The EU's rural roads: more efforts needed to apply known and affordable road safety measures

***12 October 2010, Brussels* – In 2009 at least 21,500 people lost their lives on rural roads[1] across Europe, totaling 55% of all road deaths. Today, ETSC[2] launches its 18th Road Safety PIN[3] Flash[4] comparing EU countries' progress in reducing deaths on rural roads since 2001. It also recommends key measures to the EU and Member States and will promote them during the European Road Safety Days[5] taking place this week in Brussels.**

France, **Luxembourg** and **Portugal** achieved the highest annual reductions in road deaths on rural roads with more than a 9% average reduction since 2001. **Latvia**, **Belgium**, **Israel**, **Germany**, **Spain** and **the Netherlands** follow closely behind with annual reductions of over 6% on average[6]. France, Portugal, Latvia and Belgium are countries that have achieved rapid overall reduction in road deaths over the same period. The reduction in speed has been the single most important factor in the recent French road safety success, and this has been especially marked on rural roads.

Comparison between countries of the safety levels is difficult because of the variety of rural roads and lack of detailed data on vehicle-km travelled, but measures to improve safety on that part of the network are known. They include safe road design, safe infrastructure management, and better enforcement of traffic rules, in particular of speed limits.

Sweden has pioneered new safe designs for roads which are not motorways. Since 1998, there has been a large programme of single carriageway upgrade into '2+1 roads'. In each direction, two-lane sections, which provides safe overtaking zones, alternate with one-lane sections. Vehicles travelling in opposite directions are separated by a safety barrier system, which prevents fatal head-on collisions. This provides the model for all countries where traffic is too light to upgrade major routes to motorways.

The EU Directive on Road Infrastructure Safety Management requires Member States to apply four instruments[7] on the Trans-European Road Network. The **Dutch** government has decided to go beyond this requirement and implement all four instruments also on its rural network. "*We urge all Member States to follow the Dutch example and take advantage of the transposition of the Directive on Infrastructure Safety to introduce mandatory road safety impact assessments and audits for new roads and rehabilitation projects, and inspections and benchmarks to the existing rural network,"* said Antonio Avenoso, ETSC Executive Director. "*We also encourage the European Commission to support Member States with technical guidelines covering the management of high risk sites and the promotion of traffic calming measures to tackle speed*."

The full PIN Flash "Reducing deaths on rural roads" and detailed figures for each country are available at www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php. For more information, please contact PIN Programme Manager Graziella Jost, graziella.jost@etsc.eu, Tel: +32 (0)2 230.41.06, Mob: +32 (0)484.380.579

Notes to editors:

(1) **Rural roads** are roads outside urban areas other than motorways

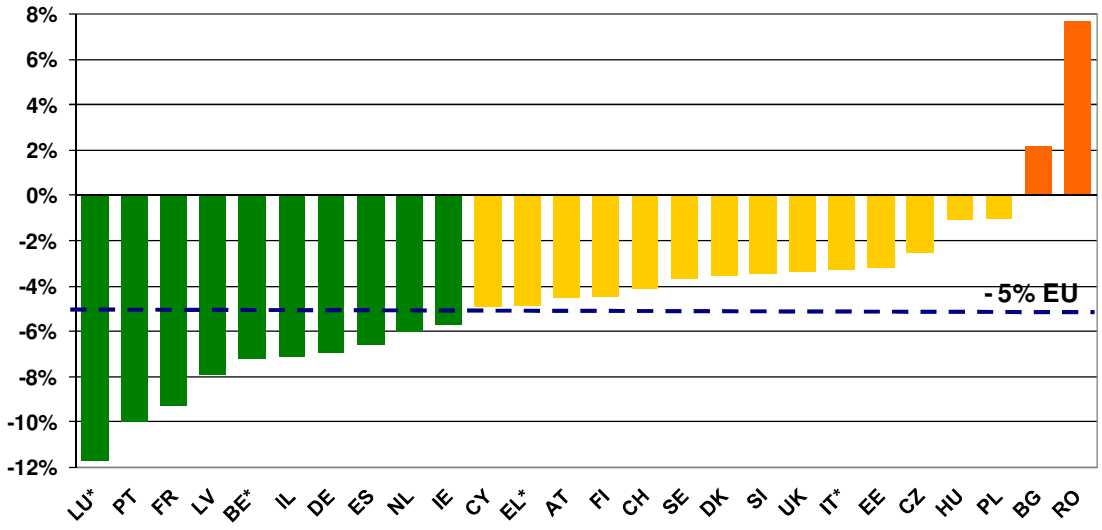
(2) **The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)** is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 43 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

(3) **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. www.etsc.eu/PIN

(4) The **PIN Flash "Reducing deaths on rural roads"** and detailed figures for each country in the Background Tables are available at www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php

(5) European Road Safety Days, On the move for safer roads in Europe. http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/events-archive/2010_10_13-14_ersd_en.htm

(6) Fig.1: Average annual percentage change in deaths on rural roads in 26 countries over the period 2001-2009. **BE, EL, IT, LU (2001-2008).*



(7) The EU Directive on road infrastructure safety management requires Member States to apply the following four instruments on the Trans-European Road Network (TERN) by December 2010: Road safety impact assessments, Road safety audits, Network safety management and Safety inspections.
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/infrastructure/safety_management_roads_en.htm