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Maximum Protection at Low Cost - EAC demands harmonised regulations on high-visibility vests

Reflective high-visibility vests effectively contribute to road safety in accidents and breakdowns. This has been impressively shown in Austria, where wearing high-visibility vests has been compulsory in such cases since 2005. The accident figures on Austria's motorways and dual carriageways have dropped significantly. The official statistics show accidents falling by 39% and numbers of casualties by 53%.

The Austrian EPIGUS Institute for Holistic Accident and Safety Research recently proved in a specially designed eye tracking analysis that high-visibility vests contribute to improved safety. Persons wearing a high-visibility vest can be detected by other road-users within 4 seconds whereas, even at daylight, for the oncoming traffic, persons without a high-visibility vest are hardly visible. Thus, wearing a high-visibility vest effectively prolongs the reaction time that might prevent an accident and therefore can save lives.

At present, 13 out of 27 EU countries require high-visibility vests to be worn as a safety measure: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, Slovakia, and Slovenia. However, the regulations on the use of the vests vary substantially in these countries. For example, while only the driver has to wear a high-visibility vest in some countries, in others all passengers have to;

in some countries, the vests have to be stored in the front of the car, while in others they must be transported in the boot, etc.

Moreover, 14 EU Member States have no clear regulations on the use of these vests.

One of the most important acquisitions of the European Union is free cross-border mobility. At a time of open borders, however, individual solutions on high-visibility vests do not make sense. They confuse road-users and lead to unintentional traffic violations that not only entail legal consequences but also endanger road safety.

The EU committed to significantly reduce the number of fatal road accidents and casualties. A European regulation on high-visibility vests would be a simple and cost-effective step in the right direction.

To support road safety, the EAC is calling for a EU-wide unified policy on the use of high-visibility vests. Our objectives are:

- unified compulsory regulations on carrying and wearing high-visibility vests for all car drivers across Europe,
- unified regulations on wearing high-visibility vests on all roads, at least for motorways and dual carriageways,
- regulations on wearing high-visibility vests for the driver and all passengers.

EAC is a signatory of

