belts at once in case of accident, which would be useful to have when, for example, large numbers of children were travelling.

The Commission is at present engaged in discussion with 'CARS 21', a motor industry lobby group that deals with, among other things, road safety matters.

Can the Commission say what measures will be taken in the next ten years regarding the programme for fitting vehicles with new safety equipment? In addition, can it specify an exact timetable for compliance with the requirement for manufacturers to fit seat belt systems suitable for all types of passengers?