

Brussels, 3 November 2006

Fourth Verona Conference on Road Safety: on track towards saving 25 000 lives

Today, Vice-President Jacques Barrot opened together with Alessandro Bianchi, Italian Minister of Transport, and his Finnish counterpart, Susanna Huovinen, the Fourth Verona Conference on Road Safety. More than 30 ministerial delegations from Europe and beyond will exchange their views on "Innovative Approaches to Road Safety". This conference is important to promote the topic of road safety, especially with a view to the set target to reduce the number of fatalities by 50% until 2010.

Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot stated: *"The large participation and wide range of this conference demonstrate the importance of road safety in the European Union and throughout the world. I am especially pleased that the European Road Safety Charter receives the attention it deserves within the framework of our discussions here in Verona. I am also delighted to announce that we had an 8% reduction of fatalities in the EU between autumn 2005 and autumn 2006. This is twice the rate we had in the years before. If we can maintain this trend, we will achieve our ambitious goal of halving the number of road fatalities between 2001 and 2010."*

The two-day conference is dedicated to road safety and is the fourth of its kind. Four working sessions will be held over the next two days. The first session is entitled "Children's mobility and road safety awareness". On this occasion, winners of the first Verona Pilot Action dedicated to improve road safety among children will be awarded. The second working session underlines safety of two-wheel vehicle users. On the second conference day, sessions will focus on road safety planning and policies as well as innovations in road safety including technologies.

In 2005, more than 41 000 people died in road accidents throughout the EU. In 2001, the European Commission tabled an action plan containing various measures at all levels to fight road violence. Latest statistics indicate that the progress towards a reduction of fatalities around 25 000 is indeed ambitious but reachable. In this context, the European Road Safety Charter gives everybody the possibility, through the commitment of citizens, to participate with verifiable and practical initiatives to achieve this goal. Around 600 companies and public authorities have signed the Charter and have made concrete commitments to improve road safety.

For further information on the European Road Safety Charter, see:
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/rs_charter/introduction_en.htm