



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION BECOMES INVOLVED

It was at this point that Dr Willson, a trackside doctor who attended motorcycle race meetings, as well as providing initial trauma care to road traffic accident casualties at the roadside, and who had been a member of the ACU standard committee, travelled to Brussels and convinced Mr Petrovich, whose son happened to be a motorcyclist, to encompass motorcycle clothing within the scope of the standardisation programme instigated in response to the recently published Personal Protective Equipment Directive.

German standards agency DIN were appointed as the secretariat for WG9, which held its first meeting within DIN's offices in the former East Berlin in August 1991. The committee's early efforts were primarily focused on developing a standard for limb protectors, but outside of the meetings, controversy was building.

The European motorcycling industry feared that the publication of PPE standards could lead to motorcyclists being compelled to wear approved clothing. Both the Commission and CEN were lobbied by industry and riders' groups to exclude motorcycle clothing both from the scope of the Directive and the standardisation programme.

At a pivotal meeting with Commission officer Mr J-P Van Gheluwe, the industry demonstrated a textile jacket, which, it was claimed, merely represented a barrier to non-extreme ambient conditions of wind, rain and cold. Such products for private use are specifically excluded from the scope of the Directive, and so the industry considered a block exemption for all motorcycle clothing to be justified.

Unfortunately, someone had forgotten to remove the back, shoulder and elbow protectors from the jacket, and when one of the Commission delegation enquired "what are these meant to be?", an industry representative answered honestly and instinctively "they are the protectors" - which immediately resulted in the Commission delegation pronouncing them to therefore be PPE and consequently within the scope of the Directive!

A compromise was reached whereby motorcycle clothing intended for private use and providing protection only from non-extreme ambient weather conditions would not be considered as PPE. Any protectors fitted to, for example, the elbows and shoulders were considered to be PPE and therefore to be tested and approved. If, however, a manufacturer specifically claimed or implied in literature or advertising that in addition to fitted protectors, the garment also provided other forms of “special” protection (e.g.: abrasion and cut resistance), then the garment would also be considered to be PPE and subject to testing and certification.

This accommodation was agreed to by the industry delegation. As would be clear subsequently, however, agreement did not equate to compliance!