

Press Release

DEKRA presents “Old-Age Mobility” Road Safety Report 2021 in Brussels

Valean: “Think about the people behind the crash statistics”

- EU Commissioner calls report essential contribution and impetus
- Older age groups overrepresented among vulnerable road users’ fatalities
- Technology can compensate for age-related deficits to a certain extent

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Older road users are potentially disadvantaged when it comes to road safety, says Adina Valean, European Commissioner for Transport. Speaking at the presentation of the 2021 DEKRA Road Safety Report entitled “Old-Age Mobility” in Brussels, the Commissioner pointed out: “Advances in technology and regulation are designed to keep road users safe and save lives. But we need to acknowledge that older people tend to drive older cars, which will not be equipped with the latest tools. And when driving a vehicle fitted with innovative assistance systems, some drivers including those from older generations may find it more difficult to use them. Sadly, older road users are also overrepresented among vulnerable road users’ fatalities.” One in two pedestrians or cyclists killed in a road traffic crash on EU roads is 65 or older. Overall, more than one in four of those killed in road traffic accidents is in that age group.

Advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) have the potential to improve the safety of all road users, especially vulnerable road users and of course older drivers. DEKRA CEO Stefan Kölbl joined the European Parliament in calling on the Commission to include ADAS in the upcoming revision of the Roadworthiness Package. “The potential can only be put into effect if these systems work reliably over the course of a vehicle’s full life cycle. This, in turn, means that vehicle inspection organizations like DEKRA must be able to check these systems regularly. Tomorrow’s periodical technical inspection needs ways and methods to do that. And we need a regulatory framework.”

The 2021 DEKRA Road Safety Report is the 14th edition to be published. The importance of improving road safety with respect to older people becomes particularly clear if comparing their crash statistics to younger demographics. While numbers of crash fatalities among 18 to 64-year-olds have been on the decline between 2010 and 2018, according to data from the International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group (IRTAD), in the same period the number of over-

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65s who were fatally injured in crashes actually rose¹.

“As we move up the age groups, we see an increasing risk of suffering more severe or fatal injuries compared against younger people given the same kinds of accidents. As such, there is a danger that the number of road accident fatalities occurring in the 65+ demographic will continue to rise,” explained Jann Fehlauer, Managing Director of DEKRA Automobil GmbH.

One of the challenges will be to solve the conflict of goals: On the one hand, senior citizens should retain their independent mobility well into old age as a way of social participation. On the other hand, the potential risks posed to them – and occasionally posed by them – should be minimized.

In the short term: focus on the human factor

While driver assistance systems can, to a certain extent, compensate for age-related performance deficits and help to reduce the extent to which older drivers are involved in car accidents – or indeed cause them –, it is important to note that it will take a long time for vehicles with assistance systems to achieve a high level of market penetration. Likewise, infrastructural measures often take a long time to get from the planning stage to implementation.

This is not to say that the road safety potential in vehicle technology and infrastructure should be underestimated. However, for the short term, the DEKRA Road Safety Report calls for a focus on the human factor.

Commissioner appreciates DEKRA’s contribution

The report includes real-life crash examples that illustrate some of the challenges connected to older road users. “From older drivers having trouble reversing into a parking space to driving slowly on a motorway or taking longer to get across a pedestrian crossing than the lights allow, I am sure these examples make us all think about the people behind the statistics”, commented Commissioner Valean.

She also expressed her appreciation to DEKRA for the latest report: “Your focus on older people’s road safety is an essential contribution to our understanding of the issues that road users face every day. It is also an impetus to the European Commission to keep pushing forward with our road safety agenda to put safety first and to keep our eyes fixed on Vision Zero.

Each year, the DEKRA Road Safety Report highlights important issues that we need to tackle as a society. And this year the standard is as high as ever.”

The DEKRA Road Safety Report 2021 on old-age mobility is available to download online from www.dekra-roadsafety.com.

¹ Data for OECD countries (except Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Slovenia)

DEKRA's demands to increase road safety for senior citizens:

- To ensure that they use the roads safely, older people must be provided with intensive education on their performance and limitations.
- Regular practical evaluations should be mandatory for senior citizens over the age of 75; these play an important role in helping them maintain their skills.
- All the relevant players in the health care system must be given awareness training and the qualifications to provide older people with advice regarding whether it is safe for them to drive.
- To boost safety, driver assistance systems must become more widely used on the market.
- In-vehicle safety features across all vehicle models should become largely standardized so that they are as intuitive as possible to use.
- Depending on the prevailing local conditions, light signaling systems, pedestrian crossings (crosswalks), central islands or protruding curbs must be used to make crossings safer, especially for older pedestrians.
- In light of the fact that more and more people aged 65 and over are using bicycles and pedelecs, the expansion of the bicycle path network in accordance with road safety concerns and the maintenance of bicycle paths must be made a top priority.
- Anyone buying a pedelec – in particular older people – should be provided with in-depth advice and the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the unusual way they work before buying.
- In order to prevent cars from driving in the wrong direction on freeways as much as possible, suitable measures that help drivers to (intuitively) orient themselves in good time are required.
- Particularly in rural regions, models must be developed to enable older people to retain their mobility without having to drive a car themselves.

Picture Caption

Online presentation of the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2021 in Brussels. From left to right: Jann Fehlauer, Managing Director of DEKRA Automobil GmbH, Moderator Katrina Sichel and Oliver Deiters, Head of Global External Affairs and Public Policy, DEKRA e.V.

About DEKRA

DEKRA has been active in the field of safety for almost 100 years. Founded in 1925 in Berlin as Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V., it is today one of the world's leading expert organizations. DEKRA SE is a subsidiary of DEKRA e.V. and manages the Group's operating business. In 2020, DEKRA generated turnover totaling almost EUR 3.2 billion. The company currently employs around 44,000 people in approximately 60 countries on all continents. With qualified and independent expert services, they work for safety on the road, at work and at home. These services range

from vehicle inspection and expert appraisals to claims services, industrial and building inspections, safety consultancy, testing and certification of products and systems, as well as training courses and temporary work. The vision for the company's 100th birthday in 2025 is that DEKRA will be the global partner for a safe, secure, and sustainable world. With a platinum rating from EcoVadis, DEKRA is now in the top one percent of sustainable businesses ranked.