

CLOSING SPEECH

by

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for the European Symposium on Trends
in the Regulations concerning motor
vehicle design

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Throughout the symposium I have been kept informed of the main lines of your debate and conclusions. I am happy to say that as a result at the high level of your discussions the Commission now has a very valuable addition to its knowledge in this field which will facilitate in an important way our thinking on the shaping of the future policy.

First of all, I think that it has clearly emerged from our discussions over the past few days that it is vital to concentrate our efforts to get the Directives that are still missing from the overall EEC type approval procedure either proposed or adopted as soon as possible. This is an absolute priority for us and we will do everything within our means to have this accomplished. However, I think it will ^{not} be enough to content ourselves with the establishment of EEC type-approval procedures in the near future.

We must develop this system further but we are now able to do this on the basis of a set of common Community legislation and not any more by the way of harmonising varying national legislations.

A number of speakers - particularly manufacturers' representatives and also representatives of certain Member States - have put forward the idea that we should now leave the so-called optional approximation method currently applied in the vehicle directives and go over to the total method, which would mean that Member States could no longer keep their national laws alongside Community ones. I was interested to note this attitude and I can assure you that we will take into consideration along with other views that have been expressed.

So far in fact, the optional method has, with one or two exceptions, been the only one adopted in the sector of free movement of goods and, the vehicle sector in particular. When the first directives on vehicles went before the Council, the optional method seemed the best overall method and that in addition economics of scale would direct manufacturers towards the Community solution. It is conceivable that, once the EEC type-approval procedure has been completed and put into practice, it might well be possible to adopt total harmonization, particularly where the aspects of safety, public health, and the environment are predominant. But I should like to stress the fact that, in this particular field, the Commission has not a rigid position on the method of harmonization chosen but that we would normally seek the most practicable solution.

In saying this I would further emphasise that the overall view of the Commission on the use of the optional method of harmonisation in its work remains unchanged in those areas where safety or similar considerations are not predominant and where total harmonisation could limit consumer choice or result in the disappearance of regional specialities.

Previous speakers have touched on a thorny problem which has been bothering us for some time - the sometimes erroneous or, at least unsatisfactory, way in which Community directives are transposed into national law in certain Member States.

This is a problem which the Commission had to face as early as 1972 and I must say that our efforts to date have been crowned with a certain amount of success.

The representative of
As Mr. MARTINELLI has said, Italy has not always found it easy to transpose the directives into its own legislation; I am happy to say that a determined attack on this problem by the Italian authorities has now brought them from the bottom to the top of the list.

I can assure you that, in the future, we will accord greater priority to ensuring the transposition of Directives into the respective national legislations and in addition we will do our utmost to maintain the atmosphere of collaboration and confidence that is also necessary for a speedy and proper implementation of Directives. It is not just a question of the legislative transposition of directives but to complete the process it is essential that the approval of the vehicle prototype by the relevant departments is swiftly carried out. Certainly for the manufacturers this is the most important aspect since it represents practical application of the directive.

should be
I think that action planned at Community level, to avoid varying interpretations of Directives when they are implemented. The most reasonable solution, in my opinion, might well be for national officials responsible for approval to meet regularly, or whenever there is a specific problem of interpretation, in order to settle the problem at Community level.

So far I have mainly been dealing with improvements to the existing legislation, but I would now like to add one or two remarks on the discussions concerning the concept of a car for EMS in the eighties.

I have had the impression that there are two main attitudes or philosophies which at first sight seem at variance. On one side are the supporters of what I shall call the pause for reflection theory which was expounded so ably by Mr. DREYFUS. Practically speaking, they are asking us, once the first set of directives are terminated, to provide a break in the work on approximation; only afterwards would begin again with efforts oriented towards performance rather than design standards. In this event, the implementation periods would have to be rather long ones.

On the other side are the supporters of what I would call continuity. They are asking for the directive amendment process to be carried on and suggesting that, as the necessity for new legislation arises, the changeover from design standards to performance standards is achieved by a process of gradual evolution.

I can say clearly that the Commission is certainly willing to envisage the proposal of performance standards without dismissing continuity which I consider to be important.

I think that wherever possible the gradual changing of emphasis towards performance standards is acceptable but that it is important to envisage realistic implementation times that would enable industry to adjust its production smoothly.

Let me explain something here. I do not think that the Commission has ever introduced into any of its proposals to the Council time limits which were unreasonable or which industry was unable to cope with.

I should also add that the time between adoption and implementation in a number of existing Directives was so long that we had to bring amendments to take account of technical progress before the Directives could even be applied.

Of the points discussed, one - on restraint systems - struck me particularly. I think I am right in saying that every speaker has emphasized the need to make the wearing of seat belts compulsory. I am aware that this might give rise to problems of a psychological order in some Member States but

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I do not think we should be held back by stumbling blocks of this type on a point which is of such prime importance for the preservation of human life.

I think, therefore that I am right in saying that a specific demand for the wearing of seatbelts to be made compulsory throughout the Community has emerged from this Symposium.

I should mention here that the need for comparable national statistics has been stressed on a number of times throughout the Symposium and I am very pleased at the success of the Seminar on the subject run parallel to the Symposium. This has, in fact, highlighted needs in the various sectors more specially concerned with such data and will permit the Commission to draw up guidelines for further work in this field.

I have one more thing to add. I do not of course know what are your reactions at the end of the Symposium. You have been active and constantly attentive participants, the rapporteurs have been extremely well prepared and their candour in putting what were often very different points of view has meant that the discussions have been lively and constructive.

We for our part think the Symposium has been an important stage in the development of our work in that it has been, we consider, a unique opportunity for people with very diverse interests to explain their points of view and to take a step towards mutual understanding.

The Commission has no doubts about the success of this symposium judging from the amount and quality of your input . We will certainly ensure that when we get to the stage of output we will not fail to keep you adequately informed.

In concluding I would thank you all again for your active and fruitful participation and wish you a pleasant and safe journey home.