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The Government must implement strategies that will meet the European target of reducing deaths by 50 per cent by 2020

Sir, Road deaths last year fell to an all-time low of 1,857, reflecting the long-term collaborative effort of those active in road safety and of national and local government. Provisional road casualty figures for 2010 show welcome improvement and should be taken as encouragement to achieve greater continuous reduction in death and serious injury. However, the figures allow no room for complacency — the remaining deaths are preventable. Our real aim should be for zero harm on our roads: this is the case on the railways and in other aspects of commercial life.

Compared with this rate of progress, the forecast or assumption for road deaths contained in the Government's Strategic Framework for Road Safety shows a noticeable lack of ambition.

To achieve the central forecast contained in this document, we only need to cut deaths by 4.7 per cent over the next decade (that is less than 0.5 per cent a year), compared with a fall of more than 16 per cent in the single year from 2009 and 2010.

The European Commission, supported by the UK Government, has set a target of halving road deaths in the EU by 2020, which is seen as a staging post to achieving the eventual elimination of death and long-term injury on Europe's roads. This commitment makes financial sense since spending on road safety delivers significant rates of return. Achieving this level of reduction would save more than 4,600 lives in Britain by 2020, a benefit to the country worth more than £7 billion.

We urge the Government to implement strategies that will meet the European target of reducing deaths by 50 per cent by 2020. That would take annual road deaths below 1,000 and help us to achieve the safest road network in the world for all its users over the same period.

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