

NEWS RELEASE

ETSC urges Irish government to lower drink drive limit

23 October 2009, Brussels – European Transport Safety Council⁽¹⁾ urges the Irish Government to introduce its life saving legislation which will provide for a new lower drink drive limit. The drink drive limit is currently 0.08 g/dL in Ireland, making it the highest in the EU with Malta and the UK. The proposed lower limit of 0.05 for drivers and 0.02 for professional and novice drivers will also bring Ireland into line with the other EU member states and the European Commission's recommendation⁽²⁾.

Speaking from Brussels, Mr. Antonio Avenoso, Executive Director of the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) said: *"We cannot underestimate what a significant milestone this is for both the Irish Government and the Irish people. Minister Noel Dempsey T.D. and his colleagues should lower the drink drive limit, a move that can and will only lead to safer roads, fewer lives lost and more injuries prevented. By keeping the current BAC limit, Ireland risks to soon stand alone among EU countries with irresponsibly high legal limit."*

"There is overwhelming evidence to support lowering the drink-drive limit from 0.08 to 0.05. For example, in Switzerland, the limit was reduced from 0.08 to 0.05 on 1st January 2005. The period 2006 to 2008 saw 44% less alcohol related road deaths than the period 2002 to 2004⁽³⁾. A similar drop in alcohol related deaths occurred also in Austria, whose limit was reduced from 0.08 to 0.05 in 1998", he added.

"Ireland has made great strides in becoming one of the top performing countries in the EU for road safety. In just 8 years, the country has seen a 32% reduction in the number of road deaths, from 411 in 2001 to 279 in 2008. However, many other EU countries have begun to improve their track record on road safety and Ireland will have to continue implementing important and proven road safety measures if it does not want to be left behind. With 63 deaths per million on Irish roads, Ireland comfortably sits below the EU average of 79 deaths per million."

"But despite recent improvements in Ireland's road safety record, it is still estimated that up to 100 people die from alcohol related collisions on Irish roads every year. 100 people who need not have died and whose families continue to grieve for what could have been a preventable tragedy. Lowering the limit is the right choice and I applaud the Irish Government for choosing to do so," Mr. Avenoso concluded.

For more information please contact ETSC Communication Manager Evgueni Pogorelov evgueni.pogorelov@etsc.eu at the ETSC secretariat: Tel: +32 (0)2 230.41.06 ; Fax: +32 (0)2 230.42.15

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 42 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. See <http://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 to2008 and 2002 to2004.