

Position Paper

MANDATING ABS ON ALL MOTORCYCLES

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European Transport Safety Council

Executive Summary

Motorcyclist deaths in the EU have declined more slowly over the past decade than those of other road user groups - by approximately 20%, compared with 45% for moped users and 33% for road users overall. Improvements to vehicle safety standards form part of the response to this gap.

Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) have been found to reduce motorcycle collision involvement by around 30%, with greater effects on more serious collisions and on wet roads. Under current EU law, however, ABS is mandatory only for medium-performance (L3e-A2) and high-performance (L3e-A3) motorcycles, and not for the low-performance (L3e-A1) subcategory. Regulation (EU) 168/2013 required the European Commission to report on the mandatory fitting of ABS to these motorcycles by the end of 2019 and to consider a legislative proposal. To date, neither the report nor a proposal has been published.

A supporting study commissioned by the Commission concluded that ABS should be made mandatory for all new motorcycles. It estimated the benefits of mandating ABS for low-performance motorcycles at €1.4 billion against an estimated cost of €60.7 million - a benefit-to-cost ratio of approximately 23, derived from the study's most conservative scenario. The study found that preventing as few as 1,500 slight injuries over a decade would offset the full cost of the measure. India and Singapore have moved to mandate ABS on motorcycles, and ABS-equipped models are sold in markets with lower purchasing power at prices comparable to or below those of non-ABS low-performance motorcycles in Europe.

At the Motorcycle Working Group meeting in April 2026, the Commission indicated that a targeted revision of Regulation (EU) 168/2013 was unlikely, citing the requirement for an impact assessment and limited resources. ETSC notes that the Commission is six years beyond its legal deadline and has had the relevant cost-benefit evidence available throughout this period.

ETSC's position: ETSC calls on the European Commission to bring forward a single legislative proposal addressing the changes to Regulation (EU) 168/2013 that it identifies as requiring little preparation - including the ABS mandate for L3e-A1 motorcycles. Bundling these short-term measures would justify the administrative resources required while ensuring that they are not delayed by the lengthier full review of the regulation.

Introduction

In the last decade, the number of motorcyclist deaths decreased on average by 2% annually in the EU26, from 4,233 in 2011 to 3,364 in 2021.¹ While a reduction of around 20% during the decade, motorcycle user deaths are declining significantly more slowly than deaths among other road users, as moped user road deaths decreased by around 45% and other road user deaths by 33%.²

Moreover, 17,228 motorcycle users were reported seriously injured in 2020 in the EU27. However, these numbers are likely to be lower than the true numbers due to a high level of underreporting of serious injuries.³

This underlines the urgent need for more measures that improve the safety of motorcycle users to be implemented, including improvements to vehicle safety standards.

Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) on motorcycles have been investigated empirically and were found to reduce collisions. The European Union's legislation for the so-called 'L-category' vehicles, however, mandates ABS only for the medium-performance (L3e-A2) and high-performance (L3e-A3) subcategories of motorcycles, but not for the low-performance (L3e-A1) subcategory.^{4,5}

That legislation also requires the European Commission to present a report examining the mandatory fitting of an ABS for the low-performance motorcycles and to consider presenting a legislative proposal.⁶

A supporting study commissioned by the European Commission examining this mandatory fitment of ABS on low-performance motorcycles was published in 2020 and concluded that ABS should be made mandatory for all new motorcycles.

The European Commission's report, which was required by law to have been published by the end of 2019, and the follow-up legislative action to mandate ABS for the low-performance motorcycles are therefore long overdue.

This position paper sets out the safety benefits of mandating ABS for low-performance motorcycles and puts Europe's lack of regulatory activity in global perspective. It concludes with a call on the European Commission to come forward with a targeted legislative proposal amending Regulation (EU) 168/2013, which includes a mandate for motorcycles of category L3e-A1 to be fitted with ABS.

¹ EU26: EU27 minus MT due to lack of data. Source: ETSC. (2023). PIN Flash Report 44. Reducing road deaths among powered two-wheeler users. <https://tinyurl.com/bdz6st44>

² Ibid.

³ Source: EU CARE database. Please note that for some years, countries that are not included in the figure are France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Italy and Estonia due to problems of comparability, missing data or a break in the time series.

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 168/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the approval and market surveillance of two- or three-wheel vehicles and quadricycles. <https://tinyurl.com/3xjhh5p9>
This Regulation requires manufacturers to fit to a low-performance motorcycle either an ABS or a combined braking system (CBS), or both.

⁵ The low-performance (L3e-A1) subcategory are motorcycles with an engine capacity of 125 cm³ or less, and a maximum continuous rated or net power of 11 kW or less.

⁶ Article 79 of Regulation (EU) No 168/2013.

Benefits of Anti-Lock Braking Systems (ABS)

Locking the wheel by braking increases the risk of losing control, particularly when undertaken in emergencies. If, during emergency braking, the rider inadvertently locks the rear wheel, correcting this by reducing braking can have dire consequences. If the wheel is substantially out of line, a sudden reactivation of traction can cause the motorcycle to “high side” in the direction of the skid and eject the rider.

A locked front wheel can also lead to a crash, if not corrected immediately by releasing and then reapplying braking as soon as the skid has been corrected.

The anti-lock braking system detects wheel slip and automatically adjusts the braking pressure to prevent the wheel from locking.

Anti-lock brakes on motorcycles have been investigated empirically and on average were found to reduce collision involvement by about 30%. Greater effects were found on more serious collisions and on collisions on wet roads than on other collisions.⁷

The support study, commissioned by the European Commission and conducted by TRL, also concluded from a literature review that ABS has a significant effect in reducing the frequency and severity of collisions.⁸ The support study’s authors however note that the literature in the review focused mainly on motorcycles more powerful than the low-performance motorcycles.

In their subsequent analysis, they estimate the benefits of mandating ABS based on an analysis of in-depth crash reports involving the low-performance motorcycles and extrapolating it to the EU level. The sample was however relatively limited due to the lack of such in-depth reports of crashes involving low-performance motorcycles.

The authors estimate the benefits to be 1.4 billion Euros, against the relatively low estimated cost of 60.7 million Euros to fit all new low-performance motorcycles with ABS, resulting in an astonishing benefit-to-cost ratio of 22.79. The benefits are based on the estimate that the mandatory ABS installation will prevent around 2,900 serious injuries and around 14,000 slight injuries during a ten-year period.

The authors furthermore note that due to the low cost of ABS instalment and the high costs associated with motorcycle injuries, the prevention of only 1,500 slight injuries (or less than 0.15% of the total collisions) during the course of a decade would already fully offset the costs of implementing the mandatory installation of ABS for all new low-performance motorcycles.

⁷ TØI. (2016). Report 1517, Summary Motorcycle Safety. <https://tinyurl.com/mr364j82>

⁸ TRL. (2020). Examination of the mandatory fitting of an anti-lock brake system and a supplemental combined brake system at the choice of the manufacturer to L3e-A1 subcategory motorcycles. <https://tinyurl.com/yrdzumm>

Moreover, it is important to underline that this estimate is based on the most pessimistic scenario analysed in the study.

From the available literature as well as the support study it can therefore safely be concluded that the installation of ABS on low-performance motorcycles prevents deaths and injuries and that also from an economic perspective, mandating it is a no-brainer.

Europe is falling behind India and ASEAN due to the inaction of the European Commission

The legislation required the European Commission to submit a report on the potential of making the fitment of ABS mandatory for motorcycles by the end of 2019, while the study by TRL prepared in support of this report was published in 2020.

Now in 2026, the European Commission's report and accompanying legislative proposal are still awaited. Meanwhile, other parts of the world have acted on this key lifesaving technology.

India is moving forward with mandating ABS on all powered two-wheelers above 50cc, as from 2026.⁹ Additionally Singapore took a similar step by making ABS mandatory on all motorcycles from 2027 onwards.¹⁰

Moreover, ABS-equipped motorcycles are marketed in other parts of the world where consumers have comparatively lower purchasing power, for a price that is equal to or less than the price of a low-performance motorcycle without ABS in Europe, which further demonstrates the affordability of ABS.

ETSC Calls for a Swift Mandate of ABS for Low-Performance Motorcycles

ETSC wrote to the European Commission in September 2025 calling for a targeted revision of the regulatory framework to introduce the ABS mandate for low-performance motorcycles. It also requested for the topic to be put on the agenda of the next meeting of the European Commission's Motorcycle Working Group (MCWG).¹¹

At the MCWG's meeting on 22 April 2026, officials from the European Commission indicated that it was unlikely that there will be a targeted revision of Regulation (EU) 168/2013 to introduce the mandatory fitment of ABS for the low-performance motorcycles, due to such mandate requiring a co-decision proposal, in turn requiring an impact assessment, while their resources were limited.

⁹ Times of India. Transport ministry approves mandatory ABS in all 2-wheelers, 2 helmets with new bikes. Reported on 18 June 2025. <https://tinyurl.com/3623f6sf>

¹⁰ Land Transport Authority Singapore. All new motorcycles registered from 1 April 2027 to Have Anti-Lock Braking System. 16 September 2025. <https://tinyurl.com/46nwrrwc>

¹¹ ETSC. (2025). Letter: Call for mandating ABS on all motorcycles. <https://tinyurl.com/m7wkhu3a>

ETSC does not find that response credible. The European Commission is already six years past its own legal deadline, while it has – and for all these years has had – an overwhelming cost-benefit case at its disposal to base the impact assessment on. A case that moreover demonstrates that mandating ABS for L3e-A1 motorcycles is a ‘no-brainer’, not only from the road safety perspective, but also the societal, economic and technical ones.

During the MCWG meeting, the European Commission set out a list of (potential) issues with the L-category regulation that would require a legislative proposal to address them.¹² The list contained issues that would require little legislative preparation, such as the ABS mandate, as well as those that would still require significant preparation.

Rather than calling for a targeted legislative proposal to only introduce the ABS mandate for L3e-A1, **ETSC calls on the European Commission to swiftly come forward with a legislative proposal that gathers those legislative changes of Regulation (EU) 168/2013 that it identifies as requiring only little preparation, including the ABS mandate for L3e-A1 motorcycles.**

Such a bundle of short-term measures would justify the administrative resources used to prepare the proposal, while at the same time making sure that life-saving measures are not held back by an extensive review and revision of the motorcycle regulation, which will take years of preparation time – all the while riders of small motorcycles are paying the price for an inaction the Commission cannot any longer reasonably defend.

¹² European Commission. (2026). Slide 8 of the presentation at the MCWG meeting on 22 April 2026. <https://tinyurl.com/nm92w2t7>



European Transport Safety Council

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Founded in 1993 in Brussels, we provide an impartial source of expert advice on transport safety matters to the European Commission, the European Parliament, international organisations, and national governments.

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