

Road safety for motorcyclists: Call to action

The recently published road safety figures by the European Commission did not look good for motorcyclists. Although the number of fatal crashes has declined over the years with 12% (against a rising number of motorcyclists), in 2020 3042 motorcyclists and 495 moped riders still died as result of a crash in the European Union and EFTA countries.

This means 3537 people never went home anymore and are missed by their loved ones. It also means high costs for the society. According to SWOV¹, the costs are about € 6.5 million per road death and € 0.7 million per serious road injury. On fatalities alone this means almost a € 23 billion cost for society. Money and effort that is spent on road safety are therefore not costs but investments in lives, life quality and reduction of costs for society.

The share of fatalities for motorcyclists compared to all traffic fatalities rose from 14% to 16%. The same can be said for serious injuries. For moped riders these shares are a stable 3% (from 2011 to 2020) for fatalities and a decline from 7% to 5% for serious injuries. In this period the number of motorcycles has increased and that of mopeds has decreased. There are large differences per country, just as there are large differences in training, education, design, building and maintenance of the road infrastructure, and enforcement. We see a relation between these elements and the number of fatalities with crashes that involve motorcyclists. More detailed information about the figures can be found on the website of the European Commission:

https://road-safety.transport.ec.europa.eu/statistics-and-analysis/data-and-analysis_en.

In the [European Road Safety Observatory \(ESRO\) Road Safety Thematic Report on Motorcycles](#) that was published in January 2023, several explanations are given. Motorcyclists are often overlooked, the road environment has shortcomings (poor road surfaces, loose material, poor road alignment, obstacles, limited line of sight), motorcycle design elements, and a lack of rider training and experience by younger riders. The age groups 20-24 and 25-29 are significantly higher represented in fatalities than other age groups.

Although the European Commission gives no detailed information about the age groups of riders, it can be said that the age groups of younger riders (<30) are overrepresented in the fatal crashes and those over 65 are underrepresented. In our view, the focus on road safety for car drivers is often at the expense of vulnerable road users, including motorcyclists.

The high numbers of crashes that end up with fatalities and serious injuries mean that there is still much work to do. Some steps are already set out with the inclusion of motorcyclists in the Road Infrastructure Safety Management Directive, some elements in the General Safety Regulation, the inclusion of motorcycles in the test standards of the UN Regulation 157 (Automated Lane Keeping Systems, ALKS), technical improvements like ABS, and the prohibition on the sale of motorcycle clothing that is not tested to conform with the European minimum standards.

There is still much room for improvement in provision of training and education, motorcycle technology, the use and quality of personal protective equipment (PPE) and, in particular, road infrastructure. In our long experience, the road safety of motorcyclists does not get enough attention from lawmakers and authorities on national and European level despite a rising use of motorcycles for commuting, work and leisure.

¹ Road crash costs. SWOV fact sheet, November 2022, SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research, The Hague

We call on the European Commission, the European Parliament, national governments and parliaments and road authorities in Europe:

- **to include motorcyclists in their mobility and road safety policies,**
- **to build safer, forgiving roads and keep them safe,**
- **to improve education and training (both pre- and post-test) of motorcyclists where they are not only the necessary skills and knowledge are taught but also the mental attitude to ride defensively and awareness of risk exposure,**
- **to set standards for technical improvements on motorcycles and conspicuity of motorcyclists by using extra driving lights, and finally**
- **to facilitate effective promotional campaigns on wearing helmets, use of protective clothing and risky behaviour and towards drivers to take more care of motorcyclists.**

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