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“Road safety”: Reading between the lines

The European Parliament Transport committee surprisingly rejected the E. Commission’s proposal for a directive on Road Infrastructure Safety Management.

The Directive was expected to increase the safety level on the trans-European road network by setting actions to be undertaken in order to reach the main EU safety objectives: namely, halving the number of road deaths on the EU roads by 2010.

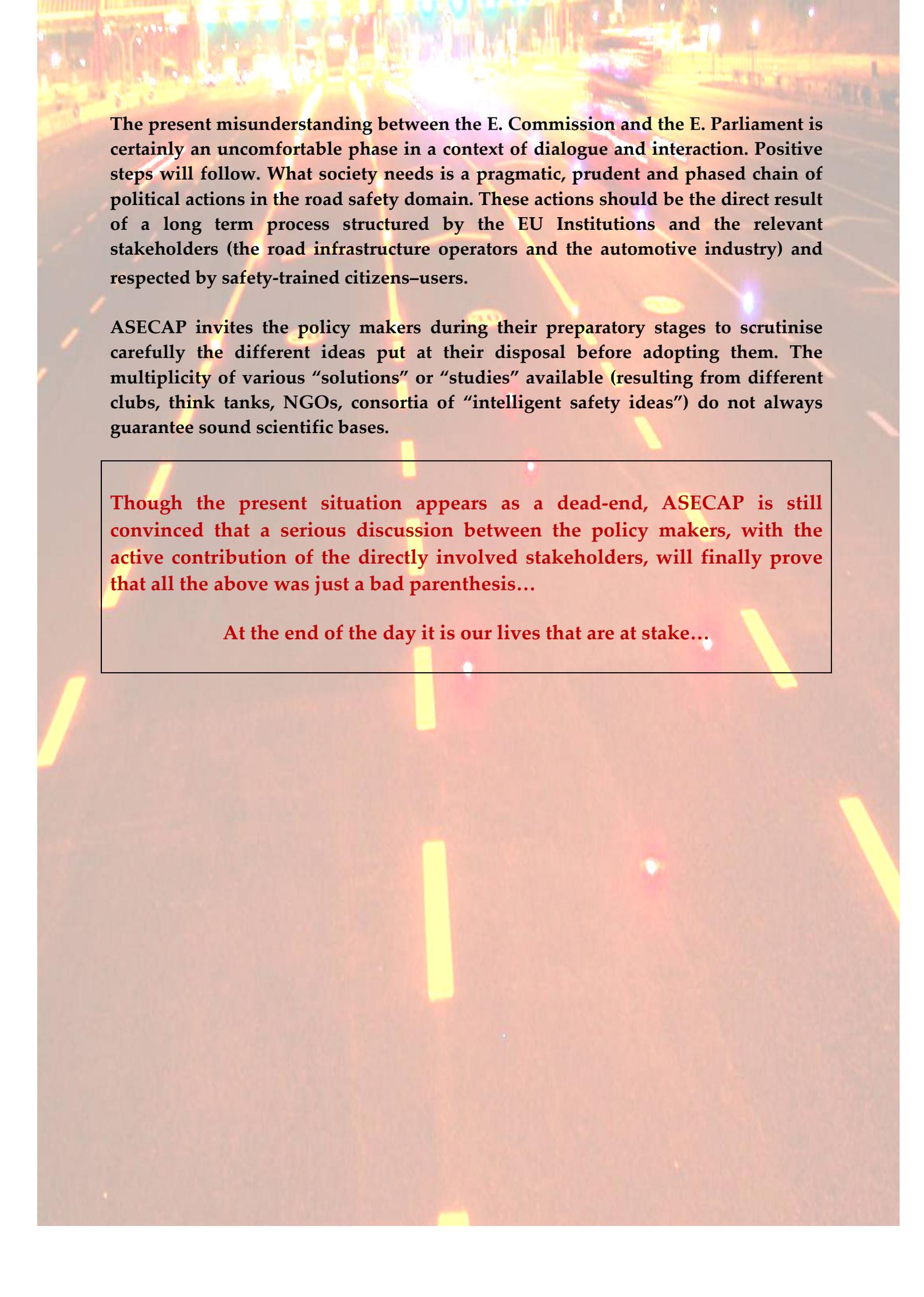
What are the reasons lagging beyond this? Is it that the members of the EP have suddenly decided to decrease the safety standards on the TENs or is it that they just could not understand the real substance of the EU Commission’s proposal that in spite of a limited number of “problems” was aiming to the right direction?

Are things so simply negative or is it now time for a careful reflection reading between the lines? It would have been easy to put the blame on somebody. However, prudence is surely needed; misinterpretations of facts, and mainly misunderstandings of the reasons behind these facts, could dangerously upset the terms of road transport safety for the years to come.

ASECAP is perfectly aware that both the E. Commission and the E. Parliament do their best to increase the safety standards on European roads keeping “road safety” as their priority target.

So, what did really happen? It seems that the two EU Institutions have in mind different road maps to reach their common target, and in their efforts, they used tools, technical and political elements - sometimes going beyond “road safety” in the strict sense of the term- that unfortunately are still neither well defined nor commonly understood.

ASECAP and its members, building and operating the **safest roads** in Europe, have always underlined that “road safety” is not a simple political message but an extremely sensitive and complex matrix, demanding serious analysis and synthesis that policy makers should not undertake alone; the main stakeholders should be also present from the earliest stages of the preparatory legislative phases.



The present misunderstanding between the E. Commission and the E. Parliament is certainly an uncomfortable phase in a context of dialogue and interaction. Positive steps will follow. What society needs is a pragmatic, prudent and phased chain of political actions in the road safety domain. These actions should be the direct result of a long term process structured by the EU Institutions and the relevant stakeholders (the road infrastructure operators and the automotive industry) and respected by safety-trained citizens–users.

ASECAP invites the policy makers during their preparatory stages to scrutinise carefully the different ideas put at their disposal before adopting them. The multiplicity of various “solutions” or “studies” available (resulting from different clubs, think tanks, NGOs, consortia of “intelligent safety ideas”) do not always guarantee sound scientific bases.

Though the present situation appears as a dead-end, ASECAP is still convinced that a serious discussion between the policy makers, with the active contribution of the directly involved stakeholders, will finally prove that all the above was just a bad parenthesis...

At the end of the day it is our lives that are at stake...