

Brussels, 22 June 2010

Commission supports international campaign to reduce fatal accidents at level crossings

The European Commission is backing the first ever international campaign dedicated to reducing the number of fatalities at level crossings, which is being launched today. Each year hundreds of people across Europe die in accidents at level crossings, which account for one third of all rail fatalities and 2% of all road deaths. Today road and rail stakeholders (¹) will hold simultaneous events in more than 45 countries on five continents to mark the first International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD), which uses education to reduce level crossing accidents.

Vice-President Siim Kallas, responsible for transport, said: "I am pleased that the Commission is involved in this initiative as we are firmly committed to reducing the number of fatalities on our roads. We cannot afford to overlook level crossings as so many accidents still take place on them. I am glad this campaign will give this problem the attention it deserves."

The Commission participates actively in the ILCAD campaign as it dovetails with its firm commitment to improve road safety. It has produced a video to raise awareness of level crossing safety, which will be made available to national campaigns. It can be viewed on <http://ec.europa.eu/roadsafety>. In addition, the Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport organised a workshop on level crossing safety in April 2010.

ILCAD focuses on educational measures and the promotion of safe behaviour at and around level crossings. It is built on existing national events which will be held jointly at various locations in every participating country and constructed around the common message "Act safely at level crossings!" In addition to regular or permanent activities held throughout the year, many special follow-up actions have been planned across the five continents. Flyers will be handed out at level crossings, in schools, driving schools, scouting clubs, etc. Posters will be displayed in railway stations and other central places and special messages will be broadcast on radio and television.

¹ European Rail Agency (ERA), Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC), Community of European Railways (CER), European Infrastructure Managers (EIM), European Level Crossing Forum (ELCF) and European Transport Safety Council (ETSC).

ILCAD builds on the success of the first European campaign, which was implemented in 27 countries last year. The international version will be carried out in more than 45 countries. Level crossings belong to both the rail and road network, but most accidents there result from misbehaviour by road users. In 2008, 409 people in the European Union died in an accident at a level crossing. Apart from the obvious human and social loss, there is also a heavy economic cost due to damage to the rail network and train traffic being interrupted for a long period. Meanwhile the Commission remains committed cutting road fatalities. The programme covering the period 2001–10 has been credited with cutting road deaths significantly across Europe and this summer the Commission will publish road safety guidelines with the aim of cutting fatalities even further.