

Press Release - 3-10

Maximum Protection at Low Cost - EAC demands harmonised regulation on safety vests

Brussels, 2010-03-04 - "We want the safety vest for all Europeans. The wearing of these vests should be standardised throughout Europe, at least on motorways and highways." Peter Stuppacher, president of the European Automobile Clubs (EAC) said on Wednesday evening at the European Parliament in Brussels at the start of a joint initiative together with the Austrian Jörg Leichtfried, a member of the European Parliament and of the Transport Committee. This initiative has prominent support; the Austrian Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Doris Bures has sent this message from Vienna: "Safety has priority. I therefore support the uniform use of safety vests throughout Europe."

In 14 EU countries this area has not been regulated and among these countries are highly populated ones such as Germany. Safety vests are obligatory in 13 of the 27 EU member countries: in Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Italy, Luxemburg, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary. However the use of safety vest in these countries underlies different regulations. For example, in some of these countries it is only the driver who must wear a safety vest, whereas in others, all passengers are obliged to wear one. "We really don't need this patchwork quilt", says Leichtfried.

At a time of open borders these individual solutions are not the answer, emphasises EAC President Stuppacher, especially when prompt action could save lives: "Why should 246 million Europeans not have, what for 252 million Europeans is a matter of course? The use of safety vests cries out for a European solution."

In Austria where the use of safety vests has been compulsory since 2005 the advantages are obvious: The number of accidents has been reduced by 39% and the number of casualties by even 53%. Furthermore a scientific gaze study carried out by the Austrian Institute for Holistic Accident and Safety Research (EPIGUS) and financed jointly by the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (Transport Safety Fund VSF) and the Austrian EAC member ARBÖ demonstrates that safety vests are a substantial safety gain.

Putting the core message of the study in a nutshell, Mag. Christoph Pflieger, CEO of viewpointsystem. said, "Those wearing a safety vest at night on the hard shoulder are noticed at the very least four seconds before other motorway users drive past them. Thus at a speed of 110 km/h one can be seen 120 meters earlier. Without a safety vest one is more or less invisible, and at night there is absolutely no chance of being seen by other road-users."

As a direct result of the parliamentary evening in Brussels, Mr. Leichtfried (MEP) sent a written enquiry to Siim Kallas (EU Transport Commissioner) with the following demands:

- The compulsory carrying and wearing of safety vests for car drivers in the whole of Europe.
- The standardised use of safety vests in the whole of Europe, at least on motorways and highways.
- The recommendation that, when necessary, all car passengers who get out of the vehicle, and not just the driver, should wear a safety vest.

The EU Commission is obliged to react to this form of written enquiry. In this context Leichtfried added: "We hope that we have taken an important step towards more road safety for everyone in Europe."

Further inquiries:

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About the EAC: The alliance of European Automobile Clubs was founded in 2007. Five Automobile clubs from Germany and Austria belong to it: ARBÖ (Auto-, Motor- und Radfahrerbund Österreichs), ACE (Auto Club Europa e.V.), ACV (Automobil-Club Verkehr), ARCD (Auto- und Reise-Club Deutschland) und KS (Kraftfahrer-Schutz e.V.). Peter Stuppacher is the General Secretary of the ARBÖ and has been the president of the EAC since November 2009.