NEWS RELEASE

Bringing an End to Drink Driving in Poland: Poznan and beyond

14 October 2008, Poznan **– Although the number of alcohol-related traffic offences in Poland has decreased over the past several years, they have grown more serious and fatal. This is one of the conclusions at the Safe and Sober Talk held today in the city of Poznan, Poland by ETSC[(1)] and its Polish Member, an NGO: "Road and Safety"[(2)].**

The number of road deaths has decreased by as little as 0.9% between 2001 and 2007 in Poland, which includes a 6.5% year-on-year rise in 2007. In 2007, 409 deaths, or 10.9% of the total road fatalities, were alcohol related, also a slight increase on 404 in 2006. This casts doubt over how realistic is the goal of a 6% reduction in the number of deaths caused by drunk drivers, pedestrians and cyclists by 2013, envisaged in the national road safety strategy GAMBIT 2005 .

On the positive side, the number of detected alcohol offences dropped by 20% between 2006 and 2007, which is believed to have been contributed to by Poland's change in its traffic offence penalty regime and the accompanying publicity. Currently a proposal is being discussed that every driver stopped by police for whatever reason should be tested for alcohol by 2009. Poland has also been successful in purchasing enforcement equipment including 1000 breath tests with EU Structural Funds under its Sectoral Operational Programme for Transport. However, more resources for both more traffic police on the roads and equipment are sorely needed.

"As examples of other countries show, increased police enforcement brings about swift and efficient results," said ETSC Policy Director Ellen Townsend at the event. *"In Austria, the introduction of roadside alcohol tests 2005 led to a 20% drop in drink driving deaths over the next twelve months."*

Nationwide awareness rising campaigns and events are run by the National Road Safety Council (NRSC) and supported by many NGOs, also with roots in the powerful national Catholic Church. The most recent one "100 years!" refers to the Polish birthday song but also to the impact that a drink driving crash can have one a person, family and friends – even 100 years is not enough to pay back for someone's life! [(3)] *"NRSC is also shifting its education and media campaigns to pilot projects at local and regional levels in co-operation with local authorities and organisations [(4)]. All our actions are always organized in the cooperation with the police,"* explained Mr. Grzegorczyk NRSC's Director at the ETSC Safe and Sober Talk in Poznan.

Ilona Buttler of ITS Poland who also spoke at today's Safe and Sober Talk stated that: *"Poland's prevention policy over the last 10-15 years has produced a steady reduction in road accidents caused by drunk road users. The reduction has slowed recently. If we want to continue to reduce the risk of alcohol consumed by road users, we have to change our policies quickly."*

ETSC's Safe and Sober talk is being held in conjunction with Poland's Road and Safety NGO based in Poznan who are celebrating their 10th anniversary. Alicja Fonżychowska stressed: *"We are on the front line fighting drink driving in Poland. We urgently need more anti drink driving measures targeting small towns and our rural areas."*

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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 41 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be

(2) The Association for Improving Road Safety, "Road and Safety", aims to reduce danger to life and health in road traffic, as well as material losses incurred due to road accidents. www.drogaibezpieczenstwo.org.pl

(3) www.krbrd.gov.pl/kampanie/piles_nie_jedz.htm

(4) *Such pilots help the NRSC to implement best practices from UN and EU recommendations and test the findings of PEPPER,* www.pepper-eu.org *and CAST,* www.cast-eu.org *projects – best practices on enforcement and road safety campaigns.*