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European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1980 - 1981

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DOCUMENT 1-343/80

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-83/80) for

- I a directive amending Council Directive 77/541/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to safety belts and restraint systems of motor vehicles**
- II a directive amending Council Directive 76/115/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to anchorages for moto-vehicles safety belts**
- III a directive amending Council Directive 74/408/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the interior fittings of motor vehicles (strength of seats and of their anchorages)**

Rapporteur: Mr K. von WOGAU

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By letter of 11 April 1980 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 100 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for directives amending Council Directives 77/541/EEC, 76/115/EEC and 74/408/EEC on safety belts, safety belt anchorages and interior fittings of motor vehicles.

The President of the European Parliament referred these proposals to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Transport for its opinion.

On 28 May 1980 the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs appointed Mr K. von WOGAU rapporteur.

It considered these proposals at its meeting of 16 July 1980 and adopted the motion for a resolution with two abstentions.

Present: Mr Deleau, acting chairman; Mr Macario, vice-chairman; Mr von Wogau, rapporteur; Mr Balfour, Mr Beazley, Mr Beumer, Mr von Bismarck, Mr Bonaccini, Mr Brok (deputizing for Mr Sayn-Wittgenstein), Miss Forster, Mr Herman, Mr Hopper, Mr Moreau, Mr Nyborg, Mr Schnitker and Mr Turner (deputizing for Sir Brandon Rhys Williams)

The opinion of the Committee on Transport is attached.

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The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for

- I. a directive amending Council Directive 77/541/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to safety belts and restraint systems of motor vehicles,
- II. a directive amending Council Directive 76/115/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to anchorages for motor vehicle safety belts,
- III. a directive amending Council Directive 74/408/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the interior fittings of motor vehicles (strength of seats and of their anchorages)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposals from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 100 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 1-83/80),
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Transport (Doc. 1-343/80),
- approves the Commission's proposal.

¹ OJ No. C 87, 9.4.1980, pp. 4,5 and 7.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. These Commission proposals are designed to extend the scope of the directives on safety belts and their anchorages. Up to now, the directives have applied to vehicles intended for the carriage of passengers and comprising no more than 9 seats, but it is now proposed to extend their application to buses and lorries weighing up to 3.5 tons and to make EEC type approval of heavy lorries conditional on the fitting of safety belts.

A special amendment proposed is that safety belts may be anchored to seats.

2. The Commission proposes that the European Parliament and the Council adopt a position on the questions of principle only; most of the amendments necessary to the technical annexes will be carried out in accordance with the procedure for adaptation to technical progress.

3. In view of the fact that some Member States want to extend the use of safety belts to the vehicles in question, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs supports the Commission's proposal to amend the directives as otherwise further barriers to trade could arise. It also endorses the Commission's proposal that the technical details be laid down in accordance with the procedure for adaptation to technical progress.

4. In its opinion, the Committee on Transport comes out in favour of total rather than optional harmonization as proposed by the Commission. It refers in this connection to the opinion delivered in 1974 by the former Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport on the first proposal in this area, in which it also calls for total harmonization in view of the safety implications involved.

5. The Committee on Economic and Monetary affairs cannot endorse the opinion of the Committee on Transport in this instance. Not all Member States want to extend the obligatory use of safety belts to buses and heavy lorries at present. It would therefore not be possible for the Council to agree to total harmonization and so the Commission's proposal would be blocked for an indefinite period of time. However, a directive based on optional harmonization has a good chance of being adopted in the Council and will be sufficient to remove the obstacles to trade which might otherwise arise.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Transport to Mr DELORS,
Chairman of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Luxembourg, 3 June 1980

Dear Mr Chairman,

At its meeting of 30 May 1980, the Committee on Transport considered

- the proposal for a Council directive amending Council Directive 77/541/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to safety belts and restraint systems of motor vehicles
- the proposal for a Council directive amending Council Directive 76/115/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to anchorages for motor-vehicle safety belts
- the proposal for a Council directive amending Council Directive 74/408/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the interior fittings of motor vehicles (strength of seats and of their anchorages)

(COM(80) 84 final) (Doc. 1-83/80)¹.

Since the purpose of the three proposed amendments is to extend the scope of the existing Community provisions contained in the original Directives to include all vehicles used for the carriage of passengers and goods, which will naturally mean a greater degree of safety, the Committee on Transport approves the Commission's proposals.

It should, however, be pointed out that in November 1974, in its Opinion on the Commission's first proposal on this subject, the former Committee on Regional Policy and Transport expressed regret that on such an important safety issue optional harmonization rather than compulsory harmonization of standards at Community level had been chosen (Doc. 323/74/corr., p.17).

In a subsequent own-initiative report by the undersigned on 'safety glass for use in motor vehicles' (Doc. 397/75 of 3.12.1975), the European Parliament's Committee on Transport stressed that for the reduction of deaths or injuries the role of safety belts, head rests and safety glass was of the greatest importance. The committee also held the view that compulsory harmonization of this three point safety system should be introduced (see explanatory statement, p. 7).

The Committee on Transport therefore asks the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs to take account of these considerations in its motion for a resolution and to request the Commission to submit proposals as soon as possible on the compulsory fitting of safety belts in motor vehicles.

Yours faithfully,

(sgd) Chairman

¹Present: Mr Seefeld, chairman; Mr De Keersmaeker, Mr Carossino, vice-chairmen; Mr Albers, Mr Buttafuoco, Mr Janssen van Raay, Mr Gabert, Mr Gatto (deputizing for Mr Craxi), Mr Herman (deputizing for Mr Hoffmann), Mr Hutton (deputizing for Lord Harmar-Nicholls), Mr Key, Mr Klinkenborg and Mr Moorhouse.