

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1035/09

by Elly de Groen-Kouwenhoven (Verts/ALE) and Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Lack of road safety supervision exercised by the state institutions of Bulgaria and possible ways of solving this problem

1. Is the Commission aware that Bulgaria now has a serious road safety problem, with over 1000 deaths and over 10000 injuries each year - in 2004 there were 940 deaths and 9287 injuries; in 2006 there were 1043 deaths and 10 215 injuries; in 2008 there were 1052 deaths and 9888 injuries - and that Bulgaria's fatality rates are 2 to 2.5 times higher than in some Western European countries and in addition, many of the 10 000 injured may end up disabled for life? Is the Commission aware that experts claim that the main reason for the tragedies is the lack of supervision by the state institutions that makes drivers abuse their rights and fail to maintain driving discipline ?
2. Is the Commission aware that, besides the pain and suffering of victims and the grief of families who have lost loved ones, such casualties are a significant drain on the Bulgarian economy, that, in addition to using scarce police resources at accident sites and medical and nursing resources in order to treat victims, the country loses the future productivity of those killed or disabled, that annual losses to the economy are estimated to be well over EUR 500 million per year and could be as high as EUR 1 billion per year and that no country can afford to sustain recurring annual losses of this magnitude year after year, meaning that urgent action is required to try to reduce such losses ?
3. Can the Commission confirm that Bulgaria, in line with other European countries, has committed itself to meeting the EU-wide target of reducing its road accident casualties by 2010? Is the Commission aware that, whereas other European countries are steadily reducing the numbers killed and injured on roads, Bulgarian trends currently show deaths on the roads are increasing, and, unless significant additional investment and increased efforts are made to improve road safety, Bulgaria will find it very hard to achieve its target of reducing casualties to 700 deaths and around 6600 injuries by the end of 2010?
4. What measures for drastic improvement of road safety in Bulgaria will be taken in 2009 by the Bulgarian authorities?
5. What is the EU doing to help achieve this target, e.g. as part of EU road safety policy and as part of regional development policy? Does the Commission intend to step up those efforts?