

SPEECHES

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PRESS CONFERENCE: FEMA President's speech

Welcome to this press conference where I hope you will find interesting information.

20 years ago, in the summer of 1988, 6 motorcyclists gathered in a park. They were concerned about a new proposed regulation that was being discussed somewhere in the EU bureaucracy. They found out they needed to be active in Brussels to defend their rights to keep on riding motorcycles and to defend their lifestyle.

Today we are celebrating the brainchild of these six motorcyclists; FEMA. After 20 years, FEMA's importance to motorcyclists have not been greater as we strive to fulfill the intentions of our founding fathers, namely to fight for European motorcyclist's rights. That is why we are here. That is what we're all about. FEMA of today is the result of 20 years of volunteers' commitment and motorcyclists donations to their respective national representative associations like MAG Belgium, FFMC France, MAG Netherlands, BMF and MAG United Kingdom which in turn finance FEMA's work.

We represent the European motorcyclists in a broad range of arenas, as FEMA no longer only operates in Brussels. The voice of the street riding motorcyclist is also heard in e.g. the United Nations, where more and more regulations are voted globally before being translated into European and national legislations. His and her voice is heard in the OECD when motorcycle safety is discussed; in CEN (the European Standardization Body) to have standardized protective guardrails for motorcyclists, and in a number of research projects where FEMA bears the voice, expertise and opinion of the European motorcyclist, only to mention but a few recent activities.

So where do we go from here?

The motorcycle community faces challenges that we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to. FEMA will continue to represent the riders of Europe, and to do so in an even more complicated world of policy making, FEMA needs to grow stronger. And the strength of FEMA is, of course, the European rider. The more riders we represent, the stronger we are as a community and a political force. FEMA aims at increasing its strength by being more visible to the riders of Europe, and to better report back our achievements to those who we represent. We are undertaking a series of actions on a number of arenas to make sure we do that.

We do all this because the issues we need to deal with in the near future demands the voice of the rider to be heard. Let me name a few examples:

- **Safety:** it is very often heard that motorcycling is becoming a more dangerous mean of transport over the years. This is statistically wrong and does not help to improve the real debate over motorcycle safety and counter measures to be promoted. FEMA will work at refocusing the motorcycle safety debate into the right track in order to have appropriate measures taken to REALLY improve motorcycle safety and ensuring it remains an attractive means of transport
- **Environment:** in the global warming context, motorcycles will have to improve their environmental performance. Motorcyclists' challenges (this means FEMA's challenges) will be to ensure that this is being done fairly compared to other means of transport, without discriminations upon motorcycling usage.
- **Mobility policies:** though we all know that motorcycling offers a sustainable alternative to car usage, it is still very often ignored: in the last edition of the European Mobility Week, promotion of all transport modes (even car pooling/sharing) was made, except for motorcycling. This is inconsistent and counter-productive regarding safety and environmental policies. FEMA will have to ensure motorcycling has a place in tomorrow's mobility policies, starting with the Green Paper on Urban Transport, which will soon be discussed by Members of the European Parliament.
- **Development of new technologies:** In the past, we have found that technological development often creates two different types of problems for motorcyclists: 1. The first is that motorcyclists are generally forgotten in these developments (e.g. Intelligent Infrastructure, V2V communications, etc.); 2. Secondly, that transport engineers

simply try to apply what works for cars to motorcycles, without taking motorcycling characteristics and needs into account (the '2-wheeled car' scenario); Motorcyclists therefore have to make sure that their needs and wants are well known by transport stakeholders, which is one of the reasons FEMA decided to become involved in EU Research programmes, like SAFERIDER.

The 21st century also brings an important challenge to transport authorities who need to develop innovative solutions to contain increasing mobility and congestion problems, but often fear to integrate motorcycles as one of the solutions. This, in our views is due to a many pre-conceived and negative ideas about the use of motorcycles. Lack of knowledge of decision makers, inaccuracies due misleading statistical data or sometimes even "bikeism" prevent motorcycling from being fairly promoted as sustainable mobility solution. Fortunately, some cities have (London or Barcelona), with very positive results both in terms of safety and mobility.

Indeed, as underlined by the recent OECD workshop on motorcycle safety, the only way to reach such positive results is to develop motorcycling strategies in collaboration with all the stakeholders. A joint challenge for both the motorcycle sector and transport authorities in the coming years will be to address these issues in order to take advantages of the numerous positive attributes that motorcycles offer to the transport mix, among which, the most important in our views: freedom and fun!