NEWS RELEASE

BOOST THE MARKET FOR SAFER CARS ACROSS THE EU

Brussels, 14 April 2009 **- Until the recent economic downturn, around 15 million new passenger cars were sold in Europe annually, making up to 6% of the 250 million cars registered in EU member states. Unlike environmental performance, safety was not among the key criteria which most national governments actively promoted through tax breaks and scrappage schemes for purchasing new cars. As a result, huge differences exist between countries in terms of market penetration of safer cars, as was demonstrated by the new Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)[(1)] ranking. A project of ETSC[(2)] in cooperation with Euro NCAP[(3)], it looked at safety of new passenger cars sold in 2008 in the 30 countries.**

Vehicle passive safety has improved considerably over the past decade, from 2 stars awarded by Euro NCAP to an average car for occupant protection ten years ago, to 4 or 5 stars going to 90% of the new cars tested today. Constantly improving vehicle passive safety has helped to prevent some 10,600 car occupants from dying in road crashes in the EU over the past 10 years. Yet European citizens do not benefit equally from these improvements.

On average in the EU, 53% of the new cars sold in 2008 were awarded 5 stars, 31% 4 stars, 7% 3 stars and still 1% only 2 stars. **Sweden**, **Ireland** and **Norway** are the countries with the highest proportion – above 60% - of cars awarded 5-stars for ***occupant protection*** amongst new cars sold in 2008. **Portugal, Norway** and **Sweden** sell most – over 90% - 4 and 5-star cars. Safety levels are notably lower in the new Member States than in the older EU-15 ones, with the exception of **Slovenia**.

Improvements in ***pedestrian protection*** have developed more slowly than for occupant protection. Still only 21% of the new cars sold in the EU are 3-star, 42% were 2-star and 29% only 1-star. Consumers in **Southern, Central and Eastern** European countries buy smaller cars, which provide better pedestrian protection, but less good occupant protection. Consumers in **Nordic countries** or **Germany** tend to buy larger cars mainly from national brands, performing poorly on pedestrian protection but providing better occupant protection.

Commenting on the mixed Swedish results, Anders Lie from the Swedish Road Administration said: "*Sweden considers vehicle safety to be one of the most important strategic tools to improve traffic safety. The Swedish Road Administration set the example when we decided to buy or rent only 5-star Euro NCAP cars. The Swedish Government recently extended the demand to all government bodies to do the same.*"

Michiel Van Ratingen, Euro NCAP Secretary General, said: *"Even in the current economic crisis safety should remain a top priority. Euro NCAP will continue to set higher benchmarks and reward those manufacturers who make safety their ultimate goal."*

"Governments can influence consumer choice of vehicle. National incentives, such as tax breaks or car scrappage schemes, should reflect new climate change challenges and address road safety", added Graziella Jost, ETSC PIN Programme Officer.

You can download the complete Road Safety PIN Flash 13 at www.etsc.be/PIN-publications.php
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Notes to Editors:

(1) **The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)** Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes 30 countries. The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) receives financial support from Swedish Road Administration and Toyota Motor Europe. www.etsc.be/PIN.
You can download the complete Road Safety PIN Flash 13 "Boosting the market for safer cars across the EU", April 2009, at www.etsc.be/PIN-publications.php. Background Tables and Methodological Note can be downloaded from the same address.

(2) **The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)** is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 41 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be.

(3) Launched in 1997, the **European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP)** has been the main driver in encouraging consumers in Europe to buy safer cars. Until 2009, Euro NCAP made three separate ratings available for each vehicle. In February 2009, Euro NCAP published a new overall rating for every vehicle that will cover Adult Occupant Protection, Child Occupant Protection, Pedestrian Protection and a new area of assessment: Safety Assist. Under the new testing regime, vehicles are awarded a single overall score from one to five stars. This will make it easier for car buyers to choose the 'stand-out' safest vehicles. Car buyers interested in a particular area of assessment such as adult protection or child protection will still be able to compare different vehicles as the individual scores that make up the overall rating will also be available on Euro NCAP's website: www.euroncap.com.
Make sure you pay a visit to Euro NCAP website before you buy a car!