

NEWS RELEASE

## Estonia halves road deaths but still faces many challenges

**21 May 2010, Tallinn** – Road safety in Estonia is the focus of today's Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Talk organised by the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication<sup>(1)</sup> and ETSC<sup>(2)</sup>. Experts and officials discussed the ways to improve road safety and speed management in Estonia drawing on other EU countries' experiences.

Road deaths in Estonia have been cut by half since 2001, going down from 208 (average for 2000-2002) to 100 in 2009. If this trend is sustained in 2010, Estonia will be among the few countries reaching the EU Road Safety Target by the end of the year. The progress is also very visible when measured in terms of road deaths per population: from 146 deaths per one million residents in 2001 down to 75 in 2009.

There is however no room for complacency. Progress needs to be done in particular in tackling the three main killers on the road: speeding, drink driving and non-use of seat belt. Speeding remains one of the main concerns in Estonia and poses a particularly grave threat to vulnerable road users. Urban pedestrians make up respectively 59% of all road deaths in Tallinn (against 43% on average in the EU capitals)<sup>(4)</sup>. While the **use of seat belts** has become more widespread on the front seats, wearing levels are still disturbingly low on the rear seats. If 88% of car occupants use their seat belt in the front seats, only 63% do so in the rear seats<sup>(3)</sup>.

Speaking at the PIN Talk, Mr. Eero Pärasmäe, Deputy Secretary General at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, said that much had been achieved in terms of reducing deaths on our roads. *"After disappointing results in 2006 and 2007, we are starting to see the results of the intensified effort initiated by the Estonian Road Administration to tackle road deaths,"* Mr. Eero Pärasmäe said. *"Among other measures, a High Level inter-ministerial Road Safety Commission was created, gathering the relevant Ministries and the police. Police enforcement has been made more visible. This has been supported by road safety campaigns to communicate with the public. Finally, we applied low cost infrastructure remedial schemes and road safety audits to reduce accidents on high risk sites."*

Graziella Jost, PIN Programme Manager at ETSC, said: *"The example of Estonia is an encouragement for all other Central and Eastern European countries. The next steps are to expand the network of safety cameras and introduce lower speed limits in cities to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists as early as possible in an effort to sustain similar progress in 2010."*

The Tallinn PIN Talk was attended by many of the Members of the National Traffic Commission, including representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, representatives of the Road Administration, the Police, the insurance sector and technical universities, among others. Experts from Finland and Latvia also took part in the debate and exchange best practices.

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## Notes to Editors:

(1) Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, <http://www.mkm.ee/>

(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.eu](http://www.etsc.eu)

The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes the 27 countries of the EU, as well as Israel, Norway and Switzerland. The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) receives financial support from the Swedish Transport Administration, Toyota Motor Europe and the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. [www.etsc.eu/PIN](http://www.etsc.eu/PIN).

(3) ETSC PIN Flash 16 Tackling the Three Main Killers on the road, 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, <http://www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php>

(4) ETSC 3<sup>rd</sup> PIN Report, 2010 on the Horizon, June 2009, p.65, <http://www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php>