European Transport Safety Council

NEWS RELEASE

More Police Enforcement is Key to Less Drink Driving in Belgium

2 June 2008, Brussels **– Belgian drivers drink less while at the steering wheel, but there still is a lot of work to do before the country has solved the problem of drink driving on its roads, revealed the discussions at the *Safe and Sober Talk* at the Belgian parliament today. The event, organised by ETSC and the Belgian Road Safety Institute (IBSR/BIVV)[(1)], demonstrated to law-makers that improved law enforcement and data collection must be the first priorities for the country's road safety.**

Some 300 fewer people die in road crashes in Belgium today than in 2001[(2)]. The 28% decrease in road deaths between 2001 and 2006, down to 1069 fatalities, has been to a large extent the result of a successful anti-drink driving campaign in the country. Belgium has seen a yearly 11.7% progress in alcohol-related road death reduction over the past decade, which is the second best result among the EU countries. Road deaths from drink driving dropped 9.4% faster than deaths from other causes over this period in Belgium[(3)].

Speaking at the *Safe and Sober Talk* at the Belgian parliament today, Dr Peter Silverans from IBSR/BIVV said that the proportion of drivers found over the 0.5 BAC limit decreased from 3.3% in 2003, when the police and IBSR started bi-annual measurements of drivers' alcohol level, down to 2.1% in 2005. However, the figure goes up to 7.6% on week-end nights, which is a worrying signal.

One of the underlying problems is that drink driving accident data in Belgium remains incomplete and patchy, with blood test results available in only 45% of fatal crashes, according to IBSR. This is an improvement on 25% registered in 2004. However, IBSR concludes that the national data reflect under-registration and recommends that all injured drivers should be tested.

The number of screening tests, conducted during the yearly BOB campaign, have also increased from 83 500 in 2002/2003 to 157 000 in 2005/2006, said Dr Peter Silverans. However, this falls short of the required 2 million tests a year covering a third of all drivers, as was suggested by the 2007 General Assembly on Road Safety. According to a recent study[(4)], only 7.5% of drivers in Belgium say they have been tested in the course of the past year.

A legislative proposal on the introduction of alcolocks in Belgium is expected to be adopted by the Belgian parliament before the end of the year, said MP Jeff van den Bergh. This law, targeting recidivist offenders, will be among the first of its kind in the EU.

Speaking today at the Belgian Parliament, Dr Peter Silverans of IBSR stressed that: *"All drivers involved in injury accidents should be tested, and a complete database of all traffic offences should be created to identify and evaluate recidivists. Alcohol checks should cover the entire traffic flow and should not be limited to specific campaigns."*

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Notes for Editors:

(1) 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. ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 39 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe; www.etsc.be

IBSR/BIVV, the Belgian Road Safety Institute, is charged with collecting data on road accidents and devising measures to improve road safety in the country; www.ibsr.be

(2) ETSC Road Safety PIN, www.etsc.be/PIN

(3) Idem

(4) *Alcolock implementation in the European Union: An in-depth qualitative field trial* http://bivv.ipower.be/communicatie/alcolock/Alcolock_Deliverable_D1.001.pdf