



NEWS RELEASE

Ireland to lower drink-drive limit

7 July 2010, Brussels – The European Transport Safety Council⁽¹⁾ highly commends the resolve of the Irish Transport Minister Noel Dempsey T.D. and the Irish legislators who are in the final stages of adopting the Road Traffic Bill 2009. The Bill, which introduces lower legal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) level for drivers, has received wide cross party support in the Irish Parliament. After today's, hopefully positive, final discussions at its Upper House it will have to be signed by the President of the Irish Republic before becoming the law.

The new limits will finally bring Ireland in line with the vast majority of other EU Member States and ETSC's and the European Commission's recommendation on the BAC⁽²⁾. After this change only the UK and Malta will still have a 0.8g/l BAC limit. Once the Bill is passed, the current legal BAC limit of 0.8g/l will go down to 0.2 for novice and professional drivers including taxi drivers and hauliers and to 0.5 for all other drivers. The Bill will also introduce compulsory testing for alcohol for drivers involved in collisions.

Speaking from Brussels, ETSC Executive Director Antonio Avenoso said: *"This is one of the most important steps in road safety which any country keen on the health of its people can make. Lower drink-drive limits will mean fewer deaths on the roads and less human grief and injury. We sincerely hope that we can congratulate the Irish government and MPs on the final adoption of the Bill still before the end of this week."*

Alcohol, even in comparatively moderate doses, significantly impairs drivers' capabilities and slows their reactions. Experience of other countries provides overwhelming evidence that lower BAC limit leads to fewer road deaths. For example, in **Switzerland**, where the limit was reduced from 0.8 to 0.5g/l in 2005, there were 44% less alcohol related road deaths in 2006-2008 compared with the period 2002-2004⁽³⁾. A similar drop was also registered in **Austria** after the limit was reduced from 0.8 to 0.5g/l in 1998.

Over the past nine years Ireland has seen an impressive 41% reduction in the number of road deaths, from 411 in 2001 to 241 in 2009. With 54 deaths per million on Irish roads, it ranks 7th safest country in the EU⁽⁴⁾. Ireland's progress has been recognised with the "**Road Safety PIN Award 2010**" at the 4th ETSC Road Safety PIN Conference in Brussels on the 22nd of June.⁽⁵⁾ One of the most important measures of Ireland's success was the introduction of Mandatory Alcohol Testing in 2006 and tougher penalties for drink driving offences in 2007. The announcement of the new roll out of safety cameras shows that the Government is also committed to further reduce speeding. However, up to one third of road deaths on Irish roads every year are estimated to be alcohol related. The introduction of lower BAC limits can only help Ireland reduce drink driving and become a safer country to travel to.

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Notes to 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. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 43 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu
- (2) European Community. Commission Recommendation 2001/116/EC of 17 January 2001 on the maximum permitted blood alcohol content (BAC) for drivers of motorised vehicles. (Official Journal of the European Communities, No. L 43, 14 February 2001, pp. 31-33)
- (3) Alcohol-related deaths relatively decreased by 24%, as the number of non-alcohol related deaths fell down by 26% between 2006-2008 and 2002-2004.
- (4) ETSC 4th PIN Report 2010, Road Safety Targets in Sight: Make up for lost time [www.etsc.eu/documents/ETSC PIN Report 2010.pdf](http://www.etsc.eu/documents/ETSC%20PIN%20Report%202010.pdf)
- (5) ETSC Press release, 22 June 2010, Ireland receives Road Safety PIN Award 2010 [www. www.etsc.eu/documents/06 22 - PR PIN Award Ireland FINAL.pdf](http://www.etsc.eu/documents/06%2022%20-%20PR%20PIN%20Award%20Ireland%20FINAL.pdf)